

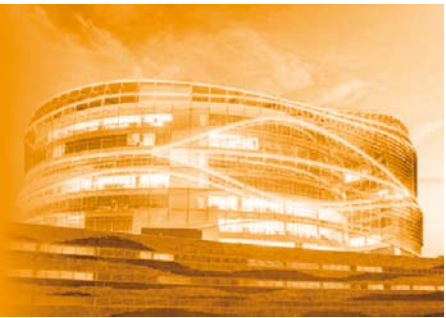
Lebanon passes 2022 budget

Lebanon's parliament passed the 2022 budget on Monday using an exchange rate for customs tax revenues that lies far below the market value of the Lebanese pound, falling short of economic reform measures that would pave the way for an IMF deal. An agreement with the lender of last resort is seen as a first crucial step for Lebanon to begin exiting a three-year financial implosion that has left most people poor and plunged the country into its worst crisis since the 1975-90 Civil War. — AFP



P13

PUBLIC ISSUE OF OMAN'S PEARL REIF SLATED DURING Q4



P10

TIAFOE STARS AS TEAM WORLD WIN FIRST LAVER CUP



P20

UNDERSTANDING THE CHARM AND IMPORTANCE OF THE SARDINE SEASON



MUSCAT

OMAN AND IRAN EXPLORE JVS

Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Monday received a business delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran to explore business and investment opportunities in both countries. The meeting focused on several economic fields in a bid to strike partnerships between Omani and Iranian businessmen, namely in agriculture, mining, medical equipment, technical inspection services, livestock, industry, auto spare parts, petrochemicals, building material, jewellery and furniture. Several B2B meetings were held between businessmen from both countries. SEE P4

CRUDE PRICE AT \$84.46 A BARREL

Oman oil price for November delivery on Monday reached \$84.46, comprising a drop by \$4.82 from the price of last Friday which stood at \$89.28. The average price of Oman oil for September delivery has stabilised at \$103.21 per barrel, thus \$9.72 per barrel lower than August delivery. Meanwhile, Asian stocks also fell, and oil and gold were under pressure due to the surging greenback. Gold touched a 2-1/2 year low of \$1,626.4 and Brent crude futures were down about 1 per cent having earlier fallen to their lowest since January at \$84.51 a barrel.

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INSIDE



SIX PEOPLE KILLED IN PHILIPPINE TYPHOON



PREPARING FOR THE LONG WAR

Bilateral trade at RO 5.5 billion in 2021

OMAN-UAE ROBUST COMMERCIAL EXCHANGES ANCHOR GOOD RELATIONS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 26

The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are based on common and solid foundations and the deep-rooted relations have been further consolidated through cultural, social and economic cooperation.

A sizable chunk of Omani imports and exports are routed through the UAE, underscoring the importance of Oman's northern neighbour as a gateway for trade with the wider world.

Bilateral trade between the two fraternal neighbours touched RO 5.5 billion in 2021, comprising RO 1.3 billion in Omani exports and RO 4.2 billion of imports. Investment from UAE into Oman stood at RO 1.207 billion in 2021. Over 3,000 UAE companies are currently operating in the Sultanate of Oman, majority of them are concentrated in commercial, construction, industry, real estate, services and



Over 3,000 UAE companies are currently operating in Oman.

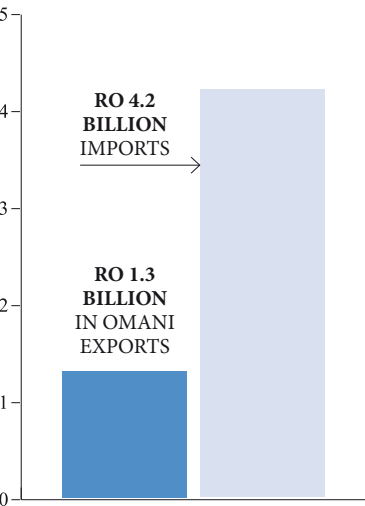
transport sectors. This compares with commercial exchange of around RO 5.2 billion in 2020.

JOINT COOPERATION
Economic and commercial relations account for a relatively modest share of the multifaceted bilateral relationship that the two

countries enjoy. This was reiterated at the high-profile second Oman-UAE Economic Forum which was held in Dubai earlier this year. Taking place on the sidelines of Oman's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai, the forum discussed consolidation of economic partnership between the

business communities in the two countries to serve the economic relations, commercial exchanges, investments and programmes of cooperation at government and private levels. Deliberations during this three-day forum focused on developing business partnerships in sectors such as innovation,

RO 5.5 billion Bilateral trade between Oman-UAE in 2021



Investment from UAE into Oman stood at RO 1.207 billion in 2021

renewable energy, water solutions, financial services, logistics support, construction, real estate and entrepreneurship. Bilateral meetings were held between major Omani and Emirati multinationals to discuss opportunities for joint cooperation and business facilitation. SEE ALSO P2 & 3

A DISTINCTIVE DESTINATION



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Tuesday marks the World Tourism Day which falls on September 27 every year. The ministry organises a series of events and activities to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a distinctive destination in the region and globally. These activities aim to attract more visitors to the country's various governorates. DETAILS ON P5

Nasa attempts to smash asteroid

LAUREL: Nasa will attempt a feat humanity has never before accomplished: deliberately smacking a spacecraft into an asteroid to slightly deflect its orbit, in a key test of our ability to stop cosmic objects from devastating life on Earth.

The Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) spaceship launched from California last November and is fast approaching its target, which it will strike at roughly 22,500 km per hour.

"It's the final cosmic collision countdown," tweeted mission control at Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory in Maryland. To be sure, neither the asteroid moonlet Dimorphos, nor the big brother it orbits, called Didymos, pose any threat as the pair loop the Sun, passing about seven million miles from Earth at nearest approach. But Nasa has deemed the experiment important to carry out before an actual need

is discovered. If all goes to plan, impact between the car-sized spacecraft, and the 530-foot (160 meters, or two Statues of Liberty) asteroid should take place at 7:14 pm Eastern Time (23:14 GMT), viewable on a Nasa livestream.

By striking Dimorphos head on, Nasa hopes to push it into a smaller orbit, shaving ten minutes off the time it takes to encircle Didymos, which is currently 11 hours and 55 minutes. — AFP

Plan set for net-zero carbon economy

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With a mission to establish a comprehensive national strategy and a unified operational plan towards achieving net zero emissions, Carbon Management Lab (CML) kicked off here on Monday to keep pace with the development goals within Oman Vision 2040.

The CML, which runs till October 13, seeks to boost Oman's strategic approach to the environment. It is organised by Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, under the supervision of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, in cooperation with the Environment Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority.

The overall objective is to build effective, balanced and resilient ecosystems to protect the environment, maintain the sustainability of natural resources and enhance the national economy.

The CML is also held in preparation for Oman's participation in the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, scheduled to be held in Egypt in November.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the Supervisory

Redoubling efforts in achieving zero emissions include current global rise in energy prices, which prompted some countries to revert to the use of coal

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFU

Minister of Energy and Minerals

Committee of the CML, said that redoubling efforts is involved in achieving zero emissions for many reasons, including the current global rise in energy prices, which prompted some countries to revert to the use of coal as an alternative source of energy.

The CML will focus on four main sectors, which, he said are the energy sector (electricity, oil and gas), the industry sector, the transport sector, the cities and buildings sector.

All parties concerned will update their plans, strategies and policies and define regulatory frameworks.



Leadership fosters strong Oman-UAE cultural ties

MAI AL ABRI

MUSCAT, SEPT 26

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates have long standing fraternal ties that have been strengthened by their productive cooperation. In light of their shared interest in advancing and expanding the possibilities for bilateral cooperation in all areas, the two nations' leadership has worked to expand these ties to new heights at various levels.

These cultural ties are underpinned by their historical links, neighbourly relations, customs and traditions, community connections and a shared destiny, thereby laying the foundation for stronger cooperation based on common aspirations for their mutual growth and prosperity.

Nurtured over generations, the historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates have been reinforced by a commitment to preserve their shared heritage, exemplified by their common language, religion and kinship.

Over the years and decades, a number of events and activities jointly hosted by the two countries have helped sustain and build relations in the cultural arena. Notable has been the UAE Cultural Week,



which was inaugurated in Oman on December 11, 2006, in conjunction with celebrations designating Muscat as the 2006 Capital of Arab Culture. The weeklong festival featured four exhibitions focusing on Arabic calligraphy, numismatics, contemporary art, and books and periodicals about culture. Additionally, the Ministry of

Nurtured over generations, the historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates have been reinforced by a commitment to preserve their shared heritage, exemplified by their common language, religion and kinship

Culture, Sports, and Youth, as well as the Ministry of Information, represent the Sultanate of Oman at the annual book fairs held in Abu Dhabi and Sharjah. A number of cultural and media organisations from the UAE also attend the international book fair in Muscat.

Furthermore, museums and art galleries distributed throughout

the UAE regularly showcase works by Omani artists. The first digital museum displaying the creative work of photographers and artists from the Arab Gulf states is the Khaliji Museum. With their unique creations that celebrate Omani traditions and beautiful landscapes, Omani artists have made an indelible impression on art enthusiasts in the UAE. The museum celebrates creativity, diverse forms of art, and shared history among the Gulf countries.

The participation of Oman in the Dubai Expo 2020 marked a new high point in cultural ties between the two countries. The pavilion was designed and built in a distinctive modern style inspired by one of the icons of nature in the Sultanate of Oman — the frankincense tree. Its design traces the story of the frankincense tree — a symbol deeply embedded in the country's rich history and heritage.

The historic visit of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan to the Sultanate of Oman in 1991 was an important turning point in bilateral relations between the two countries. In the same vein, today's visit by UAE President HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan promises to herald a new era in brotherly ties between the two countries and their peoples.

A new starting point for closer and more tangible ties

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

The visit of UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan to the Sultanate of Oman is a testimony of the commitment to a policy of constructive relations and cooperation between the two brotherly countries and their peoples.

The visit which comes at the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will reinforce the shared vision of the two countries for a secure and stable region that promotes sustainable development and supports a thriving economy in which people can realise their full potential.

Inherited by the generations, the historical relations between Oman and UAE are linked by brotherly ties and strategic relations whose approach was founded by the late Sultan Qaboos and Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. The late leaders signed many agreements in cultural and education areas.

Under the same framework, the historic visit of Shaikh Zayed to Oman in 1991 was a key milestone in the cooperation between the two countries, and a joint higher committee was formed that issued a resolution enabling travel between the two countries using IDs instead of passports.

The relations are compatible in many areas of shared interests that serve the peoples of the two countries over the past decades maintaining the integrity in the purviews of visions that stem from language, religion and kinship.

The statement of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan during Oman's 51st National Day celebrations last



year that "the UAE and Oman share deep-rooted ties that grow stronger every day" highlights the depth of the relations filled with key milestones that strengthened the relations.

The two countries also share a common cultural heritage, including in arts and literature, which shaped a similar identity for their peoples and the peoples of the Gulf region.

Oman and the UAE are the first two countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to adopt

the personal card as a document for the movement of their citizens instead of passports since 1993.

When it comes to bilateral visits and relations, there have been mutual visits and continuous coordination between officials of the two countries, during which prospects for joint cooperation in various fields and enhancing investment opportunities are discussed.

The Oman-Emirati Economic Forum also held two sessions, in October 2021 and February 2022, where they discussed

the development and upgrading of trade and investment partnerships and working to open new channels of a partnership between the business communities in the two countries.

Tuesday's visit by the UAE President constitutes a new starting point for more tangible steps, coordination and integration towards the achievement of the shared interests of the two countries. It will motivate more action for the realisation of the prosperity for the peoples of both countries in all spheres.

The Sultanate of Oman and the UAE are the first two countries of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf to adopt the personal card as a document for the movement of their citizens instead of passports since 1993

The visit will also reflect positively on the economic, investment, and societal aspects as the two countries are constantly keen to form practical visions and perceptions about the future of joint relations.

The UAE has been working to achieve the maximum exchange of benefits between the two countries, taking advantage of the investment opportunities in the Omani market, where the portfolio of Emirati projects is diversified in multiple sectors, most notably the manufacturing industries, financial services, construction, real estate, as well as tourism.

The peoples of both countries are looking forward, with great hope that the meeting between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan will open the next stage for more combined efforts to maintain the advanced levels in the relations.



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Omani-UAE relations enter broader horizons

ALI AL MATANI

The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have deep roots and multiple dimensions. There is social bonding and marriages across the borders. The demography as well as overlapping borders also strengthen their relations. They have shared history and common economic, commercial, and business interests. All these attributes make them strategically important for each other.

Therefore, one should not be surprised by the 470 per cent growth in the non-oil trade exchange between the two countries during the last ten years. There was a boom in the export and re-export sector between the two countries. This is evident from the data of the National Centre for Statistics and Information. It showed that the UAE was on the top of the countries which received Omani non-oil exports which at the end of the third quarter of 2021 was more than RO 764 million. The re-export of Omani products from the UAE was more than RO 393 million in the same period last year.

There are foreign direct investments (FDIs) which also link the two neighbourly and brotherly nations with each other and make them interdependent. The UAE is among the top three countries which has made foreign direct investments in the Sultanate of Oman. According to a FDI survey conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the volume of direct investments made by the UAE in the Sultanate of Oman was RO 846



Both the countries are focused on ensuring a more prosperous future for their people. Therefore, they never hesitate in sharing resources, experiences, and also expertise with each other

million. In the manufacturing industries, it made investments of RO 175.9 million and in financial intermediation it is RO 306 million. The foreign direct investments the UAE made in real estate, rental and commercial projects of Oman is worth RO 98.7 million. The construction industry of Oman received RO 21 million as UAE's

investment, trade with 148.6 million riyals. The transportation, storage and communications sectors of Oman got RO 4.6 million, hotels and restaurants RO 67.3 million riyals and other activities got RO 23.9 million from UAE as foreign direct investments in Oman.

On the other hand, the UAE is also

on top of the list of the countries which attracted Omani direct investments. By the end of 2015, Oman has invested about RO 528.4 million in the UAE.

If you through these statistics, there is no need for further explanation of the interdependence between Oman and UAE. Their relations are deeply rooted in

their cultural and civilisational heritage. These ties inspire more cooperation, synergies, solidarity and coming together to meet the modern-day challenges. For the countries which have shared history, common concerns and mutual interests, nothing can stop them from joining hands everywhere.

History has proved that geographic proximity is important to take the relationships forward. Nature has given them the opportunity to explore more avenues for cooperation in the areas of military, defence, security, economy, and industrial sectors. This is a golden opportunity which the two nations already understand and would never let it go. Both these countries are focused on ensuring a more prosperous future for their people. Therefore, they never hesitate in sharing resources, experiences, and expertise also with each other.

Oman and UAE have presented a model of peaceful coexistence with shared borders. They have learnt lessons from their common history and present-day challenges and have made them a treasure to be used for their future development and growth together.

These relations have created hopes and aspirations in the minds of the people of the two brotherly nations for more growth. They are confident that these two neighbours together can keep the wheel of their growth and development moving, particularly when they have the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in Oman and His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in the UAE.

