

HM greets Moroccan King

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Mohammed VI of Morocco, on the occasion of his birthday. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan conveyed his best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to King Mohammed VI, and the brotherly Moroccan people more progress and prosperity. – ONA



P10

WARHOLM STORMS BACK TO FORM



P13

CONSTRUCTION OF FIRST CALCINED COKE PROJECT COMPLETED



P19

TOKYO DINERS NOSH ON DEMOGORGON PASTA, ELEVEN'S WAFFLES



MUSCAT REGISTER RENTAL DEAL TO PROTECT RIGHTS

Tenancy agreement, which is mandatory by law, must be registered with the civic authority to ensure the rights of both landlord and tenant, emphasises a top official at Muscat Municipality. “By registering the agreement with Municipality, the rights of the parties are protected, in addition to receiving several benefits in the tenancy law,” said an official at the Cases and Grievances Department at Muscat Municipality. The tenancy law spells out several benefits including transparency in rents, which according to the law cannot be raised injudiciously. In case of a dispute, the law will be evoked to settle it. **DETAILS ON P3**

PARIS FRENCH PRESIDENT SET TO VISIT ALGERIA

French President Emmanuel Macron will visit Algeria in a bid to improve strained ties between Paris and Algiers, the French presidency said in a statement on Saturday. “This trip will contribute to deepening the bilateral relationship looking to the future... to reinforce Franco-Algerian cooperation in the face of regional challenges and to continue the work of addressing the past,” the presidency said after a call between Macron and his opposite number Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Macron is to be in Algeria from Thursday to Saturday this week.



A CHARMING VILLAGE

Al Alia, a charming village located on the banks of Wadi Bani Kharus in South Al Batinah, attracts visitors from all over Oman for its moderate weather in summer and heritage. This village is blessed by monsoon rains during summer as it is nestled on the heights of Eastern Hajar Mountains. **DETAILS ON P2**

Russian grains, fertiliser must move ‘unimpeded’: UN chief

ISTANBUL: It remains “extremely important” to bring Russian food and fertiliser to world markets as part of a package deal on Ukrainian grain shipments, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said in Istanbul. Getting such Russian goods to consumers would help “calm

commodity markets,” Guterres said, adding the UN is working to overcome “certain obstacles” to this end, without elaborating. “We are at the beginning of a much longer process,” he said, urging governments and the private sector to cooperate. **SEE ALSO P6**

Jabal Akhdhar festival to boost domestic tourism

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

As the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is conducting the tourism festival in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, titled “Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Tourism Festival” from August 23 to 27, representatives from the private sector are eagerly awaiting to avail of the opportunities from the festival.

“It is a great opportunity for everyone to know about the various characteristics and seasons of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Most importantly everybody from hotels to farms are able to participate in this festival,” said Mohammed al Nabhani from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

According to the ministry, the festival, which is first-of-its-kind in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, comes within the agenda of the initiatives implemented by ministry in cooperation with the government and private entities.

Driving up to the top of the

“
This festival is a great opportunity for everyone to know about the various characteristics and seasons of Jabal Akhdhar, and will benefit all sections in tourism industry

MOHAMMED
AL NABHANI

‘Green Mountain’ requires care, but today there are transport operators who provide assistance to reach the top. While it is an open destination throughout the year, the festival will have activities as an added attraction and one of them is the horse trail. The festival will include mountain adventures such as horse riding on Al Jabal Al

Akhdhar trails. The visitors will also be introduced to the harvest season of pomegranate and the importance of this season to the local community.

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar enjoys mild Mediterranean climate with seasons for pomegranates, apricots and roses. The visitors to the festival are going to enjoy the harvesting of pomegranates.

“There are four types of mountain pomegranates in Oman, and they are known locally as Al Moqdmari, Al Malassi, Erg Al Gharib and Al Hamid,” said one of the residents. Pomegranates are traditionally sold at Nizwa Souq, but one can also buy them from the farmers.

While it is summer in rest of the country, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar continues to be pleasant and the festival coincides with summer vacation for students.

The five-day festival is being held in cooperation with the Office of the Wali of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Oman Equestrian Federation. **TURN TO P3**

Finance your property directly with us

1

Choose your apartment with deposit from OMR 12,540*

2

Simple 5 year payment plan

3

Sustainable rental yields & leasing services available



A charming village known for cool weather, heritage

AL ALIA IS LOCATED ON THE BANKS OF WADI BANI KHARUS IN SOUTH AL BATINAH

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Al Alia, a charming village located on the banks of Wadi Bani Kharus in South Al Batinah, attracts visitors from all over Oman for its moderate weather in summer and heritage.

This village is blessed by the monsoon rains during the summer as it is nestled in the heights of the Eastern Hajar Mountains.

It is famous for the diversity of high-quality crops such as mangoes, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, apricots, figs and olives due to fertile soil and freshwater.

The farmers sell their products to the local markets near the village including those in Al Awabi and Al Rustaq.

There are many archaeological and historical sites in this village. Bait Al Sarooj, Bait Al Khatma and Bait Sanaa are found on the northern mountains of the village. There are also a number of watch

towers that were used to secure the village. On one of the trails is the tomb of an Omani Imam, Shaikh Ja'id bin Khamis al Kharusi, a poet, writer and jurist.

Most of these historical sites, including towers and walls made of mud and stones, have fallen prey to the elements. There are modern houses built on the ruins of the old village, and the residents still practice agriculture and animal husbandry.

There are many trekking trails in this village. These trails are lined aflaj built on the banks of the valley. These trails provide an opportunity for panoramic views. Standing high on the mountain slopes, one can enjoy the natural beauty of this village, which is a green oasis of dozens of varieties of local fruits and vegetables. This village is also home to trees such as Al Sidr and Al Atm.

Among the slopes of these mountains live wolves, ibex, Arabian Tahr, and dozens of



species of insects, reptiles and birds.

“People here are simple and bound by social solidarity. We never hesitate to maintain agricultural facilities. We have restored old aflaj, which are sometimes damaged by rains and floods, to ensure the flow of water to our farms,” residents said.

“We are proud to welcome many tourists of different nationalities to this village. We do not hesitate to answer all their questions and inquiries, and often guide them to the beautiful sites.”

Al Alia is a model for mountain villages in the Sultanate of Oman. Its climate is mild in summer, its fresh products are in great demand, and its historical sites attract specialists in history and geology.

Al Alia is located 26 km from the centre of the Wilayat of Al Awabi and 150 km from Muscat. It got its name because it is located at the top of Wadi Bani Kharus.

OMAN FM 90.4

Jump Start

AMAL AL BALUSHI

TALAL AL SHAHRI

WEEKDAYS 7AM

Oman now a transit hub for GCC travellers

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

An increasing number of expatriates bound to some of the neighbouring GCC countries is using the Sultanate of Oman as a transit point owing to soaring airfares.

Oman's three international gateways, Muscat, Suhar and Salalah are witnessing a surge in the number of transit passengers, according to travel agents.

“These passengers are opting for Oman airports because air fares to Oman are relatively lower than that of other countries at the moment. For a ticket from, for example, Kochi to Muscat or Suhar, which is close to neighbouring UAE is nearly RO 100 whereas the same to another country where schools are opening is nearly RO 150. For a family of three or four, the difference is really beneficial,” Sunil D'Souza, CEO, Travel Point, said.

However, travel and tourism officials say this is not a new phenomenon but this happens every year during pre-Covid era as passengers found alternate ways to reduce the travel costs by choosing cheaper transit options.

“What is new now is that Oman has been chosen by GCC residents as a transit point for leisure as well as a cost effective way of travelling to



Air fares to Oman are relatively lower than that of other countries at the moment.

their final destination,” said Venkat Perumal of Indian budget airline GoFirst.

The traffic has heightened lately because of Oman's government's relaxed and well-regulated visa regime and also cost-effective options for all kinds of travellers.

Reports suggest that hotels have already started floating packages targeting transit passengers as this summer has given this industry a new revenue stream.

This increase in the number of transit passengers is invariably supporting Oman's domestic tourism as they spend a day or two exploring the tourism destinations before they head to their work places in other GCC countries.



Register rental agreement to protect your rights

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttvyp

Tenancy agreement, which is mandatory by law, must be registered with the civic authority to ensure the rights of both landlord and tenant, emphasises a top official at Muscat Municipality.

“By registering the agreement with Municipality, the rights of the parties are protected, in addition to receiving several benefits in the tenancy law,” said Khalid al Saidi, Director of the Cases and Grievances Department at Muscat Municipality.

The tenancy law spells out several benefits including transparency in rents, which according to the law cannot be raised injudiciously. In case of a dispute, the law will be evoked to settle it, he said.

Registration of the agreement provides an opportunity to approach the court in the event of a dispute. Information provided in the agreement will enable the

The municipality tax, which has been mentioned in the provisions of Royal Decree No 6/89 and its amendments, is a government debt that has to be paid by landlords or tenants as per the agreement and can be collected by administrative confiscation

relevant authority to follow up on the matter, Al Saidi said in a post on the municipality website.

The law provides important protections to tenants, particularly in the form of rent controls and protections against eviction, even when the duty to register the lease contract falls on the landlord, it usually behooves the tenant to ensure that this contract is duly



registered with the municipal authorities.

“Failure to register rent contracts by the procedures established by law, creates many problems, including the occurrence of disagreement between both parties; in case the contract does not exist, the rights are absent,” he said.

According to Al Saidi, tax evasion is one of the reasons why people do not register rent agreements, which on the other

hand, deprives the municipality of revenues by way of fees.

“This kind of tax evasion is affecting the collection of revenues due to the municipality. “In some cases, they do not show the real rent amount in deal with the tenants”

he said, adding, “the municipality was currently dealing with many cases of undocumented lease agreements.” The municipality tax, which has been mentioned in the provisions of Royal Decree No 6/89 and its amendments, is a government debt that has to be paid by landlords or tenants as per the agreement and can be collected by administrative confiscation.

In the event that one party fails to comply with his commitments hereto prescribed, the other party has the right to rescind the provisions of the agreement.

The agreement can be renewed for a further period or more unless one of the parties advises the other of his wish to vacate the property before the expiry of the validity period at least three months in advance or half of the period if it is less.

The landlord cannot ask for the property to be vacated except in the cases and according to the provisions and procedures of the Royal Decree No 6/89.

■ CROWN OF MIST AND SKY



The cliffs of rich verdant Jabal Al Qamar (The Mountain of the Moon) rise to a height of more than 1,000 metres above sea level and overlooks the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. It is one of the most beautiful tourist destinations located in the Wilayat of Rakhout in the Dhofar Governorate. Tourists flock to this place to get a view of its mist-covered hill tops. – ONA

Al Jabal Al Akhdhar festival to boost domestic tourism

FROM PAGE 1

The objective is to activate tourism development programmes in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 by promoting social welfare and balanced economic development of the governorates.

The distinct feature of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is the fact that it is located at an attitude of 3,000 metres above sea level.

The festival is expected to feature entertainment and tourism activities showcasing the uniqueness of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, also known as the Green Mountain. Accordingly, visitors will be able to experience different characteristics of the mountain from nature, culture to adventure.

It would also be a time to know more about this destination especially for domestic tourists.

“Milestones and road signs with descriptions would be perfect for tourists. It would be great to have a tourism office, but now with the festival these requirements will be met. People are friendly, and we enjoyed buying fresh pomegranates from the farm. They were also sold on the roadsides. We saw home-grown grapes and vineyards, figs, peaches, walnuts and apricots. What was fascinating was the harvesting of olives. We could see all these activities and was fascinating to see each house has some of these trees,” said Chris Vaz, who frequently drives up to the Green Mountain for breaks.

“Roads are beautiful to drive. Emergency stop ramps on the road secures the drive. In case of an emergency there are gallons of water bottles kept on the side,” added Chris.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said: “The festival will include a number of entertainment and tourism activities and visitors can explore the Green Mountain, in addition to activate the promotional aspects and innovative initiatives to attract different segments of visitors.”

“There will be also other activities including recreational, cultural and social activities,” stated the ministry.



Avoid Capri Sun Wild Cherry juice

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Food Safety and Quality Center (FSQC) has issued a warning on the possibility of contamination of some batches of Capri Sun Wild Cherry juice products of Kraft Heinz.

“They are contaminated with cleaning chemicals and carry the operational number 076840040900 with an expiry date of 25/6/2023,” the statement said.

FSQC confirmed that the aforementioned batches were distributed in the American markets, and in the interest of consumer health and safety, it is currently working in coordination with the concerned authorities to ensure that local markets are free of affected products if any.

The centre recommended all consumers avoid consuming the

specific batch numbers of this product if any.

Meanwhile, in the United States, the Food and Drug and Safety Administration issued the following statement that Kraft Heinz is announcing a voluntary recall of approximately 5,760 cases of Capri Sun wild cherry flavoured juice.

The voluntary recall comes after a diluted cleaning solution, which is used on food processing equipment, was inadvertently introduced into a production line at one of our factories. Only the wild cherry flavoured Capri Sun products with the case/package information below are affected.

The issue was discovered after several consumer complaints about the taste of the affected product. The company is actively working with retail partners and distributors to remove the potentially impacted products from circulation.

Important announcement

Health Insurance Claims Revenue Cycle Management Activity

Reference is made to the Capital Market Authority's Decision number: 107/2022 Regulation for Carrying out Health Insurance Claims Revenue Cycle Management Activity and pursuant to Article (2) of the regulation which provides “ Health insurance claims revenue cycle management activity shall only be practiced after obtaining a license from the CMA”

Hence, the companies intending to carry out Health Insurance Claims Revenue Cycle Management Activity shall contact Insurance Institutions Regulation Department on telephone , 24823250 / 24823339 or email : CMA-Requirements&LicensingInsurance@cma.gov.om

You may access the regulation in Arabic and English on the CMA's website : www.cma.gov.om

Best Regards,,,,,

إعلان هام

نشاط إدارة دورة إيرادات مطالبات التأمين الصحي

بالإشارة إلى قرار الهيئة العامة لسوق المال رقم (١٠٧ / ٢٠٢٢) بشأن إصدار لائحة تنظيم مزاولة نشاط إدارة دورة إيرادات مطالبات التأمين الصحي، وعملاً بأحكام المادة (٢) من اللائحة المشار إليها أعلاه، والتي تنص على " لا يجوز ممارسة نشاط إدارة دورة إيرادات مطالبات التأمين الصحي إلا بعد الحصول على ترخيص بذلك من الهيئة".