UAE media highlights President's visit to Oman

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The UAE media has underlined the importance of the visit of HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, to the Sultanate of Oman on the invitation of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The Al Bayan newspaper said that the two leaders will discuss

strengthening cooperation and joint coordination in various economic, commercial, investment, cultural and development fields, and pushing them forward to meet the aspirations of the two countries and achieve their goals for sustainable development.

It added that relations between countries are strongly rooted at family and community levels

while economic relations have only strengthened under the leadership of Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

The UAE media have added after the establishment of the United Arab Emirates Federation in 1971, many agreements have been signed between the two countries.

The visit of the late Shaikh

Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan to the Sultanate of Oman in 1991 resulted in the formation of the Oman-UAE Joint Supreme Committee for Cooperation and Coordination. The two countries also signed more than 20 agreements and memoranda of understanding in the fields of air services and international road transport for passengers and goods.

Reports suggested UAE is one of the most important trading partners of the Sultanate of Oman with the volume of non-oil trade exchange between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman last year was 46 billion AED, a growth of 9 per cent compared to 2020.

The two countries are working to enhance sectors such as the energy sector, renewable energy, financial services, logistical

support, construction, real estate, and entrepreneurship.

The statement wrote that the total non-oil trade between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman during the period from 2012 to 2021 amounted to more than 362 billion AED, recording a growth rate of 98.9 per cent to reach 46.5 billion AED by the end of 2021, compared to 23.4 billion AED at the end of 2012.



■ FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES COPIES OF CREDENTIALS
OF KUWAITI AND SRI LANKAN AMBASSADORS



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received on Monday a copy of credentials of Mohammed Nasser Madhi al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr also received a copy of credentials of Ahmed Lebbe Sabarullah Khan, Ambassador of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr welcomed the ambassadors and wished them success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the relations between Oman and their respective countries further development and growth. – ONA

Sept 14 to be celebrated
as Gulf Family Day



RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, today took part in the meeting of GCC ministers of social development.

Oman's delegation in the meeting was headed by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development.

The meeting approved a decision of the GCC Supreme Council at its 41st session regarding the unified indicative system for empowering people with disability and the unified indicative system for social action. The meeting also agreed that September 14 every year will be a day for the "Gulf Family" and approved the framework of observing that day.

The meeting was chaired by Ahmed Sulaiman Al Rajhi, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dr Nayef Falah Al Hajraf, GCC Secretary-General was present during the meeting. — ONA

Muscat Governor inspects projects in Al Amerat



AL AMERAT: Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat inspected a number of projects currently under implementation in the Wilayat of Al Amerat on Sunday.

Specialists at the Directorate-General of Muscat Municipality in Al Amerat presented a visual display of the already completed projects which included the development of the commercial district at phase 6, Al Mahaj walking track and some road projects. The visual display showed projects under implementation including internal roads, fixing of water-logging issue at 121 sites 92 of which have been completed and the walking track in phase four. — ONA

Baiti Amin campaign creates
awareness on electrical safety

MAZID MUSTHAIL AKA AK

An awareness drive to prevent and reduce household accidents put stress on electrical safety in the country. The drive targeted the vast audience of all the households across the country with an objective to identify the causes of household electrical accidents and to share knowledge on methods of prevention and reduction of electrical accidents.

The campaign was launched by the Dhofar Integrated Services Company as part of its annual programme named 'Baiti Amin'.

"Launched in 2015 by Nama



Group, the campaign is in its 8th year. The objective is to teach the important role of electrical safety to households across the Sultanate of Oman.

"The goal of this campaign is to spread the important message of household electrical safety in the country, in order to prevent and reduce accidents," says Said al Kathiri, General Manager of Customer Services of Dhofar Integrated Services Company.

To achieve these goals, the

campaign consists of educational exhibitions, lectures and workshops, videos, competitions, and even a solar-powered van, which has travelled to various areas of Dhofar, spreading awareness about the campaign, and its message of electrical safety.

"The van is our focal point this year. We are using it to get closer to the local society, and get them more engaged with the event."

The Baiti Amin campaign is set to last for four months. It will spread awareness about the importance of preventing and reducing electrical household accidents.



MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) received on Monday a business delegation from the Islamic Republic of Iran to explore business and investment opportunities in both countries.

The meeting focused on several economic fields in a bid to strike partnerships between Omani and Iranian businessmen, namely in agriculture, mining, medical equipment, technical inspection services, livestock, industry, auto spare parts, petrochemicals, building material, jewellery and furniture.

Hussain al Ajmi, member of the Oman-Iran Business Council, said that the visit of the Iranian business delegation comes within the framework of the two countries' efforts to enhance relations and to boost trade exchange.

Trade exchange between Oman and Iran stood at RO 254,309,890 in 2021, while exports stood at RO 155,583,200. Meanwhile, imports reached RO 98,726,790. Moreover, several B2B meetings were held between businessmen from both countries. — ONA

Al Hajar mountain villages have rare pomelo

TEXT& PHOTO BY YAHYA
ALSALMANI

It is delightful to visit a pomelo farm. The view of the fruits hanging along the long thorny branches of the tree is tempting. The fertile lands and availability of fresh water make all the villages along the Al Hajar Mountains suitable for this fruit. Despite limited agricultural land, their farms produce different crops besides palms, grapes and mangoes.

Sources indicate that farmers began their interest in cultivating the pomelo ten years ago due to good financial returns.

The pomelo trees are readied

for fruition in December when wastes are removed and trees pruned to protect them from pests. Harvesting begins in September and October.

There are two types of pomelo: 'Al Dairi' and 'Al Yahmadi'. These two types have achieved remarkable plantation success. It is in good demand in the Sultanate of Oman due to its health benefits.

In the past, when it was not appropriate to use electrical appliances, such as refrigerators, to preserve food, Omanis used to store pomelo fruit by wrapping it with palm tree fibres and keeping it underground in rooms with low temperatures. Then the fruit was extracted after several

months. This method also had the advantage of enjoying the fruit even after the fruit season.

According to research, pomelo is a fruit rich in antioxidants. A study published in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry in 2013 stated that pomelo contains 26 polyphenolic compounds, including flavonoids, one of the most prominent types, constituting 78 per cent to 94 per cent of the total of these compounds.

The properties of Quercetin and Kaempferol have excellent health benefits. The antioxidants protect the body from the dangers of unstable free radical molecules. It also helps reduce inflammation.





OMAN VISION 2040 TARGETS REINVIGORATING THE TOURISM SECTOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S GDP FROM 2.4% IN 2021 TO 5% IN 2030 AND 10% IN 2040

Rethinking Tourism

Oman marks World Tourism Day

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism marked the World Tourism Day 2022, which falls on September 27 every year.

The ministry organises a series of events and activities to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a distinctive destination in the region and globally. These activities aim to attract more visitors to the country's various governorates.

The celebrations in the Sultanate of Oman are held under the global theme "Rethinking Tourism", in response to the World Tourism Organisation's invitation to observe the sector's recovery after being hit by the repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic in recent years.

Marking the day also aims to highlight the ministry's efforts to realise "Oman Vision 2040". The vision targets reinvigorating the tourism sector's contribution to the country's GDP from 2.4% in 2021 to 5% in 2030 and 10% in 2040, according to data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Events organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism also highlighted the investment opportunities in the tourism sector in the various governorates, placed importance on training and sectoral knowledge, and urged businesses to take advantage of the many available opportunities, as they have resulted in the country seeing a strong increase in visitor numbers compared to last year.

The event will also highlight the efforts undertaken to showcase the Sultanate of Oman's Fifa programme, which supports the State of Qatar's efforts to host a successful World Cup. The efforts are designed to celebrate the organisation of the global event in the GCC region by attracting fans to the Sultanate of Oman and in particular Muscat, which is one of the main cities furnished to receive World Cup fans from 20 November to 18 December 2022.

World Tourism Day has been celebrated on 27 September every year since 1980. It marks the anniversary of the adoption of the statute of the World Tourism Organisation, which was founded in 1975. — ONA

on the day include education and awareness-raising activities, training sessions, and a media

event to talk about the potential of the tourism sector in generating more jobs. Official statistics show

an increase in the number of Omani nationals working in the hospitality industry, which went

up from 3,752 in 2020 to 5,230 nationals last year, witnessing a growth rate of 39.3%.

Over 463,800 travel via Salalah Airport during Khareef

SALALAH: The number of passengers through Salalah Airport during the Khareef (monsoon season 2022) stood at 463,848 during the period between June 21 and September 21, 2022. The figure constituted a rise by 46% compared to the same period in 2021. Salim bin Awadh al Yafei, Executive Vice President of Salalah Airport, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the number of flights during the Khareef season reached 3,385 inbound and outbound flights, comprising an increase by

49% compared to the same period in 2021.

Al Yafei pointed out that August saw the highest average of weekly flights reaching 352. Al Yafei said that all GCC states operated direct flights to Salalah Airport during the Khareef season in 2022, including Wizz Air, Fly Dubai, Gulf Air, Jazeera Airways, Kuwait Airways, Flynas and Qatar Airways. He added that Salalah Airport saw buzzing air traffic as Oman Air operated 1,372 domestic flights during the Khareef season, while domestic flights by

SalamAir stood at 648 during the period from June 21 to September 21, 2022.

As far as preparation for the upcoming winter season is concerned, Al Yafei said that eight direct flights per week will be operated from Slovakia, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic starting from November 2022 to March 2023.

The Khareef season is characterised by marvellous, exceptional tropical weather and moderate temperatures which makes it a unique destination for visitors. — ONA



Announcement of the tender TND GSI BV/08/2022 for the supply of CS pipes

GS INIMA (BARKA) LLC have been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC. Omani companies are invited to quote their most competitive price for supply CS pipes and fittings, the erection and welding as optional. To participate in bidding please send a request for participation to barka.v.site@inima.com accompanied with a copy of CR, copy of VAT certificate and copy of MSE card if any, subject **TND GSI BV/08/2022** within 2nd October 2022.

A reply with full list of items to be quoted will be reverted to candidate same day.

Bid closing date 9th October 2022 1:00PM



Six people killed in Philippine typhoon

SAN ILDEFONSO: The strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year left at least six people dead, authorities said on Monday, after heavy rain and fierce winds battered the country’s most populous island.

Typhoon Noru toppled trees, knocked out power and flooded low-lying communities as it swept across Luzon on Sunday and Monday.

There have so far been no reports of widespread severe damage to buildings from the storm, which hit the country as a super typhoon.

Five people suffered minor injuries and several others are missing, disaster officials said.

“I think that we may have gotten lucky at least this time, a little bit,” President Ferdinand Marcos Jr told a briefing with disaster agencies.

Five rescuers were killed after they were sent to help flooded residents in San Miguel municipality in Bulacan province, near the capital Manila.

Lieutenant-Colonel Romualdo Andres, chief of police in San Miguel, said the rescuers were wading through floodwaters when a wall collapsed, sending them into the fast current.

“Our house was swept away by the flood, it’s gone,” said Willie Ortega, 59, in San Miguel. “We weren’t able to save anything, even the rice to eat, none.”

An elderly man died after he was hit by a landslide in Burdeos



Residents and motorists commute along a flooded highway in the aftermath of Super Typhoon Noru in San Ildefonso, Bulacan province. — AFP

municipality on the Polillo Islands, part of Quezon province, where the storm made landfall, said Garner Jimenez from the local civil defence office.

The Philippines is regularly ravaged by storms, with scientists warning they are becoming more powerful as the world gets warmer because of climate change.

Noru smashed into the archipelago nation on Sunday after an unprecedented “explosive intensification” in wind speeds,

Swathes of land swamped after typhoon as farms, communities flooded with five rescue workers killed

the state weather forecaster said earlier. It made landfall about 100 kilometres northeast of Manila, before weakening to a typhoon as it crossed a mountain range, coconut

plantations and rice fields.

More than 74,000 people were evacuated from their homes before the storm hit, as the meteorology agency warned heavy rain could cause “serious flooding” in vulnerable areas and trigger landslides.

But on Monday, there was no sign of the widespread devastation many had feared, as the storm moved over the South China Sea towards Vietnam.

State weather forecaster Ana

Tunisians protest against high prices, food shortages

TUNIS: Hundreds of Tunisians protested on Sunday night in the capital against poverty, high prices and the shortage of some foodstuff, escalating pressure on the government of President Kais Saied, as the country suffers an economic and political crisis.

Tunisia is struggling to revive its public finances as discontent grows over inflation running at nearly 9 per cent and a shortage of many food items in stores because the country cannot afford to pay for some imports.

The North African nation is also in the midst of a severe political crisis since Saied seized control of the executive power last year and dissolved parliament in a move his opponents called a coup.

In the poor Douar Hicher district in the capital, some protesters lifted loaves of bread in the air. Other chanted, “Where is Kais Saied?”. Angry youths burned tires. — Reuters

US, South Korea begin naval drills

SEOUL: South Korea and the United States began their first combined naval exercise near the peninsula in five years on Monday, a day after Pyongyang conducted a ballistic missile launch.

Washington is Seoul’s key security ally and stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to protect it from the nuclear-armed North.

South Korea’s hawkish President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, has vowed to beef up joint military exercises with the United States, after years of failed diplomacy with North Korea under his predecessor.

“This exercise was prepared to demonstrate the strong will of the South Korea-US alliance to respond to North Korean provocations,” the South’s navy said in a statement.

The four-day exercise on South Korea’s east coast will involve more than 20 vessels and an assortment of aircraft, which



The drills come a day after nuclear-armed North Korea conducted a ballistic missile launch, the latest in its record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year.

will conduct drills on anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare operations, tactical maneuvers and other maritime operations, it added.

“Through this exercise, we will further improve the ability to conduct joint operations between the naval forces of the

two countries,” Kwak Kwang-sub, a senior South Korean naval officer, said in the statement.

The drills come a day after nuclear-armed Pyongyang conducted another ballistic missile launch, the latest in its record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year. North

Korea is under multiple sets of international sanctions over its programmes to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Seoul had also detected signs the North was preparing to fire a Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM), the president’s office said on Saturday, a weapon Pyongyang last tested in May.

Earlier this month, the North revised its nuclear law, enshrining a “first strike” doctrine and vowing never to give up its nukes.

The allies have long carried out joint exercises, which they insist are purely defensive.

North Korea, however, sees them as rehearsals for an invasion.

Last month, the United States and South Korea staged their biggest combined military drills since 2018 — the resumption of large-scale training sessions that had been scaled back due to Covid-19 and the period of diplomacy with Pyongyang.

— AFP

Thaksin’s daughter leads opinion poll

BANGKOK: The daughter of Thailand’s ex-Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in a 2006 military coup and lives in self-imposed exile, has emerged as a leading candidate for premier in a preliminary opinion poll ahead of elections due next year.

The poll signals challenges for the current military-aligned government, with potential voters listing the two main opposition parties as their top two preferences, although many remained undecided.

Paetongtarn Shinawatra, Thaksin’s youngest child at age 36, was the choice of 21.6 per cent of respondents in the poll - just behind “undecided”, which was cited by 24 per cent of those polled.

The National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA) poll surveyed 2,500 people nation-wide from September 15 to 21. It did not



Paetongtarn Shinawatra

provide a margin of error.

Thailand’s current ruling coalition’s leader, Prayuth Chan-ocha, polled fourth with 10.1 per cent. Prayuth is currently suspended pending a court ruling in a case saying his time as a military junta leader starting in 2014 should count toward term limits.

He continues to work as defence minister and the Constitutional Court is expected to rule in the case on September 30. — Reuters

TRIPOLI

Five dead, 13 wounded in western Libya clashes

Five people were killed and 13 wounded in gun battles in the western Libyan town of Zaouia, the latest unrest in the troubled North African nation.

Fighting broke out between rival forces equipped with heavy weapons, with one group linked to defence ministry and the other to the interior ministry. Libya’s ambulance service reported five dead, including a 10-year-old girl, and 13 injured at Zaouia which lies some 40 kilometres west of the capital Tripoli. A



security source, who requested anonymity, said fighting broke out after a member of one group was killed by a supporter of the other in a dispute over fuel smuggling. — AFP

TOKYO

Harris, Kishida hold bilateral talks

US Vice-President Kamala Harris reaffirmed Washington’s commitment to Japan’s defence during a meeting with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Tokyo. Harris’ trip to Asia, which will include a stop in South Korea.

Harris, who is leading the US delegation to the state funeral of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, also discussed North Korea’s recent ballistic missile test with Kishida, as well the importance of resolving the issue



of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea, the statement said. “The alliance between Japan and the United States is peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.” — Reuters

AMMAN

Syria cholera death toll rises to 29

A cholera outbreak in several regions of Syria has killed 29 people, the Syrian health ministry said in what the UN has called the worst outbreak in the war-torn country for years.

Rapid assessment testing confirmed 338 cases since the outbreak was first recorded last month, with the bulk of deaths and cases in the northern Aleppo province, the ministry said.

It said 230 cases were in Aleppo province where 25 people were confirmed dead. — the rest



were spread across the country. The UN said the outbreak was believed be linked to irrigation of crops using contaminated water and people drinking unsafe water from the Euphrates. — AFP



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TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 27 | 2022

7

In brief

■ BERLIN



GERMAN CHANCELLOR, INTERIOR MINISTER TEST POSITIVE

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Interior Minister Nancy Faeser both tested positive for the coronavirus on Monday. The 64-year-old Scholz has mild cold symptoms and immediately went into isolation after learning of the result, spokesman Steffen Hebestreit said. Faeser confirmed her infection on Twitter several hours later. “Covid has caught me for the first time. The virus remains treacherous. Everyone take good care of yourselves this autumn!” she wrote. Faeser was supposed to attend a joint meeting of the interior and justice ministers of Germany’s 16 states in Munich, but will now be represented by a state secretary. — dpa

■ COPENHAGEN



CONSERVATIVE IS RE-ELECTED SWEDISH SPEAKER

Conservative politician Andreas Norlén was unanimously re-elected parliamentary speaker in Sweden, two weeks after legislative elections. Norlén, a member of the conservative Moderate Party, has held the job since 2018. His pragmatic and independent approach during government crises means that Norlén is often seen as a non-partisan figure among lawmakers. The office of parliamentary speaker is the highest-ranking in Sweden after the king and, therefore, the highest that can be achieved through elections. Norlén gave the centre-right Ulf Kristersson the task of trying to form a new government. — dpa

■ MONTREAL



CANADA COUNTS DAMAGE AFTER STORM FIONA

Parts of eastern Canada suffered “immense” devastation, officials said on Sunday after powerful storm Fiona swept houses into the sea and caused major power outages, as the Caribbean and Florida braced for intensifying Tropical Storm Ian. Authorities have now confirmed two deaths caused when Fiona, then a post-tropical cyclone, tore into Nova Scotia and Newfoundland early on Saturday. Fiona had earlier claimed seven lives as it roared through the Caribbean at the start of a week of havoc. Officials confirmed the death of one person there, though there were few details. — AFP

Russia shooting kills 15, including children

MOSCOW: The death toll has risen to 15 people, including 11 children, after a man opened fire on Monday at his former school in central Russia, authorities said.

The attack was the latest in a series of school shootings that have shaken Russia in recent years and came with the country on edge over efforts to mobilise tens of thousands of men to fight in Ukraine.

Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced the “inhuman terrorist attack” in the city of Izhevsk, the Kremlin said, adding that the shooter “apparently belongs to a neo-fascist group”.

According to investigators, the attacker “was wearing a black top with Nazi symbols and a balaclava” when his body was discovered.

He was later identified as a local man born in 1988, who graduated from the school.

Investigators have said two security guards and two teachers were among the victims, while the attacker “committed suicide”.

Authorities previously announced a death toll of seven children and six adults but did not specify if that included the suspected shooter.

Investigators said they were searching his home and probing his “adherence to neo-fascist views and Nazi ideology”.

The region’s governor

Alexander Brechalov confirmed there were “casualties and wounded among children”, speaking in a video statement outside school No88 in Izhevsk.

Rescue and medical workers could be seen in the background, some running inside the school with stretchers.

Brechalov declared a period of mourning in the region to last until Thursday.

A city of around 630,000 people, Izhevsk is the regional capital of Russia’s Udmurt Republic, located around 1,000 kilometres east of Moscow.

The attack came just hours after a man had opened fire and severely wounded a recruitment officer at an enlistment centre in Siberia.

Russia’s last major school shooting was in April, when a man opened fire in a kindergarten in the central Ulyanovsk region, leaving a teacher and two children dead.

The shooter, described as “mentally ill”, was later found dead, with officials saying he had shot himself.

Mass shootings at schools and universities in Russia were rare until 2021, when the country was rocked by two separate killing sprees in the central Russian cities of Kazan and Perm that spurred lawmakers to tighten laws



Ambulances move on a road near the scene of a shooting in school No88 in Izhevsk. — AFP

Russian President Putin denounced the ‘inhuman terrorist attack’ in the city of Izhevsk, adding that the shooter ‘apparently belongs to a neo-fascist group’

regulating access to guns.

In September 2021, a student dressed in black tactical clothing and helmet armed with a hunting rifle swept through Perm State

University buildings killing six people, mostly women, and injuring two dozen others.

The gunman resisted arrest and was shot by law enforcement

as he was apprehended and moved to a medical facility for treatment.

It was the second such attack that year, after a 19-year-old former student shot dead nine people at his old school in the Kazan in May. Investigators said that the gunman suffered from a mental impairment, but was deemed fit to receive a licence for the semi-automatic shotgun that he used. — AFP

Russia says ‘no decisions’ on closing borders

KYIV: The Kremlin refused to deny on Monday that Russia might close its borders to prevent an exodus of military-age men after President Vladimir Putin declared a partial mobilisation in an effort to regain the upper hand in the war in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also confirmed that Russia was in “sporadic” contact with the United States on nuclear issues, a day after Washington warned of “catastrophic consequences” if Moscow used nuclear weapons to protect Ukrainian regions it looks set to annex.

Citizens in four regions of Ukraine were voting for a fourth day on Monday in Moscow-organised referendums on joining Russia, a plan Kyiv and the West have branded a sham.

They say the votes are rigged and they will not recognise the results.

Asked about the possibility of border closures, Peskov told reporters: “I don’t know anything about this. At the moment, no

decisions have been taken on this.”

Multiple reports have documented how people with no military service have received draft papers - contrary to Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu’s pledge that only those with special military skills or combat experience would do so - prompting even loyal pro-Kremlin figures to publicly express concern.

Peskov acknowledged that some call-ups had been issued in error, saying mistakes were being corrected by regional governors and the ministry of defence.

More than 2,000 people have been detained across Russia for protests at the draft, says independent monitoring group OVD-Info.

With criticism of the conflict banned, the demonstrations were among the first signs of discontent since the war began.

A 25-year-old gunman was detained after opening fire on Monday at a military draft office

in Russia’s Irkutsk region, the local governor said.

Almost 17,000 Russians crossed the border into Finland over the weekend, Finnish authorities said, while Russian state media said the estimated wait to enter Georgia hit 48 hours at one point on Sunday, with more than 3,000 vehicles queuing. A senior lawmaker said Russian men of fighting age should not be allowed to travel abroad.

“Everyone who is of conscription age should be banned from travelling abroad in the current situation,” Sergei Tsekov, a member of Russia’s upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, told RIA news agency.

By incorporating the four Ukrainian regions — Luhansk and Donetsk in the east and Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in the south — Moscow will also be able to portray Kyiv’s efforts to recapture them as attacks on Russia itself. — Reuters



A damaged car bearing the letter Z, at a possible mine field next to an abandoned industrial chicken farm, near a suspected mass grave in Kozacha Lopan, Kharkiv region. — AFP



Leader of Brothers of Italy Giorgia Meloni reacts at the party's election night headquarters in Rome. — Reuters

Energy, pensions first challenges for Meloni

ROME: Giorgia Meloni, widely expected to be named Italy’s first woman prime minister after Sunday’s elections, will have to tackle a raft of pressing economic problems as soon as her government takes office.

The country’s laborious institutional proceedings mean that will not happen for at least a month, during which outgoing Prime Minister Mario Draghi remains in charge.

This week he will issue new economic forecasts expected to show a darkening outlook, sources said.

The first task for Meloni, leader of the far-right Brothers of Italy, will be finding billions of euros to keep her election pledges to soften energy costs, cut taxes and block a hike in the retirement age due to kick in from January.

The energy crisis “will be the first test for the new government”, League leader Matteo Salvini, her main coalition ally, told reporters.

Draghi has already set aside 66 billion euros (\$63.63 billion) this year for tax breaks and subsidies to help energy-intensive firms and poor households.

Those are due to expire in November, and extending them for another month would cost 4.7 billion euros, Treasury officials

said. Meloni is helped by the fact that higher energy prices increase government revenues from excise duties and value added tax, meaning she can probably find the money without raising state borrowing, the officials said.

However, with business activity across the euro zone rapidly deteriorating, it is likely she will have to approve similar measures in 2023.

At an additional cost of 3.5 billion euros, the new government also plans to extend to 2023 existing tax breaks for workers due to expire this year, a senior Meloni aide in the running for a prominent cabinet post told Reuters.

Pensions are another problem Meloni has to tackle fast. A temporary regime allowing people to take a state pension when they are 64 expires in December, after which the age will rise to 67 under an unpopular 2011 reform which Salvini wants scrapped.

Blocking the rise in retirement age will add to a state pension bill which is the second highest in the euro zone as a proportion of national output, after Greece.

Because pensions are index-linked, Italy’s almost double-digit inflation rate is compounding the problem. — AFP

Are E-textbooks here to stay?



Sandhya Rao Mehta
The writer is an Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Literature, Sultan Qaboos University

As the pandemic and subsequent lockdown proved, humans are amazingly adjustable beings.

Who can forget how quickly schools and colleges moved from physical classrooms to virtual ones in many parts of the world? Part of teaching virtually was, of course, using electronic textbooks. It looks like those may actually stay on.

Textbooks are an integral part of education – we remember taking notes in the margins, doodling, even sending notes to each other using these books.

The electronic versions are less dynamic in these ways but they may achieve something else.

Of course traditional textbooks have an advantage: they need no external support like a device to be read, their pages are easy to

manoeuvre and compare in real time. Plus they are a permanent reminder of our reading journey, even inviting others to browse through our collection.

That is not to take away from the usefulness of digital books. From catering to different learning styles, using the audio feature for those with reading challenges, hands-on access to meanings and further information about concepts via hyperlinks and even being able to change the font for better reading experience are all undeniable advantages to e-books.

When it comes to textbooks, the advantages are even more obvious.

Students need to carry a lighter load to school, specific chapters can be downloaded for exercises and interactive material can be included

MORE RESEARCH IS NECESSARY TO MAKE ANY RECOMMENDATION ABOUT THE VERACITY OF USING ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS. EVEN AFTER EQUIPPING STUDENTS WITH THE NECESSARY DEVICES AND FACTORING IN THEIR MAINTENANCE, ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS WORK OUT TO BE CHEAPER

for extra practice.

In fact, some exercises are now collaborative and students can actively engage with a book to arrive at solutions or work through

a particularly difficult question. The link to learner motivation is clear.

One of the most important advantages of an electronic textbook is the speed at which it can be revised. Previously, books once published would only see another edition after a decade, with students, meanwhile, learning outdated material.

This is especially true in cases where teachers can add their own examples or exercises based on student range and capacity. Adding more, or less challenging tasks based on student performance can cater to a wide group of students, even helping each student at their own level.

The monetary implications are no less significant. In the long run, even after equipping students with the necessary devices and factoring

in their maintenance, electronic textbooks work out to be cheaper.

It is now possible to rent out a textbook for an academic year, so students will not have to buy a book but just borrow it.

More research is necessary to make any recommendation about the veracity of using electronic textbooks, however.

Studies have shown that, while young learners are very comfortable using electronic devices and gadgets for entertainment such as gaming and being on social media, they would still prefer to study from a hard copy of a textbook.

The constant scrolling, remembering of data, dates or other information is seen to be easier in a traditional book. The jury is still out on this important educational topic.

Sudanese head north to Egypt seeking brighter future

KHARTOUM: At downtown Khartoum's al Souq al Arabi, travel agencies helping young Sudanese seek a brighter economic future in Egypt are replacing once-packed hardware stores in a corner of the capital's main commercial hub.

The exodus reflects growing despondence over prospects at home, where the economy has been in free fall and the UN says food shortages affect a third of the population. Power and water cuts are common.

Anti-army protests have rocked the streets since a coup a year ago.

Following the military takeover, which toppled a civilian-led government that had promised a new economic dawn, the number of those leaving has accelerated, travel agents and migrants say.

Egypt, already home to a Sudanese community estimated at 4 million, offers few of the lucrative jobs that Sudanese migrants have traditionally sought in the Gulf, but it is an easier and often more familiar destination.

And while some do travel onward on treacherous Mediterranean trips to Europe, Egypt has notable advantages.

Young Sudanese can travel there cheaply and hunt for work, while families seek healthcare, education for their children and a stable life.

"All us young people want to build a future, but you can't do that here," said Munzir Mohamed, a 21-year-old trying to book a bus trip to Egypt at one of the travel agencies.

The owner of a Khartoum bus company said as many as 30 buses were taking around 1,500 passengers to Egypt from Sudan daily, which he said was up 50 per cent from last year, despite sharp ticket price increases.

Two travel agents estimated the number of young men seeking to make the journey had doubled in the last year.

There are no publicly available figures to show recent migration trends from Sudan to Egypt. But an Egyptian diplomat said numbers travelling had been on the rise since 2019, when an uprising led to the overthrow of former Sudanese leader Omar al Bashir.

"Movement of Sudanese people into Egypt has been increasing ... gradually and proportional to the deterioration of the situation in Sudan," he said.

In Al Souq al Arabi, labourers, electricians, and others who would typically be at building sites idle away the time drinking tea and playing board games while they wait for work.

"We used to hope for five minutes to take a seat. Now I'm sat here all day," said the owner of one hardware store still operating in the market. — **AFP**

How do you handle a wounded Putin?



David Brooks
The writer is a conservative political, cultural commentator for *NYT*

The world shifted last week. Vladimir Putin showed that he knows how deeply wounded he is. He knows that his rule is under existential threat if Russia is completely humiliated in Ukraine. He also showed the world that his strategy in this context is to escalate.