وبناء عليه، فإن على الشركات الراغبة في مزاولة نشاط إدارة دورة إيرادات مطالبات التأمين الصحي التواصل مع دائرة تنظيم مؤسسات التأمين عبر الهاتف رقم ٢٤٨٢٣٣٣٩ / ٢٤٨٢٣٣٥٠ أو البريد الإلكتروني : CMA-Requirements&LicensingInsurance@cma.gov.om

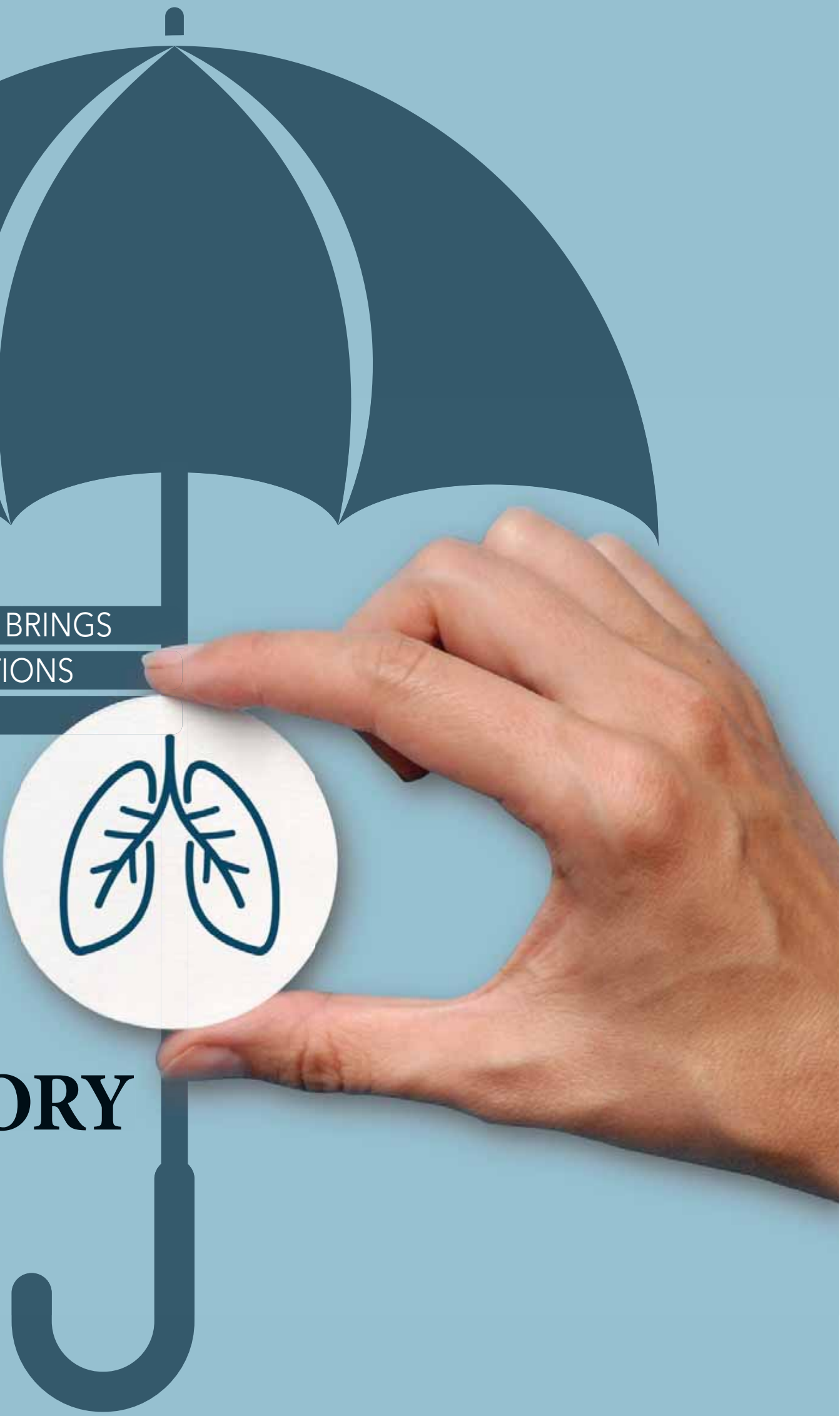
كما يمكن الاطلاع على اللائحة باللغتين العربية والانجليزية من خلال زيارة موقع الهيئة العامة لسوق المال : www.cma.gov.om

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام والتقدير،،،



THE CHANGE OF SEASONS BRINGS
IN ITS WAKE LUNGS INFECTIONS
AND ALLERGIC REACTIONS

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM RESPIRATORY DISEASES



BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

There is no vital organ in the body that is more susceptible to diseases than the lungs. Not being able to breathe is the most painful and tormenting experience for a human being. The lungs are the largest internal organ in the body and the only internal organ that is constantly exposed to the external environment. Everyone who breathes is exposed to infectious and toxic agents in the air. At a time when respiratory diseases are causing

death around the world, one must be cautious to avoid environmental hazards.

It is now widely accepted that climate change is caused by anthropogenic factors. Climate change is increasing water and air pollution that can cause and exacerbate chronic respiratory diseases, such as asthma. Increased temperatures due to climate change causes inflammation in the airway and tissue damages in the lungs.

Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine, said, “Due to the

change of season, we experience frequent storms with rain or dust in the air.”

The change of season usually affects a large part of the community, especially people who suffer from respiratory diseases such as asthma, which is accelerated by an allergic reaction to dust or particles, causing shortness of breath and coughing. Patients with chronic lung diseases such as emphysema or bronchitis can develop them. Seasonal influenza (influenza virus) that comes every year will increase when there is a

decrease in temperature.

Dr Viresh Chopra of Oman Dental College said to avoid respiratory infections due to changing weather one should wash hands, wear warm clothes and keep the body dry, and avoid inhaling smoke. If you have asthma or COPD, keep your inhaler nearby, avoid exposure to indoor pollutants that can harm your lungs, exercise, take precautions against exposure to dust and cold, use a mask, and avoid going out if not necessary.

People with respiratory illnesses are advised to take influenza vaccines.



In brief

■ JAKARTA



INDONESIA RECORDS FIRST CASE OF MONKEYPOX VIRUS

Indonesia has recorded its first case of monkeypox in a 27-year-old man who returned from travelling overseas, the country's health ministry said on Saturday.

The World Health Organization designated the outbreak of the virus an emergency last month -- something it reserves for diseases of highest concern.

Indonesian health ministry spokesperson Mohammad Syahril said the patient had a "high awareness and knowledge of the disease". "So when he got the symptoms, he immediately checked it (with) the doctor. The result came (back) positive within a day," Syahril told reporters.

■ NONGOMA



THOUSANDS GATHER TO FETE SOUTH AFRICA'S NEW ZULU KING

Thousands of people gathered at the Zulu royal palace in South Africa on Saturday for the coronation of a new king in the country's richest and most influential traditional monarchy.

Misuzulu Zulu, 47, is set to succeed his father, Goodwill Zwelithini, who died in March last year after 50 years in charge but a bitter succession dispute threatens to overshadow the ceremony. Although the title of king does not bestow executive power, the monarchs wield great moral influence over more than 11 million Zulus. Men and women in colourful traditional outfits assembled outside the marble palace on the hills of Nongoma.

■ BEIJING



CHINA REPORTS 2,354 NEW COVID CASES: HEALTH COMMISSION

Mainland China reported 2,354 new coronavirus cases for August 19 of which 639 were symptomatic and 1,715 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said on Saturday. That compared with 2,804 new cases a day earlier - 603 symptomatic and 2,201 asymptomatic infections, which China counts separately. There were no new deaths, leaving the death toll at 5,226. By August 19, mainland China had confirmed 238,822 cases with symptoms.

Beijing reported four symptomatic cases, up from one a day ago, and one asymptomatic case, from none earlier.

15 dead in northern India after monsoon floods



A view of the section of a railway bridge washed away by the deluge at the Chakki River after flash floods in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh on Saturday. — AFP

SHIMLA: At least 15 people were killed in India after heavy monsoon rains triggered flash floods and landslides near the Himalayan foothills, authorities said on Saturday.

Flooding and landslides are common and cause widespread devastation during India's treacherous monsoon season.

Experts say climate change is increasing the number of extreme weather events around the world,

with damming, deforestation and development projects in India exacerbating the human toll.

Rescue officials were rushed to Mandi district in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh where a torrent of floodwater swept away two houses and killed eight people, a government statement said.

Landslides and flooding claimed seven other lives across the state, the release added.

Television news footage showed

part of a railway bridge washed away by the deluge in nearby Kangra district.

In Hamipur district, flash floods stranded 19 people on the rooftops of local buildings before they were rescued by disaster response teams. Schools were closed in the worst-affected districts.

Picturesque Himachal Pradesh is famed for its snow-capped mountains and is popular with tourists. — AFP

IS 'Beatle' jailed for life by US court

ALEXANDRIA: A member of the notorious IS kidnap-and-murder cell known as the "Beatles" was sentenced to life in prison by a US court on Friday for the deaths of four American hostages in Syria.

El Shafee Elsheikh, 34, was given eight concurrent life sentences with no possibility of parole after being convicted in April of hostage-taking, conspiracy to murder US citizens and supporting a terrorist organisation.

Judge T S Ellis, handing down the sentence in a US District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, said Elsheikh's conduct "can only be described as horrific, barbaric, brutal, callous and, of course, criminal."

Elsheikh, wearing large glasses, a black Covid face mask and a dark green prison jumpsuit with "Alexandria Inmate" on the back, did not visibly react and declined an opportunity to speak to the court.

The trial of the former British national, which featured emotional testimony from former hostages and parents of the murdered Americans, was the most significant prosecution of an IS militant in the United States.

Diane Foley, mother of murdered hostage James Foley, addressed Elsheikh and the court and noted on Friday was the eighth anniversary of her son's



Paula and Ed Kassig, the parents of hostage Peter Kassig, speaks to reporters outside the Albert V Bryan Federal Courthouse. — AFP

"gruesome beheading."

"You have been held accountable for your depravity," Foley told Elsheikh. "You have lost your country, your citizenship, your freedom and your family.

"Love is much stronger than hatred," she added. "I pity you, Elsheikh, for choosing hatred."

The jury deliberated for less than six hours at the end of a two-week trial before finding Elsheikh guilty for his role in the deaths of four Americans -- journalists Foley and Steven Sotloff and aid workers Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

Elsheikh and another former "Beatle," Alexandra Kotey, were captured by a Kurdish militia in Syria in January 2018 and handed over to US forces in Iraq.

They were flown to the United States in 2020 to face trial.

Kotey, 38, pleaded guilty in September 2021 and was sentenced to life in prison in April. — AFP

13 civilians die as Somali forces battle Al Shabaab at besieged hotel

MOGADISHU: At least 13 civilians have been killed and dozens wounded in a militant attack on a hotel in the Somali capital, officials said on Saturday, as security forces battled gunmen barricaded inside many hours after the siege began.

Fighters from the Al Qaeda affiliate Al Shabaab stormed the Hayat Hotel in Mogadishu on Friday evening in a hail of gunfire and bomb blasts.

Scores of people were trapped inside but officials said many including children have since been rescued.

Sporadic gunfire and loud explosions could be heard on Saturday afternoon, but details remain difficult to verify in the chaos.

It is the biggest attack in Mogadishu since Somalia's new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was elected in May after many months of political instability.

Al Shabaab, which has been waging a deadly insurgency for 15 years against the fragile government in the Horn of Africa nation, has claimed responsibility.

"We are getting information about five more victims confirmed dead and that makes 13 the overall number of civilians killed by the terrorists," security commander Mohamed Abdikadir said.

"The security forces rescued dozens of civilians including children who were trapped in the building."

Police officer Ibrahim Duale



Security forces patrol near the Hayat Hotel after an attack by Al Shabaab militants in Mogadishu on Saturday. — AFP

confirmed that more than 10 people had been killed, but said updated information would be released once the siege had ended.

"The security forces will announce any moment that the siege is over, it took a long time because of the complexity of the rescue mission," Duale said.

The director of Mogadishu's main trauma hospital, Mohamed Abdirahman Jama, said the facility was treating at least 40 people wounded in the hotel attack and a separate mortar strike on another area of the capital.

NEWLY-WEDS HURT

Dozens of people gathered outside the four-storey hotel to discover the fate of loved ones.

"We have been looking for

a relative of mine who was trapped inside the hotel, she was confirmed dead together with six other people, two of them I know," said an anxious Muudey Ali.

There has been no official comment from the government, although East Africa grouping IGAD and Turkey, which has a military base in Somalia, both issued strong condemnations.

In another incident, a volley of mortar shells hit the seafront neighbourhood of Hamar Jajab, district commissioner Mucawiye Muddey said.

"Among those critically wounded are a newlywed bride and her groom and a family of three children, a mother and their father," he said.

There was no immediate claim for that attack. — AFP

Chad at 'decisive moment' as dialogue opens

N'DJAMENA: Delayed talks on Chad's future that the ruling junta says are a "decisive moment" opened on Saturday, even as some opposition groups boycott the gathering.

More than 1,400 delegates from the military government, civil society, opposition parties, trade unions and rebel groups gathered in N'Djamena for the "national dialogue" that is scheduled to last three weeks.

Junta chief General Mahamat Idriss Deby described the forum, his brainchild, as a "decisive moment in history of our country" after arriving in military dress surrounded by tight security to open the forum.

Earlier, he had first inaugurated a statue symbolising national unity at the January 15 palace

in the capital N'Djamena before reviewing an honour guard.

"This dialogue should allow us definitively to put recourse to arms behind us," said government spokesman Abderamane Koulamallah.

Deby in midweek signed a decree saying the forum would make "sovereign" decisions which would be legally binding and that he would act as guarantor.

The junta head took power in April 2021 at the age of just 37 after his father, who ruled for 30 years, was killed during a military operation against rebels.

The military leader says the talks should open the way to "free and democratic" elections after an 18-month rule by the junta -- a deadline that France, the African Union (AU) and others have urged



Chad's transitional President Mahamat Idriss Deby (L) inaugurates the statue of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation at the January 15 Palace on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the dialogue, in N'Djamena on Saturday. — AFP

him to uphold.

The dialogue, which should have begun in February, was hit by repeated delays as Chad's numerous rebel groups, meeting

in Qatar, squabbled over whether to attend. In the end, around 40 groups on August 8 signed up to a deal that included a ceasefire and guarantee of safe passage.

How to achieve lasting peace, reform state institutions and grant fundamental freedoms to all topped the agenda.

Committees must also draw up a new constitution that will be put to a referendum.

While a number of opposition groups appeared ready to give the forum a chance, some groups did not attend.

The Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) boycotted the event which it considers to be "skewed in advance" towards the military junta. FACT is a key opposition group which did not sign the peace accord and which triggered the offensive in the northeast last year that ended in the death in combat of Deby's father Idriss Deby.