He is signalling that his best bet for survival is to cast the war against Ukraine as a struggle against the entire West.

He's like a wounded tiger, who in desperation, and knowing his strength is weakening, decides to go on the attack. This week, talking with a senior government official, I learned a bit about how US policymakers are thinking about this situation.

Putin's wounds are now pretty obvious.

US intelligence officials believe it is unlikely that the Russian army in Ukraine will simply collapse. But they do believe that Russian forces are running out of steam and being badly beaten.

I'm told that somewhere between 80,000 and 110,000 Russian troops have been killed or wounded in the past seven months.

Russia has lost 50 per cent of its prewar military tanks. It's lost 20 per cent to 30 per cent of its infantry fighting vehicles and a tenth of its advanced fighter planes.

The Russians have also burned through huge amounts of precision munitions. Morale is awful. Over the past weeks, most Russian forces have been on the defensive, or falling back.

This terrible situation has induced not humility in Putin but audacity.

In his speech to the Russian people last week, he portrayed the operation in Ukraine as a defensive measure against Western forces that want to divide and destroy Russia.

He signalled that he considers Crimea part of Russia and will regard eastern Ukraine as part of Russia too. He'll view attacks in those regions as attacks on Russia itself, especially if they are made by Ukrainian forces using American weapons.

The crucial passage in his speech was this: "In the event of a threat to the territorial integrity of our country and to defend Russia and our people, we will certainly make use of all weapon systems available to us. This is not a



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a Security Council meeting via a video link in Moscow. — **AFP**

THE FIRST AMERICAN HOPE IS THAT PUTIN WILL EVENTUALLY DO A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS AND CONCLUDE THAT HIS BEST OPTION IS TO NEGOTIATE. THE SECOND AMERICAN HOPE IS THAT THE UKRAINIANS WILL ALSO DO A COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

bluff?"

US policymakers are now preparing for all the ways Putin could escalate the war, if he pretends Russia itself is being invaded.

He could lob missiles onto American installations in Poland and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. He could escalate in space by destroying satellites. He could launch a missile strike against a Nato ally.

And of course he could use a tactical nuclear weapon — perhaps on a Ukrainian town, on a Ukrainian military unit or just in an open field to show he means business.

The intent would be to intimidate the West into ceasing all support for Ukraine.

US officials don't seem to know whether Putin will or won't use nukes,

but they are taking the possibility quite seriously. In their communications with the Russians, they are trying to convey that any use of nuclear weapons would put the world in a very different place.

They are not talking about what their contingency plans are in such a circumstance, but they imply they are grave.

Overall, American strategy is to help the Ukrainians defeat the Russian invasion, but slowly.

The idea is to hit a series of singles, not go for a crushing home run.

US officials don't want to self-deter — that is, be intimidated by Putin's threats. One the other hand, they don't want to trigger him into doing something rash.

They don't want Götterdämmerung, a situation in which a desperate Putin decides to pull the whole world down around him. They are trying to control the pace of the war so that Russia is pushed back from Ukraine gradually.

Controlling the pace of a war sounds really hard, but the weather will help.

By late October and November, Ukraine turns muddy and it is difficult to launch offensive operations.

Over time, and maybe next year, the Ukrainians can gradually take advantage of their advantages.

They are fighting to defend their homeland, they have a flexible, decentralised command structure, their air defenses have mostly prevented the Russians from doing combined air and land operations, and they have much better intelligence, thanks to Western assistance.

— **New York Times**

Italy election victors aim for rare political stability

KEITH WEIR AND ELISA ANZOLIN

The right-wing alliance that won Italy’s national election will usher in a rare era of political stability to tackle an array of problems besieging the euro zone’s third largest economy, one of its senior figures said on Monday.

Giorgia Meloni looks set to become Italy’s first woman prime minister at the head of its most right-wing government since World War Two after leading the conservative alliance to triumph at Sunday’s election.

“I expect that for at least five years we will press ahead without any changes, without any twists, prioritising the things we need to do,” said Matteo Salvini, leader of the League party that is one of the main allies of Meloni’s Brothers of Italy.

Near final results showed the rightist bloc, which also includes Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, should have a solid majority in both houses of parliament, potentially ending years of upheaval and fragile coalitions.

The result is the latest success for the right in Europe after a breakthrough for the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats in an election this month and advances made by the National Rally in France in June.

Meloni plays down her party’s post-fascist roots and portrays it as a mainstream group like Britain’s Conservatives. She has pledged to back Western policy on Ukraine and not take risks with Italy’s fragile finances.

GIORGIA MELONI AND HER ALLIES FACE A DAUNTING LIST OF CHALLENGES, INCLUDING SOARING ENERGY PRICES, WAR IN UKRAINE AND A RENEWED SLOWDOWN IN THE EURO ZONE’S THIRD-LARGEST ECONOMY

“If we are called on to govern this nation we will do it for all the Italians, with the aim of uniting the people and focusing on what unites us rather than what divides us,” she told cheering supporters. “This is a time for being responsible.”

Meloni and her allies face a daunting list of challenges, including soaring energy prices, war in Ukraine and a renewed slowdown in the euro zone’s third-largest economy. Her coalition government, Italy’s 68th since 1946, is unlikely to be installed before the end of October and Prime Minister Mario Draghi remains at the head of a caretaker administration for now.

Despite the talk of stability, Meloni’s alliance is split on some highly sensitive issues that might be difficult to reconcile once in government.

Draghi, the former head of the European Central Bank, pushed Rome to the centre of EU policy-making during his 18-month stint in office, forging close ties with Paris and Berlin.

In Europe, the first to hail Meloni’s victory were hard-right opposition parties in Spain and France, and Poland and Hungary’s national conservative governments which both have strained relations with Brussels.

Salvini questions the West’s sanctions against Russia and both he and Berlusconi have often expressed their admiration for its leader, Vladimir Putin.

The allies also have differing views on how to deal with surging energy bills and have laid out a raft of promises, including tax cuts and pension reform, that Italy will struggle to afford.

With results counted in more than 97 per cent of polling stations, the Brothers of Italy led with more than 26 per cent over the vote, up from just 4 per cent in the last national election in 2018, supplanting the League as the driving force on the right.

The League took only around 9 per cent, down from more than 17 per cent four years ago, but despite the relatively low score, Salvini said he would stay on as party leader. Berlusconi’s Forza Italia scored around 8 per cent.

Centre-left and centrist parties won more votes than the right but were penalised by an electoral law that rewards broad alliances. Enrico Letta, the head of the main opposition party, the Democratic Party, announced he would stand down as leader.

Despite its clear-cut result, the vote was not a ringing endorsement for the right bloc. Turnout was just 64 per cent against 73 per cent four years ago - a record low in a country that has historically had strong voter participation. — Reuters



UNDER WATER!

An aerial view shows flooding after Super Typhoon Noru, in San Miguel, Bulacan province, Philippines, on Monday. — Reuters

Preparing for the long war



Mark Leonard

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, is the author of The Age of Unpeace: How Connectivity Causes Conflict

A nuclear spectre is haunting Europe once again. Last week, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a mobilisation of some 300,000 reservists and announced that he will use “all available means” to defend Russia, adding, “This is not a bluff.”

As one senior European policymaker noted to me, such nuclear brinkmanship is an invitation to dust off old Cold War tomes such as Herman Kahn’s On Thermonuclear War.

To be sure, amid the euphoria following recent Ukrainian battlefield victories, some commentators are cautiously optimistic that Ukraine could win the war by the spring.

But Putin’s latest moves suggest that Russia is settling in for a long war of attrition. In addition to issuing more strident threats, he has also reduced two significant asymmetries that have characterised the conflict so far.

The first is the gap between Russia’s “special operation” and Ukraine’s whole-of-society response to it. Deploying 300,000 more soldiers may not be enough to overwhelm Kyiv or occupy Ukraine, but it will keep Russia in the game.

The other asymmetry is at the level of international support. Ukraine would have disappeared from the map many months ago had it not received billions of dollars of military supplies, intelligence support, and economic aid from Europe and the United States.

By contrast, Russia has been at pains to attract any meaningful external support.

But at the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit in Samarkand, Putin got to catch up with fellow travellers like Chinese President Xi Jinping, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, and Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

Putin’s most important supporter is Xi, who has continued to stand by him. As I learned from speaking with Chinese academics this summer, China seems to view the situation in Ukraine as a “proxy war” in its own looming cold war with the US.

A pertinent lesson from the original Cold War is that when both sides in a proxy war are receiving enough support to keep them afloat, neither side will ever prevail.

While the Ukrainians have used this fact to argue for continuous Western arms shipments, it also could motivate China to scale up its practical support (namely, trucks and semiconductors) to Russia.

If the conflict does move in this direction, we know what the result will be. The people of Korea, Vietnam, Guatemala, Afghanistan, Angola, and many other places can all attest to the horrors of proxy wars that drag on for years or even decades, soaking their countries in blood,

AMID THE EUPHORIA FOLLOWING RECENT UKRAINIAN BATTLEFIELD VICTORIES, SOME COMMENTATORS ARE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT UKRAINE COULD WIN THE WAR BY THE SPRING. BUT VLADIMIR PUTIN’S LATEST MOVES SUGGEST THAT RUSSIA IS SETTLING IN FOR A LONG WAR OF ATTRITION THAT WILL TEST EUROPEAN RESOLVE

crippling their economies, and depriving younger generations of a future.

Still, in the short-term, the West must show that it is not cowed by Putin’s threats of escalation. As my colleagues at the European Council on Foreign Relations have shown, Europe can weather a long war if it adopts a comprehensive plan to provide Ukraine with the three key elements of military supplies, security assurances, and economic support.

For the first pillar, the ECFR has devised a “leopard plan” to furnish Ukraine with desperately needed armoured vehicles, and has outlined concrete ideas for gradually supplying Ukraine with more Western technologies as its old Soviet kit runs out.

But, in addition to careful planning and execution, this will require money. Given that Ukraine’s army is larger than the Bundeswehr (the EU’s largest land force), and that its armoured brigades outnumber those of Britain, France, and Germany combined, we estimate that its military supply needs will cost €100 billion (\$97 billion).

Second, to agree to a settlement to end the war, Ukraine will need credible long-

term security guarantees. To that end, my colleagues have developed a framework comprising formal assurances of support, consultation mechanisms, promises of supplies, and threats of sanctions.

These should apply only to territories that are fully controlled by Ukraine, so that Ukrainian leaders will not have to concede any occupied territories in order to agree to a settlement.

Finally, economic support must cover not just the costs of rebuilding the country and preparing it for integration into the European Union but also the Ukrainian state’s ongoing day-to-day needs.

Right now, tax revenues are covering only 40 per cent of public spending, leaving a \$5 billion monthly funding gap.

Maintaining European political support and solidarity will be the biggest challenge, especially as the costs of the long war continue to rise.

According to some of our estimates, supporting Ukraine in the ways described above could cost more than €700 billion.

That is larger than the EU’s pandemic recovery plan, which was already seen as a revolutionary step even though it applied to all member states.

Mustering the same level of support for a single non-member state will require a heroic feat of political leadership.

Moreover, the winter will bring mounting energy bills and higher costs for housing-desperate Ukrainian refugees. Governments have already been toppled in Italy and Bulgaria, and the far right seems to be making gains on a new populist wave.

European leaders will need to prepare their populations for a long war while also continuing to search for solutions. Even as they demonstrate their long-term commitment to the Ukrainian struggle, they must structure their support in ways that will keep the door open for an eventual settlement. An endless proxy war is one of the last scenarios that anyone should want.

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Putin’s latest moves suggest that Russia is settling in for a long war of attrition.

sport

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TIAFOE STARS AS TEAM WORLD WIN



Frances Tiafoe led Team World to their first Laver Cup title as the American saved four match points in a dramatic victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas that denied Roger Federer a farewell trophy on Sunday.

Tiafoe staged a superb fightback to win 1-6,7-6 (13/11), 10/8 in the penultimate match of the tournament at London's O2 Arena.

That was enough to give John McEnroe's Team World a 13-8 overall margin of victory with a match to spare, sealing their maiden triumph in the competition after Team Europe won the first four editions.

While Federer had hoped to mark the end of his career by lifting the trophy in a tournament he helped create, the Swiss legend was left to salute Tiafoe and the rest of the Team World squad.

"Congratulations to Team World, amazing comeback," Federer said.

"It's been emotional at times but I had a great time. I can't thank you enough for that. I enjoyed every minute."

Promising to attend next year's Laver Cup in Canada, Federer said: "I'm looking forward to next year. I'll be there too, supporting both teams from a different position."

LAVER CUP RESULTS

DOUBLES

Felix Auger-Aliassime/Jack Sock (World) bt Andy Murray/Matteo Berrettini (Europe) 2-6, 6-3, 10/8

SINGLES

Felix Auger-Aliassime (World) bt Novak Djokovic (Europe) 6-3, 7-6 (7/3)

Frances Tiafoe (World) bt Stefanos Tsitsipas (Europe) 1-6, 7-6 (13/11), 10/8

Team World win the tournament, beating Team Europe 13-8

Note: On opening day, each win secures one point, on second day, two points, on third and final day, three points.

Federer had played the last match of his glittering career on Friday when he and Rafael Nadal were beaten by Tiafoe and Jack Sock in the doubles.

The 20-time Grand Slam champion's tearful farewell was the tournament's headline moment, but Federer — unable to play further matches due to the knee problems that forced his retirement — stayed around to cheer on his Team Europe colleagues.

Despite the presence of Wimbledon champion Novak Djokovic and former world number one Andy Murray on the Team Europe roster, it was fitting that Tiafoe and Canadian rising star Felix Auger-Aliassime powered Team World's comeback from a 8-4 overnight deficit.

Tiafoe, 24, and Auger-Aliassime, 22, are part of a generation expected to stage centre-stage now Federer has retired, with Nadal and Murray also in the twilight of their careers.

"It's an unbelievable feeling. Our captain Jonny Mac was tired of losing, he was dropping F-bombs all week. I kept saying that this is our year. It wasn't

just me, we all showed up," Tiafoe said.

"It looks like I have that clutch game right now. I'm happy I get to hold the Laver Cup trophy, that's all that mattered."

Needing to win three of Sunday's four matches, Team World were dragged back into contention by Auger-Aliassime.

FEDERER FAREWELL

Auger-Aliassime handed Djokovic his first defeat since May as the Canadian powered to a 6-3, 7-6 (7/3) victory.

Djokovic, who missed the recent US Open due to his unvaccinated status, had won his first match for two months on Saturday when the 21-time Grand Slam champion defeated Tiafoe in straight sets.

"It's one of the best performances of my career. I've been close a few times against these great champions, so it feels to great to get a win like this," Auger-Aliassime said.

Auger-Aliassime's first ever win over Djokovic was especially impressive as he had already partnered Sock to a 2-6, 6-3, 10/8 doubles victory over Matteo Berrettini and Murray earlier on Sunday. Auger-Aliassime's heroics set the stage for Tiafoe who didn't disappoint.

Tsitsipas blazed through the first set in just 21 minutes, but the Greek's fast start was halted by the defiant Tiafoe.

Tsitsipas squandered four match points in the second set tie-break as Tiafoe showed why he reached this year's US Open semifinals, staving off defeat in nerveless fashion.