— AFP



Mexico arrests former top prosecutor over disappearance of 43 students

MEXICO CITY: Mexico on Friday arrested a former attorney general who led a controversial investigation into the disappearance of 43 students in 2014 -- one of the country's worst human rights tragedies.

Arrest warrants were also issued for dozens more suspects including military personnel, police officers and cartel members, prosecutors announced.

Ex-attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam is the most senior figure detained so far in connection with the case, which shocked the nation and generated international condemnation.

He is considered the architect of the so-called "historical truth" version of events presented in 2015 by the government of then-president Enrique Pena Nieto that was widely rejected, including by relatives.

Murillo Karam, a former heavyweight of the once-dominant Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was arrested for the crimes of forced disappearance, torture and perverting justice, the attorney general's office said.

Arrest warrants were also issued for 20 members of the military, five administrative and judicial officials, 44 police officers and 14 members of the Guerreros Unidos cartel, prosecutors later announced.

They are accused of involvement in organised crime, forced disappearance, torture, homicide and obstruction of justice, they said.

The teaching students had commandeered buses in the southern state of Guerrero to travel to a demonstration in Mexico City before they went



Ex-attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam is the most senior figure detained so far in connection with the case, which shocked the nation and generated international condemnation

missing. Investigators say they were detained by corrupt police and handed over to the Guerreros Unidos drug cartel which mistook them for members of a rival gang, but exactly what happened to them has been hotly disputed.

According to the official report presented in 2015, cartel members killed the students and incinerated their remains at a garbage dump.

Those conclusions were rejected by independent experts and the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the families.

On Thursday a truth commission investigating the atrocity branded the case a "state crime" involving agents of various institutions. It said that military personnel bore at least partial responsibility, either directly or through negligence. — AFP

Russia accuses Kyiv of poisoning some of its soldiers in Ukraine

MOSCOW/KYIV: Russia's defence ministry accused Ukraine on Saturday of poisoning some of its servicemen in the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine's southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia in late July.

An adviser to Ukraine's interior ministry said in response that the alleged poisoning could have been caused by Russian forces eating expired canned meat.

The Russian defence ministry said a number of Russian servicemen had been taken to a military hospital with signs of serious poisoning on July 31. Tests showed a toxic substance, botulinum toxin type B, in their bodies, it said.

"On the fact of chemical terrorism sanctioned by the (Ukrainian President Volodymyr) Zelenskiy regime, Russia is preparing supporting evidence with the results of all the analyses," the ministry said in a statement.

It did not say how many servicemen had suffered or what their condition was now. It did not say what the "supporting evidence" was. Botulinum toxin type B is a neurotoxin that can cause botulism when ingested in previously contaminated food products, but it



A rescuer helps a woman to be evacuated from a residential building damaged by a Russian missile strike in Voznesensk, Mykolaiv region, Ukraine on Saturday. — Reuters

can also have medical uses.

Ukraine's defence ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment, but interior ministry adviser Anton Gerashchenko commented on the Russian allegation on the Telegram messaging app.

GRAIN SHIPS LEAVE

Two more ships carrying grain have left Ukraine's Chornomorsk port, Turkey's Defence Ministry said on Saturday, bringing the

total number of vessels to leave Ukraine's Black Sea ports under a UN-brokered grain export deal to 27. The Zumrut Ana and MV Ocean S, which are authorized to depart on August 20, were loaded with 6,300 tonnes of sunflower oil and 25,000 tonnes of wheat respectively, the joint coordination centre set up to enable safe passage said in a statement.

Ukraine's Sea Ports Authority said on Saturday three Ukrainian seaports had begun loading

food onto seven ships, which would deliver 66,500 tonnes of wheat, corn and sunflower oil to consumers.

Ukraine's grain exports have slumped since the start of the war because its Black Sea ports - a vital route for shipments - were closed, driving up global food prices and prompting fears of shortages in Africa and the Middle East.

FRESH DRONE ATTACKS

Russia reported fresh Ukrainian drone attacks on Friday evening, a day after explosions erupted near military bases in Russian-held areas of Ukraine and Russia itself, apparent displays of Kyiv's growing ability to pummel Moscow's assets far from front lines.

The latest incidents followed huge blasts last week at an air base in Russian-annexed Crimea. In a new assessment, a Western official said that incident had rendered half of Russia's Black Sea naval aviation force useless in a stroke.

Russia's RIA and Tass news agencies, citing a local official in Crimea, said it appeared Russian anti-aircraft forces had been in action near the western Crimean port of Yevpatoriya on Friday night. — Reuters

Europe's drought exposes ancient stones, World War II ships as waters fall

Weeks of baking drought across Europe have seen water levels in rivers and lakes fall to levels few can remember, exposing long-submerged treasures - and some unwanted hazards.

In Spain, suffering its worst drought in decades, archaeologists have been delighted by the emergence of a prehistoric stone circle dubbed the "Spanish Stonehenge" that is usually covered by the waters of a dam.

Officially known as the Dolmen of Guadalperal, the stone circle currently sits fully exposed in one corner of the Valdecana reservoir, in the central province of Caceres, where authorities say the water level has dropped to 28% of capacity.

It was discovered by German archaeologist Hugo Obermaier in 1926, but the area was flooded in 1963 in a rural development project under Francisco Franco's



A World War II bomb is seen being removed from the dried-up river Po which suffered from the worst drought in 70 years, in Borgo Virgilio, Italy. — Reuters



One of the 'hunger stones' revealed by the low level of water in Rheindorf, Germany. — Reuters

dictatorship. Since then it has only become fully visible four times.

Memories of past droughts have also been rekindled in Germany by the reappearance of so-called "hunger stones" along the River Rhine. Many such stones have become visible along the banks of Germany's largest river in recent weeks.

Bearing dates and people's initials, their re-emergence is seen by some as a warning and reminder of the hardships people faced during former droughts. Dates visible on stones seen in Worms, south of Frankfurt, and Rheindorf, near Leverkusen, included 1947, 1959, 2003 and 2018.

Another of Europe's mighty rivers, the Danube, has fallen to one of its lowest levels in almost a century as a result of the drought, exposing the hulks of more than 20 German warships sunk during World War Two near Serbia's river port town of Prahovo. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

NAIROBI

Pilots, who missed landing, suspended

Africa's biggest carrier Ethiopian Airlines said it has suspended two pilots who reportedly fell asleep and missed their landing during a flight from Khartoum to Addis Ababa.



The plane overshot the runway at Bole International Airport in the Ethiopian capital on Monday before landing safely, according to flight-tracking website FlightAware.

Independent website The Aviation Herald said the pilots fell asleep during the flight and

were only woken up by an alarm triggered when autopilot mode disconnected.

The plane circled back to land 25 minutes later, flight data showed.

ALGIERS

Algeria fires burned Unesco-listed park

More than 10 per cent of a Unesco-listed biosphere reserve has been destroyed by fires that tore through northeastern Algeria, killing at least 38 people, an expert told AFP on Saturday.

The figure cited by Rafik Baba Ahmed, former director of the El Kala Biosphere Reserve, means that the burned area of the park alone is almost double what the civil defence service said has been destroyed throughout Africa's largest country since June.



Algeria's northeast was particularly hard-hit since Wednesday in blazes exacerbated by climate change but the fire service on Saturday said most of the fires there had been put out.

LUANDA

Dos Santos's body to arrive in Angola

The body of Angola's Jose Eduardo dos Santos, who died in Spain last month, was to arrive in Luanda on Saturday, government said, ending a weeks-long feud over the repatriation of the ex-president's corpse.

A lawyer for Dos Santos' widow confirmed that the remains, which have been at the centre of a family dispute, had left Barcelona and were on their way to the Angolan capital.

"On Friday, we made all the preparations, the customs



papers, the embalming, we did everything and, indeed, this morning the body is flying to Angola," Josep Riba Ciurana, a lawyer for the widow, Ana Paula dos Santos, told AFP.

How is Russia’s war in Ukraine going?



DAVID
LEONHARDT



CLAIRE
MOSES

Today, we’ll explain how the events of the past six weeks have affected the war in Ukraine, with help from our colleagues who are covering it from Ukraine, Washington and elsewhere. The bottom line is that the most recent phase of the war has gone better for Ukraine than many observers expected after Russia’s progress earlier this year. “The Ukrainians are doing well,” said Helene Cooper, a Washington correspondent for The New York Times. “The Russians are measuring progress in feet, not even miles, at this point.”

As Anton Troianovski, the Times’ Moscow bureau chief, puts it: “The Russians appeared to have lost some of the momentum they had earlier in the

summer. If you look closely, you see the Ukrainians gaining a bit of momentum, even though not that much is changing on the map.”

Here are three scenarios we previously described, which were based partly on public comments by Avril Haines, the director of national intelligence:

Russia starts to win — Russia would continue to take over more of eastern Ukraine, as it did in the spring, and ultimately control all of the Donbas region. This progress might break Ukrainians’ will to fight elsewhere — and weaken support for the war in Western Europe and the United States.

The war falls into a stalemate — Many analysts, including Haines, consider this scenario the most likely. In it, Russia would dominate the east but would not be able to go much farther.

Ukraine starts to win — Ukraine would halt Russia’s advance in the east and also succeed in launching counterattacks, potentially reclaiming some territory in the south, where Russia has also taken over some cities.

Looking back at this list now, we are struck that the recent events seem to fall between the second and third scenarios.

In the early summer, Russia seemed to be making progress towards taking over all of eastern Ukraine’s Donbas region, which includes two provinces, Donetsk and Luhansk. But that progress appears to have slowed. Russia controls only Luhansk, not all of Donetsk.

“Russia has made little to no inroads in the Donetsk province, and US officials don’t think they’ll take it this year,” said Eric Schmitt, a senior correspondent covering security issues for the Times. Colin Kahl, a top Pentagon official, has pointed out that Russia’s minuscule progress in the east has come at a high cost — about 20,000 troop deaths and 50,000 or so injuries. Michael Schwartz, a Times correspondent who has been covering the war in Ukraine, calls these numbers “astounding.”

Seth Jones, a military expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said, “The Russians probably don’t have enough effective combat forces to fully take Donetsk,” at least not anytime soon.

Ukraine has been able to stymie Russia thanks in large part to weapons from the United States, the European Union and other allies. Especially important in recent weeks have been truck-mounted rocket launchers, known as HIMARS, whose satellite-guided missiles can travel nearly 50 miles.



An artillery unit from Ukraine’s 58th Brigade fires towards advancing Russian infantry from a frontline position near the town of Bakhmut, Ukraine.

The United States has sent 16 of the launchers to Ukraine so far and helped train their crews.

The HIMARS are one reason that Ukraine has been able to strike more deeply into Russian-held territory than before. One target has been Kherson, a region in southern Ukraine that Russia controls and where Ukraine may be gearing up for a counterattack. Ukraine has also carried out successful sabotage attacks in Crimea, an area of southern Ukraine that Russian President Vladimir Putin annexed in 2014.

“To walk right in and start blowing up military bases in Crimea is a real embarrassment for Russia,” Schwartz said.

With all this said, Russia still has some major advantages. Putin seems completely in control of Russia’s government, allowing him to play a long game. And Russia has a history of winning wars of attrition, recently in Syria and Chechnya and less recently during World War II — although not in Afghanistan, which demonstrates that Russia can also lose these conflicts.

In the current war, Russian troops may not be making

much progress, but neither is Ukraine. It still has not recaptured large amounts of territory in the east or the south. Ukrainian troops and civilians have also suffered heavy casualties, Schwartz said.

One unexpected recent positive for Putin has been his ability to fight the war without having to resort to a draft. Some analysts had predicted that he would need to mobilise more troops from the Russian population, Troianovski notes. Instead, Russia has continued to fight using only its existing troops, and forcibly drafted residents of eastern Ukraine.

In coming weeks, Putin will likely try to bolster domestic support by holding show trials for Ukrainian prisoners of war from the southern city of Mariupol. Over the longer term, he seems to be hoping that European and US support for Ukraine may flag, especially if he can keep energy prices high.

As well as the past few weeks have gone for Ukraine, Putin has overcome setbacks before, through a mixture of patience and brutality.

Marcy Kaptur, a Democrat, breaks with Biden in TV ad



SHANE
GOLDMACHER

US Rep Marcy Kaptur, D-Ohio, the second-most tenured woman in congressional history, has released a new television ad explicitly breaking with President Joe Biden, the most prominent Democrat to do so, as she seeks re-election in a Toledo-area seat that was redrawn to be sharply more Republican.

Kaptur, who was first elected in 1982, criticised Biden in the ad over “letting Ohio solar manufacturers be undercut by China” and ended it with an attempt to cast her identity as independent from his.

“Marcy Kaptur: She doesn’t work for Joe Biden; she works for you,” the ad concludes. “I’m Marcy Kaptur and I approve this message.”

The remapping of districts in Ohio made Kaptur’s seat substantially more red this year by taking away parts of the Cleveland suburbs and exchanging them for a western swath of the state that reaches towards the Indiana border. The result turned the district from one that Biden easily won in 2020 to one that former president Donald Trump would have carried that year.

Still, the ad from Kaptur is a relative surprise.

She appeared with Biden only a few weeks ago, greeting him on the tarmac at an airport in Cleveland where photos appear to show Biden kissing her hand.

In response to her new ad, Republicans were already recirculating video of Kaptur campaigning for Biden in 2020 and declaring, “It will be my honour to not just vote for Joe Biden but to work for him.”

The ad signals how important the political makeup of a district is, as it is increasingly rare for a lawmaker to hold a seat in an area that the opposing party’s presidential candidate won.

Ohio has steadily trended Republican ever since Trump won the state in 2016. In 2020, the perennial presidential battleground had become a distinctively second-tier swing state. Trump succeeded in part by making inroads with the kind of union constituency that has always been a key part of Kaptur’s base.

In her new ad, Kaptur says that while she has been “fighting back” against Biden, she has also been “working with Republican Rob Portman,” the state’s retiring senator.

At least one other incumbent congressional Democrat has aired an ad distancing himself from Biden: Rep. Jared Golden of Maine, who in 2020 won the most pro-Trump House seat of any



Kaptur, who was first elected in 1982, criticised Biden in the ad over “letting Ohio solar manufacturers be undercut by China” and ended it with an attempt to cast her identity as independent from his

Democrat in the nation. He aired an ad this month positioning himself as an “independent voice” and saying he had voted against “trillions of dollars of President Biden’s agenda because I knew it would make inflation worse.”

The leading House Republican super PAC, the Congressional Leadership Fund, announced a new ad on Friday linking Golden to Biden, saying he “cast one of the deciding votes for Biden’s new massive spending bill.”