On his third set point, Tiafoe delivered a perfectly placed volley to trigger a first to 10 points 'Laver Breaker'.

Tiafoe tipped the match in his favour with an astonishing cross-court winner after sprinting to the net to reach the disbelieving Tsitsipas's drop-shot. It was a moment of magic that recalled Federer at his finest and the Swiss great couldn't resist a wry grin as he soaked up his last taste of big-time tennis before riding into the sunset. — AFP

Team Europe's Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer applaud after the match.



Team World's Frances Tiafoe celebrates after winning his match and the Laver Cup against Team Europe's Stefanos Tsitsipas. PICS BY REUTERS





Kohli, Yadav propel India to series win over Australia

HYDERABAD, India: India won the third and deciding Twenty20 against Australia in the last over after punchy fifties by Virat Kohli and Suryakumar Yadav in Hyderabad on Sunday.

The hosts won by six wickets with one ball remaining after Hardik Pandya, unbeaten on 25, hit the winning boundary.

Kohli and Yadav stabilised the innings after India lost both openers — Rohit Sharma (17) and KL Rahul (1) — early in their chase after Australia scored 186-7.

Kohli fell in the last over after a 48-ball 63 with India still five short

of victory.

Earlier, Yadav blasted 50 in 29 balls before he fell to Josh Hazlewood for a 36-ball 69.

Yadav hit five sixes and five fours in his player-of-the-match winning innings.

“I have always wanted to express myself. That’s how I practice in the nets. Just loving (batting) at number four,” Yadav said after the match. India’s Rohit Sharma won the toss and asked the visitors to bat first. Impressive fifties by Tim David and Cameron Green took Australia to a formidable score.

Rookie opener Green hit a

21-ball 52, with seven fours and three sixes, to put the hosts on the defensive.

But Green received little support from other top-order batters as left-arm spinner Axar Patel, who has been India’s best bowler in the three-match series, chipped away at the other end.

Patel finished with 3-33 and took the key wickets of skipper Aaron Finch (7), Josh Inglis (24) and in-form Matthew Wade (1).

The left-armer, India’s most impressive bowler in all three matches, was also the player-of-the-series

‘SUPER YOUNG PLAYER’

The hosts looked set to restrict Australia to a below-par score before the newest T20 sensation Tim David dismantled the Indian pacers in an impressive display of power hitting.

David hit a 27-ball 54 with four sixes and two boundaries before he was dismissed by Harshal Patel, who finished with 1-18 after two overs. Green was also Australia’s most impressive bowler with three wicketless overs for only 14 runs.

Leg-spinner Adam Zampa, who impressed with his leg-spin in the last match, leaked 44 runs in his

four wicketless overs.

Daniel Sams took two wickets for 33 runs while seniors Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood took one wicket each and gave away 80 runs in their eight overs.

Finch praised Green after the match and said he “is a super young player and has shown his class.”

“It was a really good series. To be able to play three games against a world-class side has been great for this side,” Australia captain Finch added. The series comes ahead of the T20 World Cup in Australia next month.

Indian skipper said the “biggest positive was different individuals stepping up with the ball and the bat” throughout the series.

“When you are sitting back and watching all of that happening, you feel nice as a management,” Sharma said. — **AFP**

Brief scores
Australia 186-7, 20 overs (Cameron Green 52, Daniel Sams 28 not out, Tim David 54; Axar Patel 3-33, Yuvendra Chahal 1-22, Harshal Patel 1-18)
India 187-4, 19.5 overs (Virat Kohli 63, Suryakumar Yadav 69, Hardik Pandya 25 not out; Daniel Sams 2-33, Pat Cummins 1-40, Josh Hazlewood 1-40)

Rizwan, Rauf help Pakistan edge out England to level series

KARACHI: Pakistan halted England with three wickets in six balls to take a sensational three-run win in the last over of the fourth Twenty20 international in Karachi on Sunday.

Haris Rauf grabbed three wickets as the hosts tied the seven-match series.

Earlier in-form opener Mohammad Rizwan struck a brilliant 88 as Pakistan made 166-4.

With England needing five for victory from 10 balls, Rauf dismissed Liam Dawson (34) and Olly Stone off successive deliveries in the 19th over.

Last man Reece Topley was then run out as Pakistan rescued victory from almost certain defeat at a packed National stadium in Karachi. Dawson had silenced a 32,000 holiday crowd by cracking four fours and a six off pacer Mohammad Hasnain’s 18th over.

When Topley was run out off the second ball of the last over it sent Pakistan players and home fans into raptures.

The win made the occasion of Pakistan’s 200th T20I more memorable. They are the first team to reach the milestone.

England were rocked by Hasnain (2-40) and Nawaz (3-35) and were staring at defeat at 130-7 before Dawson added 32 with Adil Rashid (three not out) to bring England back in the game.

But Rauf’s two wickets, he finished 3-32, sealed the match for Pakistan.

The remaining matches are in Lahore (September 28, 30 and



Pakistan’s Mohammad Rizwan celebrates after scoring a half-century in the fourth Twenty20I against England at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi. — **AFP**

October 2). England, who are on their first tour of Pakistan for 17 years, won the first and third games while the home team won the second and fourth — all in Karachi.

Rauf said he was happy to turn the tables on England. “I had the plan to bowl to Dawson because he was the key wicket for us,” said Rauf.

“The crowd was backing me and that pumped me up, it’s a great win.”

England skipper Moeen Ali showed disappointment. “It was an amazing game of cricket. We felt like we should have chased that down, disappointed that we didn’t. Pressure happens, and they bowled really well.” — **AFP**

BRIEF SCORES
Pakistan 166-4 in 20 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 88, Babar Azam 36; R Topley 2-37)
England 163 all out in 19.2 overs (H Brook 34, L Dawson 34, B Duckett 33; Haris Rauf 3-32, Mohammad Nawaz 3-35)

MCC puts onus on batter over Dean ‘Mankad’ dismissal

NEW DELHI: Charlie Dean’s controversial run-out on Saturday prompted heated debate about whether the dismissal was in the spirit of the game but the Marylebone Cricket Club has said the onus is on batters not to leave the crease at the non-striker’s end too soon.

India bowler Deepti Sharma ran out England’s Dean for the final wicket in a one-dayer at Lord’s after the non-facing batter had stepped out of her crease, prompting jeers from the crowd.

The dismissal is legal but classed as ‘Unfair Play’ in the rule book, though that is to change from October 1 when it is categorised simply as a run out.

“This was done to clarify this matter and to place an onus on batters to ensure that they do not leave the crease at the non-striker’s end, prior to a bowler releasing the ball,” MCC, the custodians of the game’s laws, said in a statement on Sunday.

“Whilst yesterday was indeed an unusual end to an exciting match, it was properly officiated and should not be considered as anything more.”

Several English players have criticised the dismissal but Sharma said they had warned Dean before effecting the dismissal named after India’s Vinoo Mankad who did it in a 1947 test match in Australia.

“We had warned her, she left the crease early on several occasions,” the spinner told reporters on her return from England where India



India’s Jhulan Goswami celebrates with team-mates after taking the wicket of England’s Kate Cross. — **Reuters**

swept the series 3-0.

“We even told the umpire. We were well within the rules.”

England regular captain Heather Knight, who continues to recover from a hip surgery, contradicted Sharma’s claims though.

“The game is over, Charlie was dismissed legitimately. India were deserved winners of the match and the series. But no warnings were given...” she tweeted on Monday.

“But if they’re comfortable with the decision... India shouldn’t feel the need to justify it by lying about warnings.”

India captain Harmanpreet Singh has praised Sharma for showing match “awareness.”

“I don’t think we have done anything new. It is an ICC rule and you always take those chances,” Kaur said after winning the series.

“I will back my player because she has not done anything that is not part of the rule.” — **Reuters**



OMAN RACING JUST MISSES PODIUM AT SPA

SPA - FRANCORCHAMPS: Omani racing driver Ahmad al Harthy produced an excellent double stint during the penultimate race of the 2022 European Le Mans Series at Spa-Francorchamps on Sunday to make a podium challenge a reality – before the team had to settle for fourth place in LMGTE.

Qualifying the No 69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE second on the class grid for the big four-hour race at the famous Ardennes track, Al Harthy took the start and worked his way into the lead just after the half-hour mark following some dramatic action on a wet-but-drying track.

Remaining in contention after the first pit-stops, the Omani ran a very strong second and was right behind the class leading Ferrari when he handed over to the Aston Martin to Sam De Haan who slipped to fourth in his stint. Marco Sorensen completed the race, closing to within five seconds of the podium, and the trio have, as a result, climbed to sixth in the LMGTE championship.

“I was very happy with my stint, it was a great stint and the first few

laps were good”, reflected Al Harthy, “The conditions were very tricky, a wet track that was drying, with slicks on the car, but we managed to navigate through traffic. We had good chances, and we took those chances, and then got into the lead.

“Obviously all of the strategies were different, we took tyres and they didn’t, and then there were a lot of blue flags for cars in front which slowed our pace. I’m absolutely delighted with how I drove and P4, so close to the podium. This will make us more motivated for the final round in Portimao and, as always, a huge thank you to the team as they did a great job and we had a good car.”

Al Harthy began the race from the front row in LMGTE and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS supported driver held position well at the beginning, the track very wet offline from earlier rain but with a dry line appearing.

Running within a second of pole-starting Conrad Grunewald’s Ferrari 488, on lap two the Safety Car was deployed due to an LMP2

Ahmad al Harthy, Sam De Haan, Marco Sorensen P4 in ELMS Rd5

Team-mates climb into sixth position in LMGTE Championship



class car becoming stranded in the gravel. Racing resumed with 18 minutes elapsed and Al Harthy continued to run closely behind the bright yellow Ferrari.

With an LMP3 car between Grunewald and Al Harthy, on lap eight the No 83 Ferrari of Sarah Bovy managed to get past the Aston Martin but very soon everything changed again. Just over 30 minutes

Emerging in second place, when racing resumed he was almost nine seconds behind Bovy but instantly started to reduce the gap and as the end of hour one neared the Omani was just 4.5 seconds adrift.

Moving to within less than two seconds of the Iron Lynx Ferrari 65 minutes into the race, Al Harthy continued his march back towards the front of LMGTE and 10 minutes later he was right on Bovy’s tail. The gap fluctuated, due to traffic, but Al Harthy again reduced the gap to almost nothing before another Full Course Yellow period with one hour and 40 minutes of racing complete.

Pitting for his second stop soon after, Al Harthy vacated the Aston Martin to hand over to De Haan and when the order settled after all of the stops had been served the Omani Racing car was third in LMGTE and around 15 seconds shy of the two rival Ferraris.

Holding third at the mid-point of the race, De Haan slipped to fourth behind the No 18 Porsche 911 in the second half of his stint but returned to third when the Porsche pitted soon after. With around 70 minutes

to go, De Haan pitted to hand over the Aston Martin to Sorensen for the run to the finish.

Holding fourth, around 16 seconds shy of the podium, the Dane did chip away at the gap. Following the fourth and final pit stop, with around 40 minutes to go and under a Full Course Yellow period, Sorensen emerged around 13 seconds shy of the podium battle. Having halved the gap with just under half an hour to go, Sorensen eventually took the flag just 4.9 seconds away from third place.

Portugal will be the destination for the sixth and final round of the European Le Mans Series over the weekend October 15/16, with a visit to the Autodromo Internacional do Algarve in Portimao.

2022 European Le Mans Series – LMGTE Driver Standings (after Rd5)

6. Ahmad Al Harthy/Marco Sorensen/Sam De Haan, 41pts

2022 European Le Mans Series – LMGTE Team Standings (after Rd5)

6. Oman Racing with TF Sport, 41pts

Oman U19 team confident of good show at home

MUSCAT: Over the past few months, the Oman Cricket Academy Ground has been a witness to hours and hours of training session by a bunch of talented youngsters. The national U19 boys, under the guidance of their coach Adeel Shafique and Oman’s Cricket’s chief development officer Duleep Mendis, have set their sights on securing a berth in the final round of the 2023 Asia Qualifier of the ICC U19 Men’s Cricket World Cup 2024.

To advance to the final round, hosts Oman and seven other nations will vie for the two spots available at the forthcoming ICC U19 Asia Division 2 Qualifiers, beginning at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds in Al Amerat from September 29-October 7.

Besides Oman, the other nations in fray are Bahrain, Bhutan, Hong Kong, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and Thailand.

Having kept a close eye of the boys training and progress, Mendis,



who is also the national men’s team chief coach, said: “It is a very crucial tournament for the youngsters. We are fortunate to host the eight-nation qualifier on our home grounds.

“Over the past few months, I have been keeping a close eye on the progress of the boys. Coach Adeel has been working hard with them

and the boys are shaping well.”

Mendis said that he is “confident of his boys performing well on their home ground.”

“It is a big opportunity for the boys to qualify for next year’s Asia Qualifier. The boys are aware that a solid show at home will give them a big boost and bring joy to their families and the nation. A seat in

the final round will be a big bonus for them,” he added.

Mendis said, “This age-group is a crucial time in a cricketer’s career. We know few of the boys will opt out for their higher studies and will not be available for the national team selection. But we are hopeful few will stay back and they will constitute the back-up for our

senior team. U19 is a feeder system for the national team. Our emphasis has been to promote and groom young talent. If they perform then they have a good chance to be drafted into the national side. We already have few youngsters on our radar.”

Coach Adeel Shafique is hopeful that his boys will exhibit entertaining brand of cricket and have the ability to make it to the next round.

“We had good preparations for this tournament with focus on playing many practice games. The boys have worked tirelessly and their efforts have been amazing. The practice matches have done a world of good. Simulating match-like situations is key for the youngsters. They have put the hard yards and it is now time for them to perform. It is a great opportunity for the boys to showcase their talent. Quite a few of the youngsters have aspirations to play for men’s team and this is a nice platform for them to prove.”

Ahead of the tournament, Oman

DIVISION 2 QUALIFIER IN MUSCAT	
Group A: Oman, Bhutan, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia	
Group B: Hong Kong, Thailand, Qatar, Singapore	
FIXTURES: September 29: Oman vs Bhutan; Bahrain vs Saudi Arabia	
September 30: Qatar vs Singapore; Hong Kong vs Thailand	
October 1: Bhutan vs Bahrain; Saudi Arabia vs Oman	
October 2: Thailand vs Singapore; Hong Kong vs Qatar	
October 3: Bhutan vs Saudi Arabia; Oman vs Bahrain	
October 4: Thailand vs Qatar; Singapore vs Hong Kong	
October 6: Semifinal 1 (A1 vs B2); Semifinal 2: (B1 vs A2)	
October 7: Third place play-off, Final.	

defeated Singapore in a warm-up match on Saturday.

Oman meet Bhutan in the opening clash of the Division 2 Qualifier on September 29. Matches will be played at both the Oman Cricket Academy grounds.

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Oman–UAE economic ties set for major leap

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 26

Oman’s private sector is upbeat about the positive impact that the visit of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, will have on Omani-UAE business and economic relations.

In remarks to Oman News Agency (ONA), a number of Omani businesspersons expressed their aspirations that this visit will contribute to opening new horizons of economic cooperation and trade partnership and provide more facilities and incentives that lead to increased trade exchange and joint investment partnerships between the two sides.