Democrats are seeking to boost Biden’s image after the recent signing of the Inflation Reduction Act, with the Democratic National Committee being the latest to announce an ad buy highlighting parts of the package.

In Kaptur’s ad, she also calls her opponent, J R Majewski, out by name and labels him an “extremist.”

Majewski, an Air Force veteran, was a surprise primary winner in May who first garnered attention after turning his lawn into a 19,000-square-foot “Trump 2020” sign. He said he was proud of going to Washington on the day of the January 6, 2021 attack on the Capitol, but added, “I didn’t do anything illegal. Unfortunately, there were some that did.” He has spread the baseless theory that the attack was “driven by the FBI and it was a stage show.”

Who wants to be an influencer?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi @alsinawi

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

If you have travelled recently, you would have booked your hotel through a website, and most likely, you read the reviews written by previous travellers who stayed there and shared their impressions. These comments may affect your decision about staying at a specific place, which is just one example of how reviews from other customers influence our choices. Businesses have realised the importance of reviews and therefore started sending surveys to collect feedback and respond to their comments. As humans, we are more likely to follow others' choices. Therefore, we hear about terms such as “best seller” when buying books, for example, and “signature dish” when ordering food at a particular restaurant. More recently, we saw the rise of a new form of advertising when people with no specific skills

or qualifications become influencers through social media platforms. This is an exciting concept as, up to my knowledge, there are no precise specifications of who can be an influencer and what is exactly their role. Understandably we see people from different age groups and social backgrounds trying hard to achieve influencer status. Let's think closer about what could motivate such people to spend hours recording their daily routines or perform pointless challenges and silly dances. We come up with a list of factors, wanting to be rich and famous come at the top of the list, especially since such influencers become targeted by businesses to help market their products. Gone are the days when models of a specific gender, age, and body shape are used for advertising cars or beauty products.

GETTING INTO ADVERTISING 'FEEDS' IN THE INFLUENCER'S INITIAL BEHAVIOUR, YET SOMETIMES THE SITUATION GOES BEYOND THAT WHEN CHASING FAME BECOMES A FORM OF ADDICTION, AND THE LIKES AND COMMENTS SOME POST TO SUCH ACTIVITIES TRIGGER

Getting into advertising “feeds” in the influencer’s initial behaviour, yet sometimes the situation goes beyond that. It is not uncommon that chasing fame becomes a form of addiction, and the “likes” and comments some post to such activities trigger. Dopamine, the brain chemical responsible for motivation and happiness, which means “likes”, has

the same effects as cocaine and other drugs of abuse. This is why people motivated by “likes” to get into a state of withdrawal from their posts did not trigger the desired response. Some experience depression and anxiety, while others experience grief for the fame, they once had. Sometimes an influencer who gets less famous would do anything to get back into the spotlight, either by posting controversial content or creating conflict and arguments with each other. It can be amusing and exciting for most public members, yet others will eventually lose interest and direct their attention towards new influencers. We all know that impact of influencers does not stop at their dancing and promoting goods, but it goes beyond that. Over the past few years, TikTok and other platforms appear to set out

new habits, behaviours and social standers. These ideas are not limited to a particular country since the Internet made the whole world into a small village, which is trending in Europe and America soon becomes a worldwide phenomenon practice in small villages elsewhere. Needless to say, some of the challenges often posted on this platform are dangerous and can lead to injuries and death. A recent example was a 12-year-old English boy who went into a coma after attempting the breath-holding challenge he saw on TikTok, which eventually damaged his brain. This was just an example, but I am sure there are many other victims of social media challenges that are not always reported. Finally, I think societies should be careful in choosing who to be an influencer and how we let them influence us.

Uganda’s street traders treated ‘like animals’

LIAM TAYLOR

For 13 years, ever since she lost her job in a tobacco factory, Comfort Wanicingrwoth has sold fruit on the streets of Kampala to support her four children. That makes her a criminal in the eyes of the Ugandan state. In July, she was arrested for hawking and spent five days in prison. She said the guards gave her undercooked beans and maggot-infested maize flour to eat, and left her to sleep on the hard floor with nothing but a blanket. “We are not criminals,” Wanicingrwoth said. “We are the people who are poor, who are looking for survival.” City officials have arrested thousands of vendors since January in one of the most severe crackdowns on street trade in the Ugandan capital for years. The move comes after strict Covid-19 restrictions pushed many families further into poverty, and coincides with a sharp jump in prices for essential goods, which is squeezing cash-strapped Ugandans. In Kampala, enforcement teams can be seen patrolling the congested streets accompanied by soldiers and policemen, while furtive vendors flee through labyrinthine shopping arcades. “Police are there with the guns, soldiers are there with the guns: how can you defend yourself?” Wanicingrwoth said. “We are like animals, the way they take us.” However, the city’s top technocrat told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that street vendors had “flooded the streets” as Covid-19 restrictions eased last year, blocking walkways and obstructing shops. “We had people selling all their wares, all their merchandise — tomatoes, eggs, charcoal stoves, roasted meat, whatever,” said Dorothy Kisaka, Executive Director of the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), which manages the city. “It was unsightly really. So we agreed... that we need to clear the streets, we need to enable the city to breathe.” The issue escalated last month when Kampala’s elected Lord Mayor, Erias Lukwago, filed a lawsuit against the KCCA and other state officials — calling the arrest of street vendors “illegal, ultra vires (beyond its powers), irrational and unreasonable.” Kisaka said that she supports efforts to develop clearer regulations on street trading but argued that the KCCA has “a mandate to keep the city orderly and we cannot sit back”. Across sub-Saharan Africa — from Nigeria’s Lagos to Kigali in Rwanda — governments are cracking down on street traders as authorities attempt to impose their idea of a modern city onto fast-growing metropolises.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

Germany’s stony-faced chancellor faces critics on nearly every side



KATRIN BENNHOLD

The writer is Berlin bureau chief for The New York Times

First, he failed to immediately contradict the Palestinian leader who accused Israel of “50 Holocausts” as they stood together in Berlin. Then he was heckled by discontented voters calling him a “liar” and “traitor.” And on Friday, he was summoned to testify in the case of a major tax scam that took place when he was mayor of Hamburg. Chancellor Olaf Scholz of Germany has had better days. “Shame in the chancellery,” screamed one headline in the tabloid Bild this week, while the news magazine Spiegel ran an exasperated column about the chancellor’s hesitant communication style: “Scholz is silent.” Germany’s chancellor, the prominent podcast The Pioneer concluded, has had “a horrific week.” Scholz’s most recent travails come on top of a rocky start to his chancellorship. Since coming into office in December, he has struggled to find his footing as the head of Europe’s biggest democracy and as the successor of Angela Merkel, his former boss, Germany’s iconic chancellor for 16 years, a leader he likes to emulate. Given Germany’s economic and political power in Europe, weak leadership in Berlin has implications for leadership in the European Union as well, at a time when no other country could easily step into a vacuum. In neighbouring France, the second-richest member state, President Emmanuel Macron recently lost his majority in parliament. Accused of being too aloof and passive in his communication, Scholz, a Social Democrat, has slumped in opinion polls since the election, falling far behind his popular vice-chancellor and foreign minister, both from the Green party. Abroad, too, his dithering has not gone unnoticed. In February, Scholz surprised the world, and his own country, when he responded to Russia’s war of Ukraine with a 100-billion euro plan to rearm Germany, send weapons to Ukraine and end his nation’s deep dependence on Russian energy. It was Germany’s biggest foreign

policy shift since the Cold War, what Scholz called a “Zeitenwende” — an epochal change — in a speech to parliament that won applause for his leadership at home and abroad. But in the nearly six months since the war of Ukraine by President Vladimir Putin of Russia, Scholz has ruled out a gas embargo, saying it would be too costly. He is still dragging his feet on weapons deliveries to Ukraine. And according to a new report by the German Economic GIVEN GERMANY’S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL POWER IN EUROPE, WEAK LEADERSHIP IN BERLIN HAS IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE EUROPEAN UNION AS WELL, AT A TIME WHEN NO OTHER COUNTRY COULD EASILY STEP INTO A VACUUM

Institute, a Cologne-based think tank, Germany might fail — again — to meet the target of spending 2 per cent of gross domestic product on defence agreed by Nato members.

“Ever since the Zeitenwende speech, it has just been a series of mishaps,” said Sudha David-Wilp, deputy director of the Berlin office of the German Marshall Fund. “Lots has been promised but when you look at what has actually been delivered it is underwhelming and we’re coming up to the six-month anniversary of the war.” “There is a lack of communication skills and a lot of hesitancy,” she added. That hesitancy was on stark display on Tuesday when Scholz held a joint news conference with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. Asked whether he was ready to apologise for the Palestinian “terrorist” attack at the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich that killed 11 Israeli athletes, Abbas launched into a tirade against Israel’s treatment of Palestinians. “Between 1947 and today Israel has committed 50 massacres in 50 Palestinian locations,” he said, before adding, “50 massacres, 50 Holocausts.” A stony-faced Scholz listened but did not verbally respond. He shook Abbas’ hand when his spokesperson wrapped up the news conference immediately thereafter. Criticisms of Scholz came swiftly. “Such remarks cannot be allowed to stand,” said Josef Schuster, president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

— The New York Times



Chancellor Olaf Scholz scratches his head as he arrives for the weekly meeting of the cabinet at the chancellery in Berlin. – AFP file photo

Usernames and passwords, the unwinnable game



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

As if having to have a username and password wasn't bad enough, now we have mobile phone verifications, one-time-passwords, and we must change our passwords at regular intervals, it's all becoming a bit of a pain, isn't it?

I logged onto my banking website the other day, as millions of us do daily, to be 'advised' that I must change my password. Now, I don't know if I'm the only one, but I like to keep all of my passwords dissimilar, but with a common theme, and nothing that I have ever written down, with no birth dates, no place of birth, no pet names, thoroughly unique, and that only I would know. I'm not paranoid or anything, but I reckon I've got this sorted you see...

So, I change my password, or so I think, because up pop the dreaded words... advising me that my new password is 'not accepted,' or 'not acceptable,' I can't recall which... because I can't use a password which I have previously used with this bank. "Why not?" I ask myself... and feeling ever so slightly 'miffed,' I think, "Okay, no problem, I still have another 'up my sleeve,' and enter that one, which is just as quickly rejected for the same reason.

I hesitate again, "Oh my God," and two things happen... first, I am inconvenienced, because

WHY DOES MY
PASSWORD
NEED TO HAVE
BETWEEN 8 AND
15 CHARACTERS,
AND WHY MUST
ONE OF THEM BE
'UPPER CASE,' AND
WHY MUST ONE
BE '\$PECI@L,' AND
WHY DOES IT NEED
TO BE 'NEW'?

does it need to be 'new'?

I do also realise however, that such considerations are meaningless. Nobody is listening, and probably somewhere in the myriad of documentation I signed in opening the account (you know, the bits that none of us read), that I agreed to protect my account using passwords and pin numbers according to the bank's requirements. So, I reach for my pad and paper, and work out a fourth password that is safer than the 'Da Vinci Code!'

I enter it, and it is accepted, and all is well with the world except now I have a fourth password in my 'personal security system,' that must be committed to memory, while I'm, slightly paranoid I know, shredding the notepaper I composed the fourth password on, through my office shredder. "There are no flies on me," I mutter to myself with the smug complacency of an increasingly mature, clearly intelligent, clearly articulate, journalist and academic. All is good with the world; the earth's axis has not tipped past 23.4 degrees, and the Sun will rise tomorrow.

A few days later I went to login again, on the same site, and confidently tapped in my 'new' password, only to be advised that the username or password was incorrect. "Oh, I must have pressed a wrong key," I muttered quietly... and tried again, but only with the same result. Now I could have gone down the road of clicking on 'Forgotten your password,' but no, in addition mature, intelligent, and articulate, I am also stubborn, obdurate, intransigent, obdurate, and all their synonyms, so I tried a third time... well you know the result already...

Am I alone in this? Am I alone in feeling an unwilling rider on the passwords merry-go-round, by two factor verifications, by one-time-pin numbers (OTP's), by banks especially telling us we need these measures to protect our money, and then when someone hacks our cards through their system, it's not their fault?

Ah well, such is life, and to finish on a lighter note... Why can't you have 'Lamb Stew' as a password? It's not 'Stroganoff'!



RECORD-LOW WATER LEVELS

An aerial view shows a local resident standing on a rock in the middle of the Yangtze river that is approaching record-low water levels during a regional drought in Chongqing, China, on Saturday.
— Reuters

How to boost Nato-EU cooperation

IAN BOND, LUIGI SCAZZIERI

Russia's war on Ukraine in February was a watershed moment for European security. But relations between Nato and the European Union remain marred by mutual suspicion, institutional rivalry, and a lack of effective cooperation. The two organisations must set aside their differences and work together.

Russia once again poses a long-term threat to European security. At the same time, the economic spillover from the war in Ukraine will intensify security challenges along Europe's southern flank. And, as the current crisis involving Taiwan has shown, China's increasing assertiveness will loom progressively larger in America's strategic thinking.

The key European security challenge in the coming years will be to strengthen deterrence against Russia while retaining the ability to tackle other threats. When it comes to deterring Russia, Nato is clearly the indispensable organisation, because there is no viable alternative to its integrated command structure. The Ukraine war has reinvigorated Nato's core mission of standing up to Russia and defending its members' territory if deterrence fails. Under new defense plans, Nato's rapid response force will increase from 40,000 to 300,000 troops. And Finland and Sweden will soon become members.

Nato's deterrent power is underpinned by the US forces stationed in Europe – which have increased by around 20,000 since Russia went to war with Ukraine, to over 100,000 – and by America's nuclear arsenal. But Europeans cannot expect the US to continue shouldering the bulk of their defence forever. Even before Donald Trump's presidency, US complaints about unfair burden-sharing were growing louder and more frequent. America's increased focus on Asia means that the US contribution to Europe's defence is likely to shrink over time. And Europeans cannot rule out the possibility that Trump or someone in his isolationist "America First" mold will become president in 2025 and walk away from the US commitment to Nato.

So, Europeans have little choice but to contribute more to their own defence. Since the Ukraine conflict began, EU countries have announced an extra €200 billion (\$203 billion) in military expenditure. But many countries could find implementing these commitments politically difficult given the economic downturn and competing budget demands.

Moreover, the impact of the additional defence expenditure depends on an overall plan for determining the weapons systems, logistics, and munitions needed. But European defence spending remains uncoordinated, with little intergovernmental cooperation.