Eng Redha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), explained that the Sultanate of Oman and UAE are proceeding with visions and steady steps towards achieving success to increase investment opportunities and trade exchange, and provide facilities and incentives encouraging investment, in addition to working to achieve trade partnerships in various economic sectors that serve the economies of the two brotherly countries.

THE VALUE OF OMANI EXPORTS TO THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES HAS REACHED MORE THAN RO 1.3 BILLION IN 2021, WHILE THE VALUE OF IMPORTS FROM THE UAE AMOUNTED TO MORE THAN RO 4.2 BILLION

He added that the relations between two countries are an extension of the bonds of neighbourhood and kinship that unite the peoples of the two countries, which are constantly developing relations in various fields, as the two sides seek to discover and promote investment opportunities, and overcome difficulties in commercial partnerships between business owners.

He pointed out that there are investment opportunities and incentives that contribute to the development of trade and investment relations, as there are many trade partnerships between the two brotherly countries, pointing out that the value of Omani exports to the UAE has reached more than RO 1.3 billion in 2021, while the value of imports from the UAE amounted to more than RO 4.2 billion.

In terms of the volume of



UAE investments recorded in the Sultanate of Oman in 2021, Al Saleh said that the total contribution of the UAE is about RO 1.207 billion (42 per cent of the total), and these investments are distributed among about 3,071 companies, most of which are concentrated in the commercial, construction, industry, real estate, services and transport sectors.

For her part, Lujaina bint Mohsin bin Haider Darwish,

Member of the State Council and CEO of Mohsin Haider Darwish Group, said that there are social, cultural, political and economic relations linking Oman with the UAE, the most important characteristic of which is the convergence and geographical overlap based on ties of origin, blood, descent, language, religion, good neighbourliness and social ties, so commercial and economic relations with the Emirati brothers

are growing increasingly thanks to the guidance of the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

She explained that as businesspersons in the Sultanate of Oman, they feel more facilities are anticipated during the coming period as trade exchange between the two countries has witnessed

an upsurge. Shaikh Ghanim bin Taher al Bathari, Chairman of Al Baraka Petroleum Services Company and Sakan Facilities Management Company, said that the visit of HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, carries great indications of the depth of brotherly relations between the two countries at the official and popular levels.

The two brotherly countries enjoy exceptional relations built by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan based on a historical and cultural heritage that binds the two brotherly countries, not to mention the factors of geography, blood and descent that are almost not devoid of any home in the Sultanate of Oman and the UAE.

He added: “The efforts of the two brotherly countries in developing these relations at various levels have had a clear impact in strengthening, benefiting from them and harnessing them for the prosperity of the two peoples, as many statistics indicate. Today UAE’s investments in Oman top the list among Arab countries, while highest number of Omanis visited the UAE according to last year’s statistics.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Public issue of Oman’s Pearl REIF slated during Q4

DELEVERAGING OF ASSETS: Nation’s third Real Estate Investment Fund is the product of a collaborative arrangement between Omantel and Oman Investment Authority

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 26

A new Real Estate Investment Fund (REIF) set up by majority government-owned Omantel in collaboration with Oman Investment Authority (OIA) will be floated on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) before the end of this year, according to a top official of the Omani telecom company.

Talal al Maamari, CEO — Omantel, said the Pearl REIF Fund will be listed on the Omani bourse via an Initial Public Offering (IPO) in the fourth quarter of this year. He made the announcement during an investment forum hosted recently by the MSX.

Earlier this year, Omantel announced the establishment of Pearl REIF with a share capital of RO 42.477 million. As its contribution to the Fund, Omantel said it had entered into an agreement with Pearl REIF for the sale and leaseback of its headquarters building in Madinat Al Irfan in Muscat Governorate.

In consideration of this in-kind contribution, Omantel would receive 279.086 million units of RO 0.100 each in the REIF along with a cash amount of RO 27.091 million. As part of the public offering by Pearl REIF, Omantel



Omantel’s headquarters in Madinat Al Irfan

intends to dispose of units amounting to RO 13.8 million, representing an ownership interest of 32.2 per cent, before the end of the year.

The transaction, centring on the sale and leaseback of its administrative landmark, is part of Omantel’s ‘asset lite’ strategy aimed at the deleveraging of its existing assets, the telecom firm said at the time.

When eventually listed on the Omani bourse, Pearl REIF will be the third such Real Estate Investment Fund to be launched in the Sultanate of Oman in line with government efforts to enhance investment inflows into the real estate and property sector, as well as boost liquidity on the MSX.

Aman REIT — the country’s maiden Real Estate Investment Trust — was launched in Oman in Q1 2020. A second fund, known as Oman REIT, was rolled out a year later, covering a portfolio of residential, commercial, retail and warehousing properties distributed all over the country.

Real estate funds provide options for investors to invest in real estate and own investment units in addition to allowing foreign investor to own investment units in the fund to attract foreign capital.

Curebridge: Connecting patients to world-class healthcare in India

Marking its debut in Oman, one of India’s fastest growing medical value travel start-ups is making its presence felt in the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference, which is taking place in Muscat from 26 – 28 September 2022.

Mumbai-headquartered Curebridge is a one-stop platform that provides unmatched end-to-end services to patients and their families seeking to benefit from India’s world-class multi-speciality healthcare infrastructure. In addition to connecting patients to the most appropriate healthcare institution in India, Curebridge also provides aftercare and logistic support that includes travel, accommodation, consultation as well as treatments across varied budgets. The goal is to provide patients with a successful, cost-competitive and stress-free healthcare experience, that too in a digital way.

Although just over a year ago, Curebridge has begun to establish its presence across India, Bangladesh, UAE and Africa. To strengthen its reach in Oman, it has tied up with Smart Vision Business Pioneering in Oman (https://smartbehan.com/) led by Dr. Zakieh Meshksar, a prominent medical expert having interests in Oman and Iran.

“Medical Value Travel (MVT) has been revolutionising the healthcare sector for a while. While India has been taking multiple steps in promoting MVT, we at Curebridge are digitising the entire effort. We are immensely positive about our association with Smart Vision and Dr. Zakieh. Bearing in mind the history and strong relations with Oman, we are confident of making inroads



into the Sultanate through collaborations with an overview of improving patients’ health across the globe,” stated Shweta Kumari - Business Head, Curebridge.

Dr. Zakieh added, “We are delighted to get into a partnership with Curebridge to extend MVT services to a wider audience. We are sure this partnership will yield fruitful results for both parties by attaining the final goal of assisting patients and their families to ease the process of medical treatments.”

For more details, check the website: www.curebridge.in, chat with us on +91-9152065206 or email query@curebridge.in

NLGIC Group announces C-suite leadership team

MUSCAT: A team of C-suite leaders has been appointed to lead NLGIC and RSA Middle East businesses (NLGIC Group) following the recent purchase of RSA Middle East BSC (c) by National Life & General Insurance Company SAOG (NLGIC), a flagship insurance subsidiary of Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (Ominvest).

The new leadership team, which oversees the NLGIC Group companies — National Life & General Insurance Company SAOG (NLGIC), RSA Middle East BSC (c) (RSA Middle East), Al Ahlia Insurance Co. SAOG (Al Ahlia), Al Alamiya for Cooperative Insurance Co. (Al Alamiya), NLGIC Support



Martin Rueegg

Services Private Limited (NSSPL), and Inayah TPA LLC, – comprises seasoned industry professionals with extensive local and global knowledge.

The central focus for the leadership team is to drive the shared vision of two dynamic and award-winning companies as they come together to build the region's leading multi-line insurer.



S Venkatachalam

Martin Rueegg, Regional CEO of RSA Middle East, has been appointed Group CEO of NLGIC Group. As NLGIC and RSA Middle East's operations are brought under one umbrella, Martin will direct and lead the business' operations across key GCC markets, including Sultanate of Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates,



Dr Dhafir bin Awadh al Shanfari

State of Kuwait and Kingdom of Bahrain. S Venkatachalam, CEO of NLGIC, has been named Regional CEO of Health, Life and Supply Chain for the NLGIC Group. In this newly created role, he will help expand the product line across the region and drive long-term business strategies and initiatives to maximise the growth and profitability of the insurance



Hanaa bint Fahad al Hinaiyah

business in the Middle East.

Dr Dhafir bin Awadh al Shanfari has been appointed Group Chief Operating Officer for the NLGIC Group, leading the functional governance and operational practices and working closely with the group CEO and regional leadership team to drive the strategic and operational plan that supports the company's

vision and goals. Dr Dhafir held various leadership positions in the public sector, including CEO of Omani Authority of Partnership for Development and CEO of the Public Authority for Privatisation and Partnership, as well as being a key member of several reputable councils and committees in the Sultanate of Oman.

Furthermore, the board of Al Ahlia Insurance — RSA Middle East's subsidiary in Oman — has announced that Hanaa bint Fahad al Hinaiyah, currently Deputy CEO for UAE and Bahrain at RSA Middle East, has been appointed CEO of Al Ahlia Insurance, with a particular focus on growing the business in line with the company's purpose, values and strategic priorities.

Sohar International opens branch in Bausher

MUSCAT: In line with the bank's ongoing expansion strategy aimed at increasing channels to serve and communicate with customers making banking as convenient as possible for all across the nation, Sohar International has announced the official launch of its premium, fully-equipped branch in Bausher.



The facility was formally inaugurated in the presence of Yahya bin Nasser al Harrasi, Wali of Bausher, recently with the presence of bank's executive management.

Located in at the Taminaat Complex in Bausher's vibrant commercial area, the new branch is set to amplify the Bank's established presence in the wilayat. In harmony with the banking operations at all its branches, the branch will assure fast and convenient banking services through a team of responsive and qualified professionals, who are equipped to meet the varying needs of all customer segments. Besides having a dedicated Wealth Management servicing area, the branch also provides a 24-hour digital lobby with a fully functional ATM/CDM. The branch is open to welcome customers and potential customers from 8:00 am - 2:00 pm from Sunday till Thursday.

The opening ceremony began with Yahya bin Nasser al Harrasi cutting the ribbon, accompanied by the Bank's senior officials and a number of the Bank's VIP customers. The guests were then taken on a short tour of the Branch and briefed on the various products and services offered by branch.

Oman's leading food and hospitality event begins

MUSCAT: The much-anticipated Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO) event began yesterday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hall Number 4. The three-day event, which will run until September 28, 2022, is one of the largest international trade exhibitions in the Sultanate of Oman and is running from 10 am to 7 pm everyday. In addition, an exclusive workshop is also being held from 10:30 am to 6:00 pm on the same dates.

The exhibition was inaugurated by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, amidst several distinguished delegates from different ministries, industry experts, and senior executives from leading corporate companies.

The event, which has registered the participation of more than 150 local and international companies from over 10 countries, has also garnered the attention of industry enthusiasts, professionals in different hospitality sectors, and food aficionados, and is expecting a footfall of over 5000 visitors over



the course of three days.

Organised by CONNECT, FHO is held under the patronage of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and is hosted by the Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj). The main sponsors of the event include Nakheel Oman Development Company, Oman Flour Mills Co. SAOG, and Mazoon Dairy along with keen support from the Muscat Municipality and the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn). Acting as the Food and Technology Sponsor is Foodics, while the National Hospitality

Institute is participating as the Hospitality Partner and the Oman Tourism College is on board as the Registration Sponsor.

Co-located at the exhibition is the FHO Workshop, which is accredited by CPD certification. With Oman Vision 2040 exerting emphasis on boosting the food and hospitality segment, FHO was instituted with the purpose of creating an ecosystem for visitors, SME owners, and business professionals to network, engage and interact with each other, create lucrative linkages, and explore new inventions and innovations.

Commenting on the exhibition, Dr Hussain bin Al Samh al Masrouri, Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Center, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources said, "The food and hospitality industry is rapidly evolving, and it is quintessential for stakeholders to embrace this transformation. Building the capacity of the sector's human resources, keeping pace with the latest technological and logistical developments, and being vigilant of emerging disruptive innovators are critical factors to achieving success in this journey.

We appreciate the support of the private sector companies who have shown heightened enthusiasm in aligning with our vision to enhance food security, safety, and quality in the nation. While this is fundamental for human existence and goes a long way in promoting a healthy society, achieving food security also contributes to economic growth, acceleration in trade opportunities, and generation of job prospects locally."

Oman's largest healthcare, medical event attracts global participation

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, yesterday, commenced the much-awaited Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre in Hall Number 5. Scheduled to run for three days, until September 28, 2022, the timings for the exhibition are from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm with the conference following a predefined agenda from 9:00 am to 4:15 pm on all three days.

The event was inaugurated by HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik bin Fahr al Said and witnessed the presence of distinguished officials from different ministries, top-level delegates, and industry leaders. A national-level event, OHEC has registered the participation of over 150 local companies and international exhibitors from more than 16 countries including the Czech Republic, Iran, India, Oman, Poland, Thailand, Turkey, and UAE.

During the three days of knowledge exchange, the exhibition expects a total



footfall of over 5,000 visitors. Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organising Company LLC) and conducted in partnership with Oman's Ministry of Health (MoH), OHEC is supported by the Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control (PADC), the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Centre (DGQAC) and Directorate General of Private Health Establishments.

Co-located at the event is the Oman Health Conference organised by the Conference

Partner, Oman Medical Association, which is accredited by the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) and CPD certification. Cigna, the renowned healthcare, and insurance company, is the Silver Sponsor for the event.

OHEC is in close alignment with Oman Vision 2040 which focuses on ensuring the health and productivity of Omani people through the establishment of a well-organised, equitable, efficient, and responsive health system that is grounded by societal values of equity and social justice.

Commenting on the same, Dr Walid bin Khalid al Zadjali, Chairman of the OMA's Board of Directors, said, "This health conference and exhibition is a good step forward in translating Oman Vision 2040. At the Oman Medical Association (OMA), we firmly believe that such medical meetings have the most significant and sustained impact on reinforcing and consolidating the professional relationship among the participants, enhancing the scientific research process as well as sharing experiences in various scientific and health arenas.

The conference itself is of paramount importance, as of its significant role in enriching the participant's medical knowledge and introducing the scientific and technological developments in this field. We hope everyone finds this conference useful to achieve their objectives, and actively participates in the various activities held on the sidelines of the Oman Health Exhibition & conference."

NBO launches new children's account

MUSCAT: Continuing to bring new opportunities and create value, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched its new Children's Account.

Designed to help parents to save and plan for their children's future and securing their higher education needs, increase their financial security, and achieve their goals, account-holders can enjoy a host of unique benefits like attractive returns on recurring deposits, free life insurance for parents or guardians, and saving in multiple currencies, with hands-on support at every step.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said, "We aim to empower our customers throughout their financial journey, starting from the early years.

Children under 18 make up approximately 43 per cent of the total Omani population and by encouraging them to be financially independent and save, we are ensuring that they are set up for success in the future, and in turn, are empowered to contribute to Oman's socio-economic development. In addition, the children's account offers discounts and exclusive offers at various outlets. All the while we are fulfilling our promise to help turn our customers' ambitions to reality while building genuine partnerships with them that last a lifetime."





Oman crude price drops \$4.82 per barrel

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The price of Oman crude (for November 2022 delivery) declined by \$4.82 per barrel to settle at \$84.46 per barrel in trading on the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME) on Monday.

The price of Oman crude (for September delivery) has averaged \$103.21 per barrel, which is \$9.72 a barrel lower than the August 2022 delivery average. This is the first time Oman crude fell below \$85 per barrel in nine months, the last one on January 18, 2022 with \$84.92 per barrel.

Meanwhile, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) said yesterday that the price of its basket of crude fell by \$2.84 a barrel to settle at \$92.67 per barrel in trading on Friday, down from \$95.51 last Thursday. In its publication, Opec reported last year's annual basket rate of \$69.89 per barrel. On September 5, Opec+ energy ministers agreed to adjust September oil production by



100,000 barrels per day compared to the 648,000 barrels as agreed during July's meeting.

According to Opec+, the drastic decline in surplus productive capacities requires that these capacities be used with great caution when responding to severe supply disruptions. The statement confirmed the willingness of producers from within and outside the Opec+ to convene any emergency meeting to discuss oil market developments if the need arises.

In its last periodic report, Opec expected global oil demand to increase by 2.7 million barrels per day (bpd), reaching a total of 103 million bpd, compared with 100.3 million bpd this year, driven by high demand from major consumer countries, primarily the United States.

Oman-based firm to set up \$40m Kraft liner paper project in UAE

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 26

Suhar-based Keryas Paper Industry LLC has announced that it will set up a Kraft liner project in the United Arab Emirates at a cost of around \$40 million. The plant's pulp and paper manufacturing capacity is targeted at around 200,000 metric tonnes per annum (MTPA).

An agreement to this effect was inked on the sidelines of the just concluded Propaper Dubai 2022. Keryas also signed a MoU with C2C Consultancy, India, for the complete design and engineering of the proposed project, which will be designed to produce low GSM Kraft packaging paper with a basis weight of 60 to 80 as anchor GSM. The mill will also have the capacity to produce 150 GSM basis weight of Kraft packaging paper.

The project will help fill a gap in market demand, particularly for the lower GSM ranges. The project will be one of the



largest across GCC countries and is expected to commence the production within 18 to 20 months, a Keryas Group statement said.

Keryas Paper Industry LLC has its existing production line in the Omani seaport city of Suhar. The

180,000 TPA-capacity plant was commissioned in July 2021. The plant has achieved more than 120 per cent of its design capacity in a short span of time with a superior quality end product.

Keryas is also procuring an advanced cleaning system for their

dryer screen area from Europe and America in order to ensure product quality.

Additionally, the company has invested in an egg tray manufacturing unit to utilise sludge waste from the paper making process.

Abraj launches sustainability strategy and roadmap

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 26

Following Abraj Energy Services (Abraj) successful roll-out of its new brand identity, the company initiated Project Estidama to focus on key Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) focus areas. The project aims to define a comprehensive sustainability strategy and roadmap, and publish its inaugural Sustainability Report.

The decision to undertake this sustainability journey aligns with Oman's Vision 2040 to focus on sustainable development. Abraj will engage employees and customers to conduct a thorough materiality analysis to define the ESG topics most important to the business and its stakeholders. The Sustainability Report will discuss these topics, as well as Abraj's sustainability performance, short- and long-term sustainability plans, and ongoing commitment to environmental integrity, sustainable development, and



PROJECT ESTIDAMA WAS INITIATED TO SUPPORT THE SULTANATE OF OMAN'S EFFORTS TOWARDS DIVERSIFICATION OF ITS OIL AND GAS BUSINESS AS WELL AS EMBED A SUSTAINABILITY MINDSET ACROSS THE DRILLING AND WELL-SERVICES INDUSTRY.

social responsibility.

During the kick-off meeting, Abraj's CEO, Saif al Hamhami, noted that "Project Estidama was recently initiated to support

the Sultanate of Oman's efforts towards diversification of its oil and gas business as well as embed a sustainability mindset across the drilling and well-services

industry.

With the partnership of a global group like Carnrite, we believe that the journey will be seamless and will elevate our environmental, social and governance performance."

Abraj have recently embarked a journey of rejuvenation our brand and business strategies. At the forefront of these strategies is the consolidation of our ESG efforts and the identification of new focus areas that can potentially reshape Abraj's future business. Our cumulative knowledge, skills and expertise in the energy sector gives us a competitive advantage to lead the way in ESG. We are all confident that along with our partner Carnrite Group, will be able to meet the expectations of our employees, customers" said Salah al Harthy, Abraj's Business Development Director.

To support this effort, Abraj is delighted to announce the partnership with Carnrite Group, a management consultancy with offices in the UAE, UK, and USA.

Oman-UAE economic ties set for major leap

FROM PAGE 13

He explained that the visit of HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed to his brother His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is welcomed and appreciated by all, who are confident that the visit will move brotherly bilateral relations to a new stage of cooperation in various fields, which will benefit the two brotherly peoples.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, CEO of United Securities Company, said that the landmark visit will work to increase trade exchange between the two brotherly countries, and will also constitute a good support for most of the large investment projects that are hoped to benefit the economies of the two countries, praising the economic relations between the two countries and joint projects.

He added that the UAE is the largest trading partner of the Sultanate of Oman, which

confirms the strength of relations between the two countries. He expressed his hope that the coming period will witness the provision of more facilities on the Omani-Emirati border.

Areej bint Mohsin bin Haider Darwish, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Automotive, Construction Equipment and Renewable Energy Group at Mohsin Haider Darwish Company, explained that Omani-Emirati relations have a long history – the legacy of generations of good relations and the result of the keenness of the wise leaders of Oman and the UAE to continuously upgrade the ways of cooperation in various fields.

She said that the UAE business community is a key trading partner and we look forward to increasing investment opportunities, facilities and incentives between the two parties to take bilateral relations towards wider and wider horizons.

A look at Jeremy Powell's inflation-fighting actions



OLE S HANSEN

Commodities traded generally lower in a week where the big lines were drawn by developments in Washington and Moscow. At their latest FOMC meeting, the US Federal Reserve managed to surprise on the hawkish side of expectations after an expected 75-basis point rate hike was followed up by the removal of expectations for a cut in 2023.

Changes that were made despite a significant lowering of

the GDP forecast for this year and next as well as a sharp rise in the unemployment rate forecast, a signal the Fed is willing to continue hiking rates even if the economy deteriorates in order to get ahead of inflation.

These developments helped send the dollar and US Treasury yields sharply higher and with other major central banks also hiking, the recession fear took hold and helped send growth-sensitive commodities like cotton and copper sharply lower.

However, at the same time, other commodities like gold, wheat, and diesel managed to find some support after President Putin escalated his flagging invasion of Ukraine, thereby adding a safe haven bid to gold while increasing supply risks of key commodities such as wheat, crude oil, and fuel

products.

The Bloomberg Commodity Index traded lower by 2.5 per cent on the week troubled by tighter monetary policy hurting the growth outlook, weakness in China's economy, and Europe's energy crisis which has driven the region's purchasing managers index to its lowest level since 2013. Losses being led by natural gas, cotton, crude oil, and industrial metals.

Multiple uncertainties will continue to create a volatile environment for most commodities ahead of the year end. While the recession drums will continue to bang ever louder, the sector is unlikely to suffer a major setback before picking up speed again during 2023.

The latest FOMC action has brought the market one step closer

to peak hawkishness, potentially sometime during the final quarter of 2022, and once that happens, a subsequent peak in the dollar and Treasury yields may reduce some of the recent headwinds.

Our forecast for stable to potentially even higher prices led by pockets of strength in key commodities across all three sectors of energy, metals, and agriculture is driven by sanctions, upstream cost inflation, adverse weather, and low investment appetite, and with that in mind, we see the Bloomberg Commodity Index, which tracks a basket of 24 major commodities, holding onto most of its year-to-date gains around 15 per cent for the remainder of the year.

The deteriorating global economic outlook can be seen through the continued collapse

in the cost of shipping 40-foot containers around the world, especially on the major routes from China to Europe as well as the US East and West Coasts. The Drewry Composite Container Freight Global Benchmark rate slumped 10 per cent this past week to \$4,472 per 40 feet box and the lowest since Dec 2020.

Down 57 per cent from the September 21 peak but still three times higher than the pre-pandemic average, suggesting further downside as the global economy continues to lose steam.

As mentioned, all the major China to US and EU routes have slumped while the transatlantic route to New York is holding up, potentially due to the euro weakness supporting exports to the US.

Crude oil meanwhile headed

lower after spending most of the week confined to a relatively tight range with the Powell versus Putin battle (demand versus supply) not having a clear winner until Friday when both Brent and WTI dropped as the FOMC driven slump in risk appetite and growth angst was dialled up a notch as the dollar and yields continued to surge higher.

A difficult and potentially volatile quarter awaits with multiple and contradictory uncertainties having their say in the direction. While the risk to growth is being priced in, the market has left it to another day to worry about the supply-reducing impact of an EU embargo on Russian oil and fuel as well as a part reversal of the US selling 180 million barrels from its Strategic Reserves.

(The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy, Saxo Bank)

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➤ Should be able to liaise with the Govt. Authorities.
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➤ Should have 25 years of work experience.

2. PROJECT ENGINEER - 1 No.

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Understanding the charm and importance of the sardine season

Like many professions, fishing is a labour-intensive job that requires great effort, endurance and patience. But fishermen in Oman don't seem to mind especially during Al Dhawaghi or the sardine fishing season happening between October to April every year... **P20**

Rihanna to return to the stage for Super Bowl half-time show

SUPERSTAR RIHANNA will return to the stage for the Super Bowl half-time show in February, Apple Music — the main sponsor of the event, which draws massive audiences each year — announced on Sunday.

"IT'S ON. @rihanna will take the stage for the first ever Apple Music

Super Bowl Half-time Show on 2.12.23," Apple Music said in a tweet featuring a photo of the "Umbrella" and "Diamonds" singer's raised hand holding a football.

Rihanna, 34, and the NFL also tweeted the same image.

The Barbadian-born Robyn Rihanna Fenty has in recent years



put music aside, at least publicly, to focus on her cosmetics brand Fenty Beauty.

The entertainment and fashion mogul's Super Bowl performance will follow an impeccably choreographed 2022 half-time show that featured rap legends including Dr Dre, Snoop Dog and Eminem.

The 2021 half-time show featured Canadian artist The Weeknd, while Jennifer Lopez and Shakira performed the year before.

The half-time show has since 2019 been produced by Roc Nation, founded by New York rapper-turned-businessman Jay-Z.

Apple Music announced in September that it would be the main sponsor of the event, ousting Pepsi and reportedly paying \$50 million for the privilege.

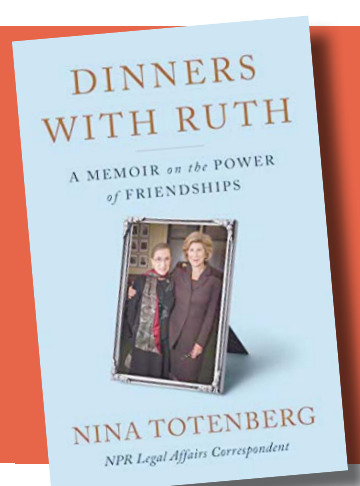
The 2022 Super Bowl, in which the Los Angeles Rams defeated the Cincinnati Bengals, drew an average of 112.3 million viewers on television and streaming, according to NBC Sports. — **AFP**

READ

DINNERS WITH RUTH

BY NINA TOTENBERG

The NPR legal affairs correspondent details her professional accomplishments and friendship with the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.



FORTUNE PINK

A picture taken in Geneva shows the Fortune Pink, an exceptionally rare giant gemstone, that is expected to bring in up to \$35 million when it comes up for sale in Geneva on November 8, 2022 by Christie's auction house. At over 18 carats, the vividly coloured gem is the largest pear-shaped pink diamond of its quality ever to be offered for sale at auction. — **AFP**



DINING TRENDS

A customer pays for takeaway food next to a board with increased prices due to inflation at a restaurant in Bangkok. The kingdom is enduring 14-year high inflation which — like elsewhere globally — has caused soaring basic living costs, but which comes as the country gears up for national elections in the coming six months. — **AFP**





Fishermen lament plunge in Scottish wild salmon catch

IN THE SHIMMERING RAPIDS of the River Spey that cuts through the Scottish Highlands, Ian Gordon casts his line with a languid swish and waits for a salmon to take the fly.

In the early 1970s, when Gordon first fished the Spey as a “wee nipper”, it never took long to catch a bite. But things have changed.

“I would say there are now 20 per cent, maximum, of what there were in the mid-80s,” Gordon told AFP on a stretch of the river near the town of Aberlour, where he runs a tourist fishing company.

Before the numbers started to fall in the 1980s and 90s, hundreds of thousands of young Atlantic salmon or smolts would migrate to sea from Scotland’s rivers.

A quarter would return to their natal rivers to spawn. Today, only around four per cent return, according to the Spey Fishery Board.

In Scotland, where anglers abide by a “catch and release” conservation code, the rod catch of 35,693 in 2021 was the lowest number since records began.

The Scottish government, in a report in June, said the numbers were “consistent with a general pattern of decline in numbers of wild salmon returning to Scotland”.

Ecologists and fishermen say multiple factors are behind the decline, including the overfishing of herring and the effect of the warming climate on the salmon’s life cycle.

“Herring used to be abundant around the coastline of the UK,” Gordon says.

“That was a species that all species relied on around the UK. Since the herring got fished out, so the salmon, which come into the ocean as little things, themselves become prey.

“It’s that cycle that gets upset when one species is taken out of the ecosystem.

“That of course is affected by the climate, there’s no doubt.”

TREES AND WEIRS

Further north, outside the town of Bonar Bridge, Andrew Graham-Stewart stands on a bridge surveying a stream.

“We’ve got a real problem happening at sea,” says Graham-Stewart, who is the director of the Wildfish Scotland charity and has fished the local waters since he was a boy.

“Climate change is obviously the



primary factor, and there is very little we can do about that.

“But when fish go out to sea, they are clearly not finding all the food that they need to find.”

One factor is the loss of trees around the headwaters of Scottish rivers.

Scotland has lost “probably about 95 per cent” of its tree cover over the last few centuries due to agriculture, industry and wars, Graham-Stewart said.

Trees, apart from providing shade for marine life, slow the release of water from the hills, which provides more constant flows through the year.

“With tree cover and reasonable flows, water remains relatively cool, and salmon need cool in order to survive and thrive,” the charity director said.

Some fisheries boards have already taken action including on the River Dee, which runs along the royal family’s Balmoral estate,



where Queen Elizabeth II died on September 8.

The Dee District Salmon Fishery Board and River Dee Trust have planted more than 200,000 native trees along the river banks since 2013.

The aim is to plant a million trees by 2035 to restore water retention and protect salmon and other river species.

On the River Carron in 2019, local groups removed a concrete weir built more than half a century ago to improve water flow and allow salmon a trouble-free journey.

FARM LICE

For Graham-Stewart, salmon farming in the western Highlands and islands of Scotland has played a “massive” role in the fall in numbers, by spreading sea lice to wild salmon.

Millions of fish in a concentrated area act as a breeding ground for parasites, he says.

When the sea lice enter the farm they multiply exponentially and are passed on to passing juvenile wild salmon.