According to the European Defence Agency, joint research and development is currently only 6 per cent of total EU defence R&D, and joint procurement accounts for just 11 per cent of total equipment orders.

The EU has a key role to play in strengthening European security in a manner that complements Nato's efforts. For starters, the Union needs to help member states manage the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine – thereby helping to sustain a political consensus for sanctions against Russia.

RUSSIA'S WAR ON UKRAINE HAS SHOWN THAT EUROPE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO TREAT QUASI-THEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS OVER EU AND NATO PRIMACY AS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS OWN SECURITY. WHILE THE ALLIANCE CLEARLY REMAINS INDISPENSABLE TO DETERRING RUSSIA, THE EU HAS A CRUCIAL COMPLEMENTARY ROLE TO PLAY

The EU can also help to prepare European armies better for conflict. The plan to establish a 5,000-strong rapid reaction force would push member states' armed forces to cooperate more closely, contributing to their overall ability to deter threats. And the EU is better placed than Nato to confront security challenges such as disinformation and election interference, because it is through the Union that member states regulate the technology platforms through which misinformation spreads.

But the EU's greatest potential contribution to European security lies

in its ability to foster higher defence spending by member states. The EU's fiscal rules can encourage this by excluding defense investment from budget deficit limits, in the same way that investment in the green and digital transformations has been excluded since the start of the pandemic. Moreover, the Union can devise incentives to promote joint procurement and deeper cooperation among national military forces.

Recent proposals from the European Commission, particularly a value-added tax exemption for joint defence procurement, could yield significant progress on defence spending, coordination, and efforts to strengthen European military capabilities. But European countries lack a truly collaborative mindset when it comes to developing, acquiring, and operating defence capabilities. Developing such an approach will require stronger political direction from national leaders.

The EU and other Nato members should ensure that their national defence markets are as open to one another as possible, to ensure economies of scale. The EU's attempts to improve military capabilities should be guided by the principle of maximising effectiveness and should not unnecessarily damage longstanding relationships between EU defence firms and their non-EU partners.

For its part, the US should continue to signal strong support for a greater EU role in European security and defence, particularly in developing the bloc's military capabilities. At the same time, US policymakers can influence the elaboration of EU initiatives in ways that avoid duplication and strengthen European security.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine has shown that defending European values and interests is a matter of life and death. Europe can no longer afford to treat quasi-theological arguments over EU and Nato primacy as more important than its own security.

© Project Syndicate, 2022



Nato's deterrent power is underpinned by the US forces stationed in Europe.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Norway's Karsten Warholm celebrates gold after the men's 400m Hurdles final during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Munich. — AFP



Britain's Zharnel Hughes (C) celebrates winning gold in the men's 200m.



Netherlands' Femke Bol celebrates winning the women's 400m hurdles final.



Britain's Laura Muir celebrates winning the gold medal in the women's 1500m final.

WARHOLM STORMS BACK TO FORM

B O L S E A L S M E M O R A B L E 4 0 0 M E U R O D O U B L E

MUNICH: Karsten Warholm announced his return to form as he retained his European 400m hurdles title in Munich on Friday while Femke Bol sealed an unlikely double.

Britain's Laura Muir and Zharnel Hughes bagged dominant golds in the women's 1,500m and men's 200m respectively, but their team-mate Dina Asher-Smith was trumped by Swiss rival Mujinga Kambundji in her bid to defend the 200m title.

Warholm's performance was all the more impressive as he makes his way back from injury, a setback that saw him come in seventh in last month's world championships in Oregon.

Warholm, who set a sensational world record of 45.94sec when winning Olympic gold in Tokyo last year, proved to be back on form

in Munich, timing a championship record of 47.12 seconds for gold.

He finished well ahead of France's Wilfried Happio, in 48.56sec, and Cuban-born Turk Yasmani Copello (48.78).

Warholm's time smashed the previous European best of 47.48sec -- a then-world record -- set by West Germany's Harald Schmid in Athens in 1982.

"It's even more special now because I've learned these things don't come so often and you should appreciate them even more because things turn around very quickly in sport, so I'm very happy to be back," said Warholm.

"The injury has healed and I feel much more confident so today was just running and enjoying it."

The indefatigable Bol of the Netherlands followed up on her victory in Wednesday's 400m flat

by totally dominating the women's 400m hurdles to seal a memorable European double.

Bol, like Warholm, clocked a championship record for victory in 52.67sec ahead of Ukrainians Viktoriya Tkachuk and Anna Ryzhykova.

"Winning this gold medal is a big relief," said Bol. "It was a great race for me. I am very surprised to achieve such a fast time."

"It was very hard mentally to race the 400m without hurdles. I am so proud to achieve the double."

MUIR LEADS BRITISH CHARGE

Muir sealed Britain's first gold of a fantastic night of track and field as she accelerated away at the bell for a comprehensive victory in the women's 1,500m.

She retained her title from

Berlin in 2018 in 4:01.08, capping a brilliant championship period that has also seen her win Olympic silver, world bronze and Commonwealth gold.

"I knew my speed was the best for the last lap, so I just tried to hold it and to control the race," said Muir.

Defending champion Ramil Guliyev pulled up injured halfway through the men's 200m, Hughes stepping up to better his silver in Tuesday's 100m behind Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs as he streaked to victory in 20.07sec.

There was a second European silver for Nethaneel Mitchell-Blake in 20.17sec, with Italian Filippo Tortu taking bronze (20.27).

"I knew that I am faster than other guys on the track because of my fast 100m," said Hughes, born

and raised in the tiny Caribbean island of Anguilla, a British Overseas Territory.

"I really did the damage on the bend, I really dominated on it. As soon as I crossed the finish line I knew that I'd won because I didn't see anyone else there."

'CLOUD NINE'

There was no such luck for Asher-Smith, who was outstripped on the home stretch by Kambundji, who won in 22.32sec to the Briton's 22.43.

"I am on cloud nine. I knew this race was going to be tough. I made sure to get a clean race. It is overwhelming to come home with two medals," said Kambundji, who also won 100m silver.

There was a humdinger of a competition in a high-quality men's discus, Lithuanian teenager

and world silver medallist Mykolas Alekna throwing a championship record of 69.78m on his fifth attempt for victory.

World champion Kristjan Ceh of Slovakia took silver with 68.28m, with Briton Lawrence Okoye going home with bronze (67.14), as Sweden's Olympic champion Daniel Stahl could only finish fifth.

Finland's Topi Raitanen produced an outstanding final kick to win gold in the men's 3,000m steeplechase in 8:21.80 ahead of Italians Ahmed Abdelwahed and Osama Zoghli.

And after earlier silver and bronze medals for Ukraine, the war-torn country finally bagged an European gold in Munich when Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk won the women's triple jump with a best effort of 15.02m. — AFP



India's wicketkeeper Sanju Samson (R) and fielder Shikhar Dhawan (L) appeal for the wicket of Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza (C) during the second ODI in Harare. — AFP

Samson shines as India claim Zimbabwe ODI series

HARARE: Wicketkeeper Sanju Samson struck an unbeaten 43 to guide India to a five-wicket victory on Saturday and a series win after the second of three one-day internationals in Harare.

Zimbabwe made a modest 161 after losing the toss and India recovered from losing skipper KL Rahul leg before for one to reach 167-5 with 146 balls remaining.

The result relegates the third match on Monday to a dead rubber, but Zimbabwe will be encouraged after putting up a much better show than two days ago, when they suffered a 10-wicket hiding.

Batting at number six, Samson faced 39 deliveries over 51 minutes and smashed four sixes and three fours.

Opener Shikhar Dhawan and fellow top-order batsman Shubman Gill contributed 33 runs each as India recovered from 5-1 to eventually finish comfortable winners.

Vice-captain Dhawan struck four fours in a brisk innings while the more cautious Gill notched six fours. Luke Jongwe was the most successful Zimbabwe bowler, taking the wickets of Gill and Ishan Kishan for the loss of 33 runs in four overs. The unbeaten 43 and three catches earned Samson the player of the match award and the wicketkeeper said he enjoyed his time in front of the stumps.

"I took three catches but I missed a stumping — as wicketkeepers we are used to being told about things

we did not do well," he said.

"I really enjoy wicketkeeping and contributing to this win. In this match the fast bowlers picked the length much quicker and I really enjoyed that.

Rahul said: "We bat deep and it is good for some of the guys to get time in the middle. We were not nervous despite my early, cheap dismissal.

'GOOD CHALLENGE'

"I wanted to get some runs but it did not happen. Hopefully in the next game I will be more successful.

"The Zimbabwe bowlers came hard at us, they are big, tall, strong boys, and created a good challenge for us batters."

India won the toss, chose to field for the second successive match and Shardul Thakur took three wickets as India bowled Zimbabwe out in 38.1 overs.

The medium-fast bowler replaced Deepak Chahar in the only change from the team that won the first match by 10 wickets.

Thakur, known as the Paighar Express after the town north of Mumbai where he was born, captured the wickets of opener Innocent Kaia, captain Regis Chakabva and Jongwe. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Zimbabwe 161, 38.1 overs (S Williams 42, R Burl 39 n.o.; Shardul Thakur 3-38) v India 167-5, 25.4 overs (Sanju Samson 43 n.o., Shikhar Dhawan 33, Shubman Gill 33; L Jongwe 2-33)

Shaheen out of Asia Cup, England T20Is

KARACHI: Pakistan's frontline fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi has been ruled out of next week's Asia Cup and the following Twenty20 international series against England with a knee injury, doctors said on Saturday.

The injury to the 22-year-old is a major blow to Pakistan's chances in the six-nation Asia Cup starting in the United Arab Emirates from August 27.

Shaheen's injury has already forced him to miss the second Test in Sri Lanka last month.

The left-armer has accompanied the team to the Netherlands for a three-match one-day international series and was in rehabilitation before doctors advised him to rest for four to six weeks.

"Shaheen has been advised 4-6 weeks rest by the PCB Medical Advisory Committee and independent specialists following latest scans and reports," said a Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) release.

Doctors hope the paceman will return to competitive cricket in October with the T20 international tri-series in New Zealand, which will be followed by the ICC Men's T20 World Cup Australia 2022.

Shaheen anchored Pakistan's upset win over India in last year's Twenty20 World Cup, also played in the UAE.

A PCB medical officer said he is expected to recover with rest. "I have spoken with Shaheen and he is understandably upset with the news, but he is a brave young man who has vowed to come back strongly to serve his country and team," doctor Najeebullah Soomro is quoted as saying in the release.

"Although he has made progress during his rehabilitation in Rotterdam, it is now clear he will require more time and is likely to return to competitive cricket in October."

The release added that Shaheen's replacement for the Asia Cup will be announced shortly.

The Pakistan side will arrive in Dubai from Rotterdam on Monday. — AFP



Southee, Boult demolish Windies order to level series



Tim Southee (L) of New Zealand celebrates the dismissal of Alzarri Joseph (R) of West Indies during the second ODI match between West Indies and New Zealand at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados. — AFP

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados: Tim Southee and Trent Boult combined to demolish the West Indies top-order batting as New Zealand scored a series-levelling victory in the second One-Day International of a three-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Friday.

After Finn Allen's 96 anchored the Black Caps to 212 off 48.2 overs batting first on another challenging pitch, Southee and Bolt claimed three wickets apiece as the home side limped to 63 for seven off 22.4 overs when a second heavy shower resulted in a prolonged delay to the day/night fixture.

Set a revised target of 212 off 41 overs on the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern scoring method, Yannic Cariah's 52 in his debut ODI innings and a swashbuckling 49 off 31 balls by Alzarri Joseph gave the tourists a fright in a frenetic 85-run ninth-wicket partnership.

However Southee was summoned by stand-in captain Tom Latham and he responded immediately by bowling Joseph

while Allen completed an excellent boundary catch to end Cariah's effort as the West Indies were eventually dismissed for 161 off 35.3 overs to lose by 50 runs and set the stage for the series decider on Sunday.

Southee's final figures were four for 19 while Boult's six-over spell at the start of the innings earned him three for 18.

Earlier, opening batsman Allen's effort off 117 balls with seven fours and three sixes was one of just four double-figure innings as the Black Caps, beaten in the first match by five wickets at the same venue two days earlier, were again found wanting against the home side's combination of spin and pace.

"I've always known I've got the grit in me but I never showed it. Showing now that I can do it is good," said Allen on receiving the 'Man of the Match' award.

"The wickets haven't been batting-friendly but I have enjoyed the challenge."

In just his second ODI, off-spinner Kevin Sinclair claimed

four for 41, including the last three wickets, terminating a last-wicket stand of 31 between Mitchell Santner and Boult with a catch off his own bowling to dismiss Boult.

Former captain Jason Holder set the tone for the innings with an excellent opening spell, the fast-medium bowler snaring two early wickets and then returning to end Allen's quest for the hundred in finishing with three for 24 off nine overs.

"It's disappointing to lose so many wickets in the powerplay," said West Indies captain Nicholas Pooran in reflecting on the opening period of his team's reply when they slumped to 27 for six.

"Just one good partnership in the top order might have been enough to see us home." — AFP

BRIEF SCORES

New Zealand 212 off 48.2 overs (F Allen 96, D Mitchell 41, M Santner 26 n.o.; K Sinclair 4-41, J Holder 3-24, A Hosein 2-51) vs West Indies 161 off 35.3 overs (Y Cariah 52, A Joseph 49, S Hope 16, K Carty 16; T Southee 4-22, T Boult 3-18, M Santner 1-21)

Medvedev sets up Tsitsipas semi

KEYS OUSTS RYBAKINA; CORIC TO MEET NORRIE

CINCINNATI: Daniil Medvedev and Stefanos Tsitsipas advanced to a semifinal showdown after both dismissed American opponents at the ATP and WTA Cincinnati Masters on Friday.

Top seed Medvedev fired 18 aces among 30 winners in a 7-6 (7/1), 6-3 defeat of Taylor Fritz in their Friday quarterfinal.

Tsitsipas, semifinalist at the last two editions, weathered a brief first-set rain interruption on the way to his 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3, defeat of John Isner, playing here for the 15th time at age 37 and the oldest quarterfinalist since 1969.

In the bottom half of the draw, Croat Borna Coric crushed Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-4, 6-4 to set up a semifinal against Britain's Cameron Norrie, who had to work for more than three hours for a 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4 defeat of Spanish teenager Carlos Alcaraz.

The tight battle ended just before midnight as Norrie completed what he called one of his best career wins. He stumbled leading a set and 4-1 as Alcaraz pushed back, winning the second set to level the match.

"I was thinking too much about the finish line," the winner said. "I got tight and he raised his level.

"I had to take my time or the match could have gotten away from me... I managed to turn it around."

Greek fourth seed Tsitsipas was relieved to have passed his examination by Isner.