Once that happens, the salmon are eaten alive by the lice.

“The damage they (fish farms) are doing to wild fish and the environment, in general, is massive,” he said, calling for tighter regulations on salmon farms.

Fish farms emphatically deny the allegations, saying that protecting the environment and health of fish are fundamental to their business.

At the Spey River, Gordon exits the water without having caught a fish.

He slides out of his waterproof waders and fixes his rod to the roof of his car.

Salmon, he believes, are a valuable indicator for the health of humanity as a species.

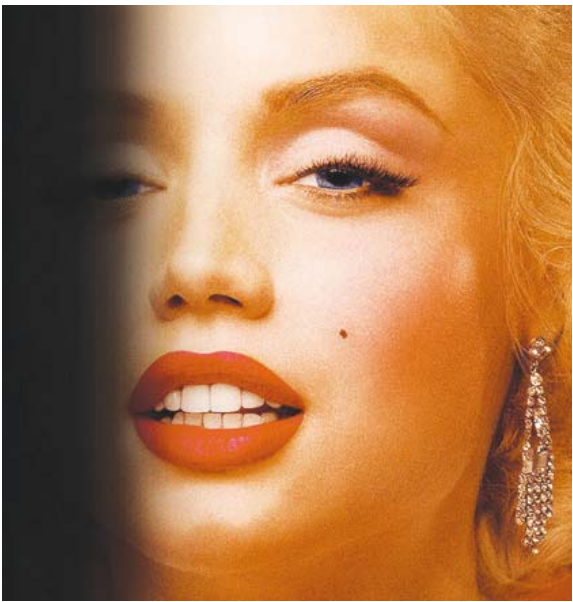
“It gives us an indication on whether the sea is in a good state or not,” he says.

“Right now, they are saying: wait a minute, guys — something’s wrong.”

— AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Deeply divisive Monroe biopic ‘Blonde’ hits Netflix



Destined to be one of the most divisive films of the year, Marilyn Monroe biopic “Blonde” finally lands on Netflix on Wednesday after more than a decade of troubled production.

While there is almost universal praise for the visceral lead performance by Ana de Armas, critics cannot agree whether the uncompromising, nearly three-hour film is an artistic tour de force or another cruel layer of exploitation perpetrated against the 20th century icon.

For ID magazine, “Blonde” is “guttural, instinctive, anguished film-making that bends space, time, and every cinematic tool at its disposal in service of attaining emotional truth”.

Or viewers might take the position of the New Yorker’s Richard Brody, who called it “ridiculously vulgar”, seeing the endless torment that Monroe experiences on-screen as “a special kind of directorial sadism”.

There are certainly no punches being pulled by Australian director Andrew Dominik in his adaptation of the hit semi-fictional book of the same name by Joyce Carol Oates.

From the trauma of a mentally unstable and violent mother, through her abuse at the hands of a studio boss, to a particularly sordid scene with president John F Kennedy, Monroe’s life is depicted as one of relentless



abuse and anguish.

Dominik spent 11 years trying to get the film made, and has credited the #MeToo movement against assault with finally generating interest in the story — though he reportedly fought long and hard with Netflix over long running time and scenes.

Armas told reporters at the Venice Film Festival, where the film premiered this month, that she had to go to “uncomfortable, dark and vulnerable” places for the role.

“She was all I thought about, all I dreamed about, all I could talk about. She was with me, and it was beautiful,” she said.

The crew filmed in the real locations where Monroe was born and died, with Dominik saying the shoot “took on elements of a seance”.

SENSE OF AWE

It is a star-making turn for Armas, who worked for months with a vocal coach to overcome her Cuban accent and find a voice that could express Monroe’s character as well as her own unique intonations.

“On the first day of filming, I went home with this sense of awe that I had the privilege of actually working with Marilyn Monroe,” co-star Adrien Brody, who plays husband Arthur Miller, said in Venice.

Dominik’s films have often proved divisive. Many saw his previous biopic, “The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford” starring Brad Pitt, who serves as a producer on “Blonde”, as a poetic masterpiece, but just as many found it dull and pretentious, and it flopped at the box office.

Dominik is unlikely to be bothered, however. “Blonde” is “a demanding movie,” he told Screen Daily. “If the audience doesn’t like it, that’s the audience’s problem. It’s not running for public office.”

NPR were among several outlets saying the film is “an exercise in exploitation, not empathy”.

But Vogue said a lot of the initial shock may fade over time.

“History will be kind to ‘Blonde’, a Hollywood biopic in real anarchy mode. (which) in time, could be considered a masterpiece.” — AFP



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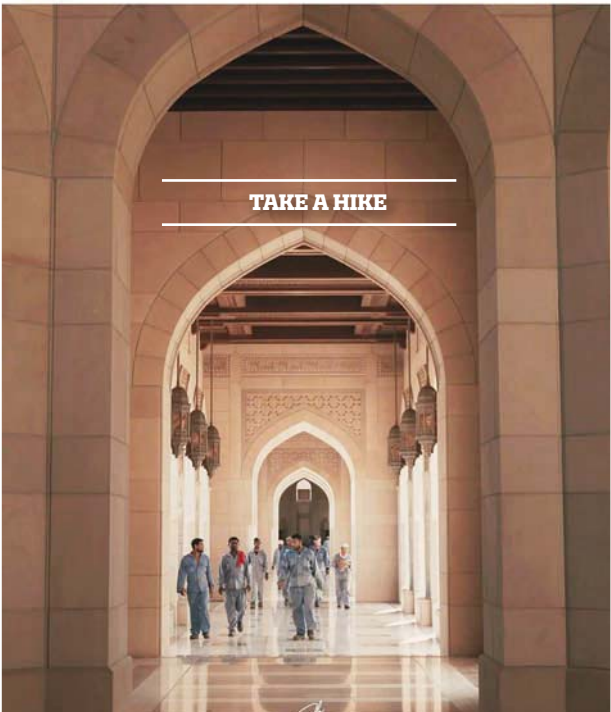
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AROUND THE WORLD

MOVIES

Paris Fashion Week launches with Gaultier protege



PARIS FASHION WEEK gets under way on Monday, with a protege of Jean-Paul Gaultier first on the catwalk, while the luxury world awaits the French debut of Victoria Beckham.

As is traditional, the first day focuses on young designers, and the opening show of womenswear spring-summer 2023 is that of 28-year-old Victor Weinsanto, a former dancer who studied under Gaultier before launching his label in 2020.

Weinsanto told AFP his collection is a "declaration of love" to his generation, inspired by fellow young designers.

Freshly decked out in bright orange hair, the designer said people were looking for "creativity, freedom, madness and humour" in their outfits at the moment.

"We want escapism," he said.

Like many of his generation, there is a focus on sustainability — with almost all his designs made from surplus stock from other brands — and inclusivity.

The clothes are designed for "both mother and daughter," he said.



METaverse

Further nods to the zeitgeist: Weinsanto's show will also include a collection created specially for K-Pop superstars Lightsum, who will appear virtually via holograms at the end of the catwalk show.

That digital collection will be sold as NFTs in the metaverse.

Weinsanto said he was fascinated by online fashion, even if he didn't see it as crucial to the industry.

"You can really free yourself," he said. "I want to go beyond 3D."

More than 100 brands feature in the official calendar for Paris Fashion Week.

Almost all are back to live runway shows following the shift online during the Covid-19 pandemic, including Dior, Chanel, Balenciaga, Stella McCartney and Issey Miyake.

But all eyes are on Victoria Beckham, who makes her first appearance at Paris Fashion Week after previously showing in New York and London.

Beckham's brand has struggled to turn a profit despite strong reviews since she launched as a designer in 2008, and a newly reorganised back office is hoping for a boost in Paris. — **AFP**

ENTERTAINMENT

Africa's first post-pandemic Comic-Con festival draws thousands



IN A MAKESHIFT changing room swathed with black fabric, South African Luke Andalis transforms into the burly Aratak, preparing to perform at Comic-Con Africa, the continent's largest pop culture, fantasy and gaming festival.

"There's so much fun in my mouth," the 32-year-old cosplayer Andalis chuckles to friends as he dons a stiff green pleather parka over his head and shoulders.

This year he chose to cosplay Aratak, the middle-aged chieftain of the Banuk tribe in the popular video game Horizon Zero Dawn: The Frozen Wild.

After a two-year Covid hiatus, Comic-Con Africa's return has been widely anticipated by cosplayers and fans.

Clad in superhero capes, colourful masks, sci-fi costumes and eccentric wigs, thousands on Saturday flocked to a vast expo centre near the FNB Stadium, which hosted the Fifa 2010 World Cup final.

Loud music welcomed the festival-goers to Stranger Things escape rooms, pop-up tattoo parlours and comic haven.

This year's festivities are star-studded, hosting fan favourites including award-winning Stranger Things and Twilight actor, Jamie Campbell Bower among others.

Africa's third edition of the comic convention is being staged at the national recreation centre, south of the economic hub Johannesburg. The festival first hit African soil in 2018.

VERY PROUD MOMENT

Andalis has been cosplaying for six years but says his 12 years as a film costume design-

er and maker made for a natural transition.

During the pandemic when performances slammed to a halt, the Cape Town-raised artist shared tips on costume play

ensemble — armoured quill braces.

As he walks from the dimly-lit dresser, a crowd swarms around him marvelling at the final product.



and showing off his "builds", a term used to describe a finished costume, racking up a large Instagram following.

Shortly before stepping on stage, Andalis's personality shifts slightly as he starts to get into character.

He complains about the stiffness of the costume, which perfectly imitates Aratak's garb, a traditional attire used to protect the character from the frigid climate of his tribe's territory.

"It is a very proud moment. I've been working on this costume for eight months," he says.

Complete with stocky faux fur tussles that swing as he turns and a regal head garment atop a fake triangle shaped beard and thick sideburns, Andalis's friend helps him put on the last component of the

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Our Company Heading towards Ibri

THE FOLLOWING is my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani:

After that it was the turn of our company to leave for Ibri, from where our platoon was ordered to go to Al Buraimi to carry out vehicle patrols. From the Khandaq Fort, where we stayed for about two weeks, we would go on patrol to Wadi Fath and Qomera. On our way we would take water from the Ain Fount. In Al Buraimi we camped in Bin Sa'aid Fount and Wadi Fath.

After coming back to Ibri, we went on patrol to the Empty Quarter and stopped at the Om al Zamool Well, where we had to go on foot with a great deal of hardship, as it was set between sands inaccessible by vehicles. We saw water pipes used to pull up water from the well for the many camels around it. The Bedouin living nearby were in charge of the water pipes. They had to report to the wali of Ibri when and if those pipes needed repair. They were also responsible for keeping an eye on the desert and report any smuggling of weapons.

Once we, the sons of Miskan, went to pay a special visit to Shaikh Hamad bin Saif al Kalbani in his home in Ghaneema in Ibri. We accompanied him to visit the then wali of Ibri, Sayyid Saud bin Harib al Busaidy in his house in Hilla.

After that, I was posted to the Ghala Training Centre to head the Applications Team, consisting of 12 soldiers from all branches of the army. The soldiers carried out all the tactical operations planned by the chief expert, a captain of British nationality. We wore civil outfit and painted our faces with black powder

from the cooking utensils.

The mission of the team was to play the role of a dummy enemy facing the platoons about to graduate. Every graduating platoon had to face us. Wadi O'q was chosen for its many twists and turns and for its rugged terrain. We would start with the entrance of the valley (Dosar Village) and get involved in a variety of military operations; we would attack the "enemy", firing guns and throwing grenades at them. The exercise would continue across Wadi O'q till its end, the Marimo Pass, where we would spend the night to return the following day to the Ghala Camp.

Our second, and the last, day and night exercise, was to be held in Wadi Ansab. We would carry out skirmishes in the manner of fight or flight in the daylight with the "enemy" platoon till we reached the Bausher Heights. The "enemy" would stay for two nights on the hill where Royal Hospital is now situated. We would stay with them, raiding their camp and the patrols that came from it at night, resorting to our shelter in an old castle behind the Ghubra Rest House. Following this pattern, we graduated eight platoons, on an average of two platoons per year.

During that period when the number of Omani officers was still small, I came to know Lieut. Said bin Salim al Wahaibi, who later on was promoted to lieutenant colonel, Escort of his Majesty and subsequently, the minister of the Royal Court. I also came to know Lieut. Ali bin Rahsid al Kindi and Private Abdullah bin Saleh al Habsi (lieutenant general later). Once the training ended, we returned to our regiment after being replaced by another team. It was soon after this that I was promoted to corporal.

art & life

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 27 | 2022



Understanding the charm and importance of the sardine season

By Arwa Al Hashimi
Photos by Mohammed Tabook

Fishing is one of the top professions in the Gulf area. With lands overlooking three seas, the Arabian Peninsula is an ideal environment for breeding different fishes. Oman being part of this peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman's more than 3,000 km coast allows fishermen to make a profession out of fishing exploring and thriving in vast marine sanctuaries filled with gifts of the sea.

Like many professions, fishing is a labour-intensive job that requires great effort, endurance and patience. Fishermen have to spend hours at sea not only battling waves and nature but also anxiety and stress. Yet they endure and it is because of their effort that people in Oman can enjoy a wide variety of seafood on their plates.

Called Al Dhawaghi in Oman, the sardine fishing season is an annual event that traces its origin to ancient times. Omanis of today had preserved many of the old traditions and still participate in such events when the 'captain' calls for it.

When Al Dhawaghi happens, a group of 20

to 30 men come together for the harvest. The season happens from October to April.

To successfully net sardines, the group must be organised and cover each other's backs. The method of fishing goes through several successive stages, starting from locating the spot, throwing the nets and dragging them to the beach and ending with loading them into the drying.

In Dhofar, fishermen in the area prepare giant nets that are carried in 'sunbouq' boats. These fishermen are referred to locally as Nawakhthah. The nets are spread across a wide area and once it's securely put in place, ideally on places with sightings of sardines, the men will pull these nets toward the shores.

The fishing process begins in the early morning by going to the sea to take tours and follow the movement of seagulls that are usually behind large quantities of sardines (Auma) or to search for dark spots in the sea, which also indicates the presence of large quantities of sardines. After locating the sardines, the fishing starts by lowering the nets and tying them on both sides with long ropes shaping a crescent and then a semicircle, after which the net is

gradually narrowed to collect a large amount of sardine fish.

Al Dhawaghi is led by the captain and 3-4 sailors who are known for their diving skills where they can dive in the depths of the sea to monitor the movement of sardines and trap them. It consists of two boats equipped with four machines of (40-60) horsepower. As of late, practising Al Dhawaghi has become more challenging for fishermen. The rise of tourism projects in indigenous fishing grounds creates a roadblock making it impossible to fish in these areas.

Al Dhawaghi is a very old tradition as benefited citizens for generations. It also plays a big role for livestock owners who depend on sardines as feed for their animals and supply them with natural protein. Ali al Maashani one of the fishermen shared that recently, there has been more interest for non-fishermen to join the activity bringing back life to the sardine season. This Fishing season is considered a remarkable event by Omani and non-Omani photographers. Even tourists can see the traditional methods of fishing and they are given an idea of how it is effectively passed on from generation to generation.