"It's never easy to play him, due to all his variations of play," Tsitsipas said. "The most important thing is to stay patient.

"The match came down to a few points. I was able to hang in there and make one more ball - he didn't give me a lot to work with."

Tsitsipas added: "Against Medvedev, I need to be concentrated and approach my game in a precise manner. "I will let my tennis do the talking."

Medvedev, the 2019 tournament winner, strengthened his grip on the world number one ranking at the last major tune-up prior to the US Open, earning his victory over 11th seed Fritz in one hour, 40 minutes.

"The second set was much better than the first," Medvedev said. "Taylor is a great player, from the baseline he didn't give you much space. "He was hitting the ball strong, making a lot of good points. "But I'm happy with my level. If I can continue to play this way and raise my level during matches I can beat anybody," added Medvedev, who leads semifinal opponent Tsitsipas 7-2 in head-to-head meetings.

KEYS DOWNS RYBAKINA

In the women's quarterfinals, Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina saved three match points before falling 6-2, 6-4 to Madison Keys.

The Kazakh, who lifted the All England Club trophy last month against the odds, exited the pre-US Open event in 92 minutes as she went down to the American titleholder from 2019.

"Elena is a remarkable player who can turn a match around at any moment," unseeded Keys said. "I needed to stay out front.

"It felt like I needed 12 match points, so I'm very happy to get the win," added Keys, who on Thursday ousted world number one Iga Swiatek.

Keys next plays Petra Kvitova, a two-time Wimbledon champion



(From top) Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE) returns a shot during his match against John Isner (USA) at the Western & Southern Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center. Madison Keys (USA) returns a shot during her match against Elena Rybakina (KAZ) and Aryna Sabalenka (BLR) returns a shot during her match against Shuai Peng (CHN). — USA Today Sports

ATP/WTA CINCINNATI MASTERS RESULTS

MEN (QUARTERFINALS):

Daniil Medvedev (x1) bt Taylor Fritz (USA x11) 7-6 (7/1), 6-3; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x4) bt John Isner (USA) 7-6 (7/5), 5-7, 6-3; Borna Coric (CRO) bt Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x7) 6-4, 6-4; Cameron Norrie (GBR x8) bt Carlos Alcaraz (ESP x3) 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 6-4

WOMEN (QUARTERFINALS):

Madison Keys (USA) bt Elena Rybakina (KAZ) 6-2, 6-4; Petra Kvitova (CZE) bt Ajla Tomljanovic (AUS) 6-2, 6-3; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x6) bt Shuai Zhang (CHN) 6-4, 7-6 (7/1); Caroline Garcia (FRA) bt Jessica Pegula (x7) 6-1, 7-5

who defeated Australian qualifier Ajla Tomljanovic 6-2, 6-3.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka ended the dream run of Zhang Shuai with a 6-4, 7-6 (7/1), defeat after the Chinese player had put out Naomi Osaka and second seed Anett Kontaveit.

Sabalenka plays for the final against qualifier Caroline Garcia,

who defeated American Jessica Pegula, the winner over US Open champion Emma Raducanu in the previous round, 6-1, 7-5 in 74 minutes.

The French winner leads the Tour with 25 main-draw victories since June; she was the first from her nation to play a Cincinnati quarterfinal since Marion Bartoli

12 years ago.

"I had the worst warm-up of the week today," Garcia said. "But that doesn't mean you will play badly. "I was able to play the aggressive style that I like. I hit very freely against a solid opponent.

"I had to play my best today to beat Jessica. I did it and I'm very happy I got the win." — AFP



WithU Yamaha RNF's South African rider Darryn Binder rides during the fourth free practice session of the MotoGP Austrian Grand Prix at the Redbull Ring racetrack in Spielberg. — AFP

MOTOGP TO INTRODUCE F1-STYLE SPRINTS

SPIELBERG: MotoGP is to follow Formula One's lead and introduce Saturday sprints to race weekends next year, the sport's governing body FIM announced on Saturday, an initiative denounced as "stupid" by world champion Fabio Quartararo.

In contrast to F1, which is staging only three sprints this campaign, MotoGP plans to hold one on the eve of every Grand Prix throughout 2023.

And in another marked difference, the sprint, half the normal race distance with half the points on offer, will not serve to shape the grid for the following day's Grand Prix.

With its arrival a rider who wins the sprint and the race itself can collect 37 points — as opposed to the 25 on offer at the moment.

"It's time to give (MotoGP) more exposure not only on television, but also to the fans," FIM

president Jorge Viegas told a press conference at this weekend's Austrian MotoGP in Spielberg.

"We need more fans, we need a better spectacle and we are going to fill up Saturdays," he added.

The new weekend sprint schedule has been tweaked, with only two, longer, practice runs before the traditional two-part qualifying session.

Q2 comprises the 10 best combined practice times, plus the two quickest riders from Q1.

The qualifying result will shape the grids for both the sprint and the Grand Prix itself 24 hours later.

The idea has not received universal approval from the pits however, with Quartararo leading the dissenters.

"I find that it's totally stupid," said the Yamaha star who raised the issue of increased rider burn out.

"If we staged a sprint from time to time like in Formula One that could be interesting but not every Saturday. "There are circuits which really push us."

Quartararo hit out like other riders have done at the sport's authorities for approving the measure "without asking the advice of the riders".

The first they heard about it was on Friday evening.

"It was during a meeting of the security commission that we were all told of the change," he said.

"We have kept them informed as much as possible that there will be some changes,

(as well as) on the spirit of the sprint race," countered Herve Poncharal, president of the International Road Racing Teams Association.

Quartararo's scepticism was not shared by all though, with Enea Bastianini suggesting the new format "may be a good thing, another reason to do things well".

The Italian rider was speaking before going out to claim pole for Sunday's Austrian Grand Prix.

The Moto2 and Moto3 championships are unaffected by the changes coming in in 2023, with the sprint only involving MotoGP. — AFP

In contrast to F1, which is staging only three sprints this campaign, MotoGP plans to hold one on the eve of every Grand Prix throughout 2023



homesUs

Instant Approval

Paperless

0% Interest Rate

0%

Introducing BankDhofar's
Intelligent Easy Payment Plan

For details, please scan the code

Terms & conditions apply

بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

the best bank for you

3478 873 | www.bankdhofar.com

Construction of Oman’s first calcined coke project completed



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The construction works of Oman’s first calcined coke project at the Sohar Freezone by Sanvira Carbon FZC LLC have successfully been completed. The \$150 million project, which was launched in November last year, will significantly contribute to the production of calcinated petroleum coke as it will produce around 600,000 tonnes per annum of calcined petcoke.

The project will also reduce the dependence on calcined coke imports. The project is in line with the government’s objectives of developing the manufacturing sector in Oman.

The project’s construction works were carried out by Johnson Arabia. Sean Kenny, the Sales Manager of Johnson Arabia said that the Sanvira calcined coke project was a new site that received its very first equipment.

Johnson Arabia scope of the work for the project was MEP (mechanical, electrical, plumbing). For the facility, the Johnson Arabia managed to successfully install the roofing as well as set the steel structure erection. A range of boom lifts played a vital role in the project’s construction. More especially the 28-metre straight booms for the steel structure erection and roofing installation.

Additionally, a combination of the 28-metre booms, 16-metre, and 15-metre booms alongside scissor lifts were utilised for the inside structure works. The scissor lifts had the impressive capability of holding well up to six people inside alongside fire and safety equipment as well as tools.

Sanvira Carbon (SFZ) LLC is a joint venture between Oman National Investments Development Company SAOC (Tanmia), Sanvira Industries Limited and United Business Trading LLC. Tanmia is a part of Oman Investment Authority — the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman. Sanvira Industries Limited is one of India’s largest producers of calcined petroleum coke. United Business Trading LLC, on the other hand, specialises in the production and marketing of chemical products in Oman.

Sohar International approves increase in authorised share capital to RO 1 billion

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

Sohar International, at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) of its shareholders on Thursday, agreed to increase the authorised share capital of the company from RO 400 million to RO 1 billion while amending Article 5 of the Articles of Association accordingly.

The meeting was presided over by Mohammed bin Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of the Board of Directors, and attended by other members of the Board, the executive management team of Sohar International and shareholders.

Held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Qurum, the EGM was streamed via the electronic platform for convening General Meetings which is accessible through the Muscat Clearing and Depository’s website.

The EGM ratified all the items on the agenda, including the issuance of up to 75,000 additional Tier 1 capital instruments in the form of perpetual bonds comprising an issue of up to 50,000 bonds with a green shoe option for up to an additional 25,000 bonds on a private placement basis, at a price of RO 1,000 per bond, aggregating up to RO 75 million.

In addition, the EGM authorised the Board of Directors to determine the other terms of



THE INCREASE IN THE BANK’S CAPITAL WILL ENABLE THE BANK TO FURTHER GROW, AND IN THE PROCESS, PLAY A SIGNIFICANT ROLE WITHIN OMAN AS WELL AS CONTRIBUTE TO OMAN VISION 2040.

issuance in relation to the Tier 1 issue and take all the necessary procedures and actions to complete the process.

Commenting on the bank’s steadfast performance and growing reverence, Mohammed al Ardhi said, “As the bank progresses alongside the nation and economy, responding to the evolving market conditions and needs, Sohar International continues to deliver on multiple fronts, contributing to the country’s progress and supporting the larger community.

The increase in the bank’s capital will enable the bank to further grow, and in the process, play a significant role within Oman as well as contribute to Oman Vision 2040. We are hence more fortified

than ever before to increase market share and add value to all our stakeholders.”

Sohar International recorded a profit for the period ending June 30, 2022 of RO 18.47 million compared to RO 15.20 million for the same period last year. Driven by an increase in loans, advances, and Islamic financings, the bank was also able to grow its total assets by 8.2 per cent to RO 4.364 billion as of June 30, 2022.

Meanwhile, the bank’s customer deposits also increased by 11.5 per cent to RO 2.568 billion as compared to RO 2.304 billion on June 30, 2021. Following a

successful rights issue in Q3 2021 of RO 50 million, Sohar International witnessed an increase in shareholder’s equity from RO 340.3 million to RO 396.0 million.

Sohar International’s Chief Executive Officer, Ahmed al Musalmi said, “By staying committed to its growth strategy, Sohar International has continued to play a proactive role in Oman socioeconomic development, actively work to provide compelling offerings, transform customer experience thru well qualified workforce and cutting edge technologies.”

Omani government to appoint investment attachés at key embassies globally

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 20

The Omani government plans to appoint commercial and investment attachés to a number of its strategic embassies around the world, according to Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The move is designed to enhance the country’s “investment infrastructure”, the official said at a key forum held in London recently.

The daylong event, organised by the ministry with the support of the Anglo-Omani Society, Omani British Business Council, Omani British Friendship Association and the UK Department for

International Trade, attracted dignitaries from both Oman and the United Kingdom.

At the forum, Al Yousef announced the appointment of a well-known Omani official as the Sultanate of Oman’s UK Commercial and Investment Attaché.

Arwa bint Abdul Rahim al Balushi, who was until recently associated with the Oman Investment Authority — the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman — will now be based at the Omani Embassy in London, he noted.

“Building on the historic and longstanding Oman-UK relationship, Attaché Arwa and her team will support Oman-UK business connectivity in the years to come and more



The desk will provide special support for UK investors wishing to explore Oman-UK business and trade opportunities

QAIS BIN MOHAMMED AL YOUSEF

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

immediately, generate stronger commercial and investment ties,” Al Yousef stated.

The UK is currently the largest foreign investor in Oman with investments totalling £17.8 billion (RO 8.1 billion approximately) in 2021. Significantly, Al Yousef also announced the establishment of a UK Investor Desk at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

“The desk will provide special support for UK investors wishing to explore Oman-UK business and trade opportunities,” he said.

In his address to the London forum, Al Yousef also shed light on the Oman National Programme for Investment and Export Development

(Nazdaher), which was launched in March 2021 with the goal of enhancing and enabling the private sector’s role in driving economic development by creating an inviting investment environment.

Nazdaher covers key investment sectors, such as energy, mining, manufacturing, transport, aviation, tourism, information and communication technology, and food security, featuring a list of investment initiatives and projects undertaken by the relevant entities.

“With FDI and exports as its priorities, Nazdaher will — at the end of the year — launch a ‘one-stop-shop’ style Invest in Oman centre,” Al Yousef added.

Omantel deploys 5G in urban areas of Muscat, North & South Al Batinah governorates

MUSCAT: Omantel has completed the deployment of 5G in populated areas of the governorates of Muscat, Al Batinah South and Al Batinah North. “We have successfully rolled out a large number of new 5G sites in the populated areas of Muscat, Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South governorates.

These new sites will serve home Internet and mobile Internet alike, and users will get an optimum speed even at the edge of the coverage range,” said Aladdin Baitfadhil, Chief Commercial Officer at Omantel.

Similarly, Omantel has advanced efforts in the rollout of 5G sites in populated areas across the country.

The city of Salalah is one among many other locations



that the company has targeted due to the high demand for an

ultra-fast Internet connection. “We managed to ensure a fast and

steady connection everywhere within the coverage range, even

for mobile users, through smaller 5G cells that connect to the main tower,” he explained.

Baitfadhil further said, “5G is an integral part of Omantel’s ecosystem and we have the widest coverage of the network in Oman. We see 5G as the key enabler for Industry 4.0 technologies, like IoT, Cloud Computing, Big Data & Analytics, Augmented Reality and Artificial Intelligence, with its massive network capacity and ultra-low latency.

Our role, at Omantel, is to lay the groundwork to help our partners in the public and private sectors to tap into the growing opportunities that arise as technology advances.”

“Due to demographic and geographic factors, 5G is the way forward to ensure a high-

speed and low-latency Internet connection in Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South governorates and other locations where “fiber” is technically challenging and financially unviable.

Therefore, we are keen on enhancing our 5G footprint in Al Batinah and elsewhere to build on our main role of connecting the society within Oman and with the world to the utmost level,” he noted.

5G offers a seamless Internet experience, and it takes home and mobile services to a whole new level of excellence. With the high throughput and ultra-low latency, customers can now experience immersive gaming, cloud gaming, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) capabilities and much more.

Zubair Corporation highlights importance of performance management in organisational success

MUSCAT: Adil al Rahbi, Group Chief Transformation Officer (GCTO) of The Zubair Corporation, recently inaugurated a workshop highlighting the relation between employee’s performance and organisational success.

The workshop, titled, “The SMART Performance Management Process”, was organised by the Zubair Corporation’s HR department at Bait Al Zubair, and saw a number of executives and line managers from different departments of The Zubair Corporation and its subsidiaries participating in the workshop. With an aim to build a productive work environment based on a culture of high performance,



the workshop aims to improve the quality of the performance management process and emphasises on the importance of linking employee performance with the objectives of the group companies.

Adil al Rahbi said, “The Zubair Corporation seeks to launch several initiatives in the field of human capital management in order to enhance the culture of

institutional performance. This can be achieved by unifying the efforts made towards achieving the future goals of the Group that are set by the corporation’s board of directors.

This workshop is part of a series of workshops that will be implemented according to a plan designed to change some of the perceptions associated with the performance management (PM)

process. The workshop aims to change these perceptions related to PM process from being routine annual procedures to becoming an essential tool in the success and prosperity of any organisation as well as being an effective tool for achieving continuous improvement for both the organisation and the employee.”

“We need to organise such workshops, now, more than ever, so that companies can achieve the desired goals of their strategic plans through optimal investment in human capital and by upgrading their performance in various disciplines and at all functional levels. There is a direct relationship between the prosperity of any organisation and employee performance,” he added.

The benefits of business digitalisation



STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com
@stefanovirgilli

The writer is a member of the International Press Association

There was a time when we used to ask for “the original” invoice. It was a time when the fax machine was one of the most advanced pieces of technology in our offices. And most importantly, emails were still seen with diffidence.

Rightly so I would add with hind sight... At the end of the day, we are all still receiving the usual scam email promising us a 7 digits inheritance from a Prince far away.

But recently there has been a well needed shift towards trusting digital records, and in the past few years it has seen a drastic acceleration. For a SME, whether the invoice is sent by email, WhatsApp, or even scribbled on a piece of paper, might not make too much difference.

But for multi-million-dollar transactions, keeping track of the documentation rigorously, is a must. To a casual reader this might seem obvious, and probably the main reasons listed as why are we collecting and keeping digital records would point to accounting only.

However, under the hood, the digitalisation of business processes — especially in trade finance — has surprising ramifications that might

benefit business in much more significant ways.

When commenting about the timing for digitisation and digitalisation, Edward Senju, Regional CEO of Sansan, a Japanese technology unicorn that aims to digitise Southeast Asia’s 5,000 tonnes of paper invoices, said: “While the concept of e-invoicing has been talked about for years, its actual implementation in day-to-day life (...) is only just getting started in the aftermath of Covid.”

An important differentiation is to clarify that digitisation and digitalisation have a slightly different meaning. Let us start from digitisation. If I had an invoice created on my computer, and instead of printing it I sent it over to my client by email, that would be considered the digitisation of a task.

On the other hand, if a firm has a complex process that starts from their supplier, goes through inventory and logistics, and ends with their client’s payment, that entire pipeline is the digitalisation.

So the digitisation of all elements creates digitalisation as a whole. Back to the not so intuitive advantages of digitalisation, one of the most important aspects is the drastic reduction — or even

exclusion — of human possible errors.

Every time a human is involved in a process, opens up the door for mistakes. A tiny error, such as a misplaced dot in a figure, can generate enormous damage.

Therefore, digitalisation aims to reduce to the bare minimum the need to manual input of data, and to remove completely the need of entering the same data manually more than once.

According to André Casterman, Founder and Managing Director of Casterman Advisory and a world leading expert in Digital Assets, Trade Finance, and Payments: “Digital processes across financial services enable increased automation of repetitive tasks, and deliver new visibility thanks to real-time analytics. Going digital is therefore crucial to support business transformation and such is now demonstrated across most industries and businesses.”

In fact, digitalisation should not be seen as a way to store the past only, but also to predict the future. With machine learning and artificial intelligence penetrating every aspect of business, the more data we feed the algorithms, the more accurate would be the prediction.

Bank Muscat offers Shahadati Education Financing with attractive benefits

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision and to meet the aspirations and needs of its customers in attaining higher education, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, developed its Shahadati Education Financing.

This innovative product with an attractive interest rate provides students opportunities to complete higher education both within and outside the Sultanate of Oman so as to get better career opportunities that benefits them and enables the Sultanate of Oman’s growth and development.

The flexible financing facility is proving to be a great advantage in helping Omani youth achieve their aspirations.

Shahadati Educational Finance comprises of Higher Education Finance and Fees Finance. In the case of Higher Education Finance, Omani nationals can get financing up to RO 75,000 for completing their higher education with a repayment period of up to 7 years at a competitive interest rate and convenient payment plans.

The Shahadati Fees Finance on the other hand is designed for assisting in the payment of private school fees, summer courses and professional certificates. It offers a maximum finance amount of RO 10,000 with a repayment tenor of up to 1 year.

The financing is available to all Omani employees in the government, quasi-government and listed private sector companies who meet the specific criteria.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah bin Tamman al



Mashani (pictured), General Manager — Products, Bank Muscat, said: “Throughout its history, the bank has always been keen to support the efforts of Omani youth to obtain certification and qualifications that are in tune to the needs of the job market.

Excellent educational qualifications are one of the most important keys to securing a better future for students in the job market. At Bank Muscat, we are delighted with the confidence and trust placed in the bank’s products and services by our customers and look forward to developing more products that meet their aspirations and needs.

The sustainability strategy of Bank Muscat has always focused on providing long-term benefits to society in general through products and services that contribute to building and strengthening different sectors in Oman. The bank’s strategy is closely aligned to the landmark Oman Vision 2040, which aims to build a knowledge-centric economy and society with human resources developed to its full potential.

Please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/loans/Pages/details.aspx#educational> or call on 24795555 or visit the nearest Bank Muscat branch for more details about Shahadati.



Requirements of transition from manager to leader



AHMED MAHMOOD AL LAWATI

Many lecturers and experts have spoken about leadership and the importance of transformation from management to leadership style since leadership influences productivity, efficiency and authenticity.

For two decades, many kinds of research have been conducted on leadership. Also, a wide variety of different theoretical approaches were studied to explain the complexities of leadership. According to Bay (2019) leadership is a subject considered easy to speak about but hard to implement in practical life.

This article explores patterns of findings from interviewing many cross-sectional leaders in different lines of business such as consultancy, oil and gas, telecommunication, information security and supply chain sectors.

Also, the article highlights the importance of having: a long-term vision, values that promote justice, and adaptability in managing change as important characteristics to have a successful transition from being a manager to a real leader. It concludes with important recommendations on best practices in utilising resources.

The Transformation from Managers to Leaders

To start with, it is important to highlight that any organisation needs both: leaders and managers. In his research, Kotter (1990) mentioned the need for both; leaders drive the path and managers make them doable. As an individual gets higher on the career ladder, it is essential to transfer to a leadership approach.

In an organisation, technical skills are “most important at lower and middle levels of management” (Northouse, 2019, p. 102). Thus, managers can fit very well to handle those roles. At the same time, leaders will better fit in a high level of management as they “influence others and create visions for change” (Bennis & Nanus, 2007, p. 221).

There are three key common features that individuals have to consider during the transition from management to leadership.

The first is a long-term vision, the second is moral reasoning, and the third is adaptability in handling change.

These ideas emerged from my interviews conducted. The long-term vision is what differentiates managers from leaders; managers set short-term timetables, agendas, and allocate resources, while leaders clarify the big picture and set strategies, according to Kotter (1990).

Leaders are the key enablers for the sustainability and long-term survival of companies. Leaders not only brainstorm possible opportunities, but they ensure the implementation of strategic plans.

Take a good example of a strategic planner and implementer: Steve Jobs, who turned Apple from a company that almost went bankrupt in 1997



to a company worth more than \$1 trillion in 2018 (Nicas, 2018). This happened because he promoted innovative ideas of staff, then built a solid synergy accordingly.

On the other hand, history is full of examples of market leaders who didn't see the opportunities ahead or act on them. Kodak, Sears and Motorola are just a few, as per Onderick Harvey (2022). The second transformational behaviour is moral reasoning. Moral reasoning is the capacity to make ethical decisions that serve justice and the greater good of the group, organisation, or community, according to Northouse (2019). Since institutions around the globe suffer from crises of meaning and moral authority, leaders can serve a deeper and more enduring role in this field. They can be models and catalysts for values “like excellence, caring, justice and faith” (Bolman & Deal, 2021, p. 421).

Value-driven leaders demonstrate two types of behaviours. First, they are strong role models for the beliefs and values they want their followers to adopt.

For example, Gandhi advocated nonviolence and was an exemplary role model of civil disobedience. Second, they articulate ideological goals that have moral overtones.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous “I Have a Dream” speech is an example of this type of behaviour.

The third common characteristic of a leader rather than a manager is the willingness to make a change and own consequences related to it. “H.H” – a Team Leader in a consultancy firm – highlighted two important factors in change management. First is the importance of finding areas of improvement and creating the circumstances for implementing the change for better outcomes.

Second is the importance

of feeling the pain because it enhances understanding of the problem and allows a hands-on experience to make an effective modification. All of the above shows the importance of having a mentor or a role model who inspires or guides a person in making an impact. As leaders are expected to manage change, they need to manage different types of anxiety, as introduced by Schein (2017).

With that being said, change leaders must recognise that “The road to freedom is full of thorns and fire, yet happy is he who follows it!” Pain is expected during change journeys and history is a solid lesson to be learned from.

First is Mayor Anthony Williams who was called a heartless hatched man when he wanted to improve public services and amend existing processes by introducing performance management systems (Scott, 2002).

Second is Dolores Huerta who

was beaten until she developed major fractures because of her role in asking for farmworker rights. Labour rights were difficult to have those days (Bratt, 2017). But victory will be noticed years after successful changes; the change effects of Mayor Anthony were noticed after a couple of years and president Obama awarded the Medal of Freedom to Dolores after many years of strife.

Criticism of Transformational Trend

In conclusion, companies are recommended to consider two points in utilising resources.

First, some talented staff who are potential leaders face challenges in delegating technical day-to-day matters. This challenge constrains their transition to leadership roles; companies are encouraged to keep a budget for leadership courses for those staff as well as on-job training with senior leaders.

Second, companies should stay vigilant to the fact that some talented staff can perform better in managerial fields rather than leadership roles. This is because some talented staff have better capabilities as subject matter experts, which is a need of all companies.

It is recommended to balance the ratio between managers and leaders according to demand and need. Also, companies need to create systems that select talented employees based on matching skills to fill managerial and leadership positions. This will be a key enabler for sustainability and success.

(The writer is project controls team leader in PDO, a doctorate student in leadership at New York University and developing trainer at the Royal Academy of Management)

European Union fiscal oversight of Greece ends after 12 years

ATHENS: Greece on Saturday concluded 12 years of European Union fiscal surveillance that was imposed in return for bailouts after a crushing debt crisis. In November 2009, Athens revealed a sharp rise in its public deficit that eventually led to a financial crisis across the euro zone and wreaked havoc on Greek finances for a decade.

In exchange for bailout cash of 289 billion euros and to stop Greece from crashing out of the euro zone, a “troika”, made up of the International Monetary Fund, EU and the European Central Bank, demanded across-the-board reforms from Athens.

These included deep state spending and salary cuts, tax hikes, privatisations and other sweeping reforms aimed at righting public finances. The economy contracted by more than a quarter, unemployment spiked to almost 28 per cent and skilled professionals emigrated in droves.

“A cycle of 12 years which brought pain to citizens, led to economic stagnation and divided society,” has ended, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said. “A new horizon filled with growth, unity and prosperity emerges for all,” he said.



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis attends a Nato summit in Madrid, in this file photo. — Reuters

“The Greece of today is a different Greece. “We have recorded strong growth and a significant slide in unemployment of three per cent since last year and 5 per cent since 2019,” he added.

Ending the oversight will strengthen Greece's international market position by increasing its attractiveness to investors. Athens will also now have greater control over its domestic economic policy.

“The end of enhanced surveillance for Greece also marks the symbolic conclusion of the most challenging period the euro area has experienced,” Paolo Gentiloni, the European Commissioner for Economy, said in a statement. — AFP

MSX closes the week lower by 0.33%

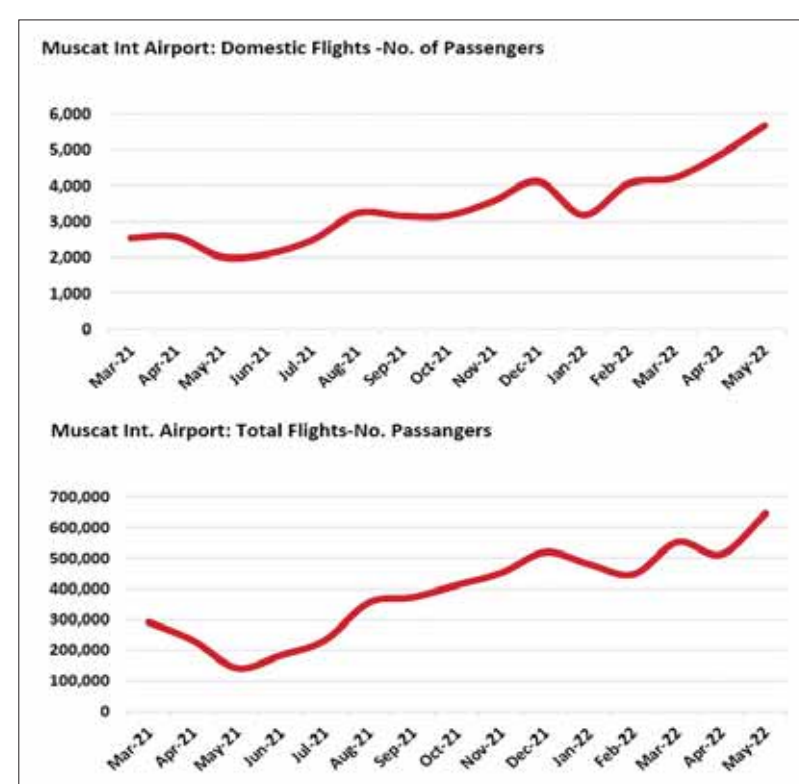
MUSCAT: The MSX30 index ended the week lower by 0.33 per cent. Industrial index ended the week up by 5.36 per cent. Services index and financial index closed lower by 0.83 per cent and 0.33 per cent respectively.

The MSX Shariah index closed up by 4.33 per cent. Oman International Development and Investment Company SAOG (OMINVEST) disclosed that based on the advice of statutory auditors and change in regulations relating to appointment of a board member in a joint stock investee company, Jabreen International Development Company SAOC, a fully owned subsidiary, has reassessed its accounting classification of its 9.99 per cent shareholding in Bank Muscat SAOG.

Accordingly, during August 2022, Jabreen Capital has reclassified its investment in Bank Muscat SAOG from ‘Investment in Associate’ to ‘Investment at fair value through other comprehensive investment’.

A one-time reclassification gain amounting to approximately RO 62 million calculated in accordance with the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards has been accounted by Jabreen Capital.

The reclassification gain represents the difference between Jabreen Capital's carrying value of its investment in Bank Muscat SAOG and the



related prevailing market price. National Gas has decided to exit its operations in the UAE region.

This decision has been taken after closely monitoring the market positions year-over year, where the rebound in the scenario is not expected in the short or medium term.

The management is evaluating the financial impact as per the IFRS 5-Non-current Assets Held for Sale and Discontinued Operations, and the necessary adjustments to the carrying value of the investment in the books will be made in the current quarter ending in September

2022. Management will keep the shareholders informed of further developments.

Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total number of visitors coming to visit Oman through all airports in the Sultanate of Oman was 794,000, while the number of visitors departing from Oman by the end of May 2022 was about 1.5 million, indicating a 36-fold increase in the total number of visitors coming to Oman in May 2022 to 216,000 compared to the same month of the previous year.

The number of flights through

Muscat International Airport in May was 5,668 flights and the number of passengers reached 643,775.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion continues to promote 22 investment opportunities available in the industrial sector for raising the sector's contribution to the gross domestic product of the Sultanate of Oman, promoting economic diversification and developing national industries.

These opportunities come in cooperation with the Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit, the Oman Investment Authority, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), the Petroleum Development Oman, Nama Holding Group and Mazoon Dairy Company. Oman's total oil exports saw an increase of 16.2 per cent until the end of June 2022 according to the latest statistics of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The report said that China topped the list of Oman's oil importing countries till the end of June 2022 at 123.10 million barrels.

The total domestic production of Oman's natural gas (including imports) up to end of last June increased by 4.4 per cent to 25.77 billion cubic metres compared to 24.69 billion cubic metres during the same period in 2021.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

Classifieds



OMAN عُمَان DAILY

Observer

Be Responsible!

Be Careful!

Be Responsible!

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

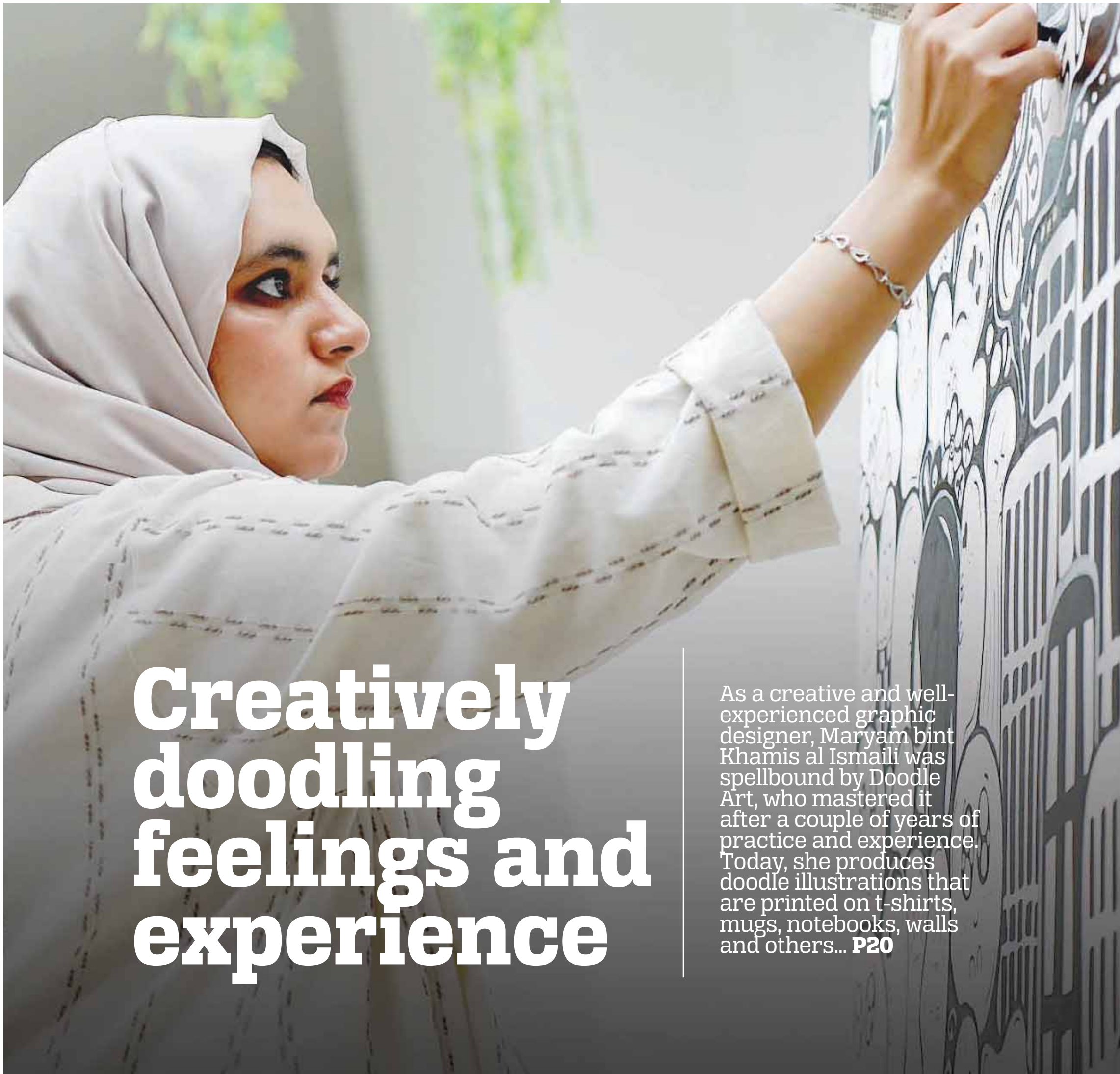





@omanobserver

www.omanobserver.om

#Living_with_COVID19



Creatively doodling feelings and experience

As a creative and well-experienced graphic designer, Maryam bint Khamis al Ismaili was spellbound by Doodle Art, who mastered it after a couple of years of practice and experience. Today, she produces doodle illustrations that are printed on t-shirts, mugs, notebooks, walls and others... **P20**

Confluence of flowers

By Kabeer Yousuf

IT IS A CONFLUENCE of flowers of various colours as the Onam, a celebration of good over evil, will be commemorated by the majority of Indian expatriates.

Starting end of August, for ten days till the first ten days of September, Indians will decorate their patios with flowers which they buy from the market, plucked from the neighbourhoods and the like, celebrating the arrival of a yes-tery-year's king, Mahabali.

Onam, also known as the 'Harvest

Festival of Kerala' is a day of memories in abundance and most of these memories are connected to childhood days for many. As the myth aptly indicates an era of sweet memories, people rejoice in those days of their childhood they spent in their villages.

In connection with the Onam festival, a floral carpet design competition will be held at Golden Oasis Hotel on August 26 where teams from across the country will show their floral designs and aesthetic ideas on the floor with their innate skills which is an epitome of teamwork.



"Thiruvonam, the end of the Onam festivities on the tenth day of the Malayalam month 'Chingam' is the day Malayalis rejoice together and reaffirm the values of harmony and coexistence," said Lijo John, GM of Modern Exchange which is joining hands with the media Fraternity in Oman to conduct the largest number of 'floral carpets' in Oman. "The contest is open to all nationali-

ties and age groups. Individuals, as well as teams of a maximum of five members, can take part. The first 25 contestants who register will compete in the finals on August 26," members of the media forum said.

A team of judges will evaluate the floral carpet creations based on design, style and theme to select three winners and two consolation prize winners.

The competition will be held from 8 am to 11 am and the winners announced on the same day. Registration started on Tuesday and will end on August 23.

Lijo John, general manager of Modern Exchange, said, "We are happy to be associated with IMF for the first-of-its-kind floral carpet competition. As part of our CSR activities, Modern Exchange has been actively engaged in several such events to give back to the people of Oman, including free insurance."

Also present at the press conference were Mohammed Iqbal and Abbad Cheruppa, co-ordinator and treasurer of IMF respectively.

Onam is a combination of myths, folklore and traditions and one of the great occasions where people come together and appreciate the goodness in each of them. Citizens with their families are often seen joining their expat friends in celebrating the feast festival at the hotels.

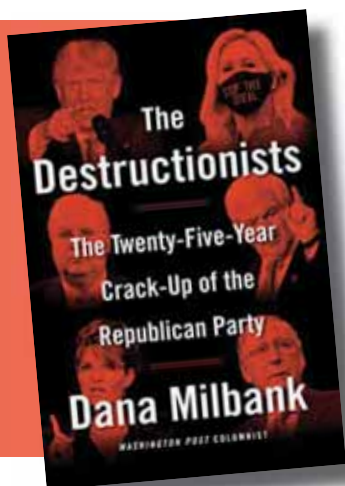
The ten day-celebration will culminate in the sadya (feast), a treat of a vast range of side dishes, predominantly made of vegetables, which accompany traditional rice on a plantain leaf on the final day.

READ

THE DESTRUCTIONISTS

BY DANA MILBANK

The Washington Post columnist describes Republican actions between the signing of the Contract With America and the January 6 insurrection.



IT'S THE CLIMB!

France's Mejd Schalk competes during the Men's Boulder and Lead climbing Final event of the European Championships Munich 2022 in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP



MOVIE TIME

Bollywood actors Taapsee Pannu (C), Pavail Gulati (R) and producer Ekta Kapoor pose during the promotion of their upcoming movie 'Dobaaraa' in Kolkata. — AFP





Greening the Himalayas: Is there a ‘wrong’ place to plant trees?

AS HE WATCHES HIS neighbours watering the tens of thousands of tree saplings they planted in their Himalayan village a few months ago, Gyan Thinlay is excited about turning this patch of bare desert into a lush habitat for insects and birds.

Chushul village sits more than 14,000 feet (4,267 metres) above sea level in the Ladakh region, a cold desert between India and China where less than 4 inches (10 cm) of annual rainfall and extreme seasonal temperature swings make it difficult for much to grow.

But that didn't discourage the villagers from planting 150,000 trees — mainly willow, sea buckthorn and tamarisk — in June, in a project they hope will combat air pollution, boost biodiversity and provide a new income source for locals who traditionally rely on livestock.

"All we see around us are barren mountains. We now look forward to seeing greenery, too," said Thinlay, a Buddhist monk who oversees the effort as the Chushul deputy chairman for Go Green Go Organic, the nonprofit organisation behind the project.

"The trees will also provide farmers fodder for their livestock," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Companies, governments and green groups are promoting and adopting tree-planting in a bid to combat rising temperatures and lessen the impacts of climate change, as forests pull climate-heating carbon from the air, capture and store water in the soil, and provide shade for crops and livestock.

But some ecologists warn that the "mindless" creation of forests in areas where they would not naturally grow can damage fragile and unique ecosystems.

"Planting trees in deserts can be as harmful as cutting trees in forests," said Abi Tamim Vanak, interim director of the Centre for Policy Design at the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) in Bengaluru.

Native plants and wild animals, such as Ladakh's famed snow leopards and blue sheep, are not adapted to forested ecosystems, Vanak noted.

"Creating plantations, especially in areas where people don't reside, can harm native habitats and make them unusable for wildlife," he said.

TREES 'STEALING' WATER

In India, a massive development push is intensifying deforestation, a major driver of climate change.

Mining, as well as construction of roads, hydroelectric projects and other infrastructure, ate up a total of 554.3 square km (214 square miles) of

forest in the country in the last three years, according to government data.

In the cold desert of Ladakh and other parts of South Asia, climate shifts are throwing off farming schedules and amplifying flooding risks.

"Glaciers are melting fast while rain and snow patterns have undergone changes, with extreme weather events such as cloudbursts occurring more frequently," said Mukhtar Ahmad, a scientist with India's Meteorological Department, adding that it is hard to know how much of that can be attributed to climate change.

Tree-planting projects are fairly new to the communities of Ladakh's cold desert.

It was only six years ago that Tibetan Buddhist leader Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche started encouraging people to create plantations and store water from melting glaciers to help curb the carbon emissions caused by increasing tourism in the area, grow more food and make money by supplying wood to the construction industry, said Chushul councillor Konchok Stanzin.

Villages in other parts of his constituency have also been establishing forests in the desert over the past two or three years, he added.

The trees are still young — but once they mature "the villagers are hopeful they are going to be an important source of fodder for sheep, goats and other livestock, besides providing greenery", Stanzin said.

But Vanak at ATREE stressed that growing trees requires a lot of water, so planting them in environments that are unnatural to them can make areas already struggling with low water supplies even drier.

"In effect, trees in the wrong places can 'steal' water from desert-adapted shrubs and herbs, and out-compete them," he said.

A report by a group of European scientists published in May in the journal Nature concluded that while large-scale tree cover expansion can increase water availability by up to 6 per cent in some

regions, it can cause water supplies in others to drop by nearly 40 per cent.

As well as potentially taking water from livestock and wildlife — and, as a result, shrinking their food supply — planting trees in desert ecosystems can even exacerbate climate change, said Forrest Fleischman, associate professor in the Department of Forest Resources at the University of Minnesota.

When trees that have been planted in places like the African savanna are killed by fires or large animals, like elephants, they release more carbon into the atmosphere than if it had stayed underground, he explained.

Instead, "avoiding deforestation, improving forest management and protecting grasslands, peatlands and shrublands from land-use conversion should be the priority," Fleischman said by e-mail.

Stanzin said irrigating the plantation in Chushul had no negative effect on the area's water supply.

From June to October, the villagers use water from melting glaciers and the rest of the year they draw groundwater using solar-powered pumps, he said.

"We rather believe (the project) will increase the water table, as the water is used around this land only and gets absorbed here," he added.

DAMAGING THE DESERT

Jigmet Takpa, joint secretary in India's environment ministry, said concerns about desert greening were overblown.

"If you plant trees in one or two square kilometres out of 57,000 square kilometres, how can it damage the desert?" he asked.

In Chushul, the warnings didn't worry Stanzin Dolker as she tended to the newly planted trees along with a group of other villagers.

More important to her is the hope that the forest they have created will bring plants and wild animals to land that has been barren all her life.

"We will make sure that each of these saplings grows into a tree. This is our resolve," Dolker said.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

LIFESTYLE

Choose Your Own Literary Adventure



THE TITLE ON THE glittery gold graph reads: "I wanna be destroyed, fictionally." Pink bars stretch up the page, evaluating the "level of sad" for each book listed. Toni Morrison's "Beloved" ranks the highest.

The colourful recommendation chart, one of many that have rippled through the Twitter and Instagram feeds of book lovers, came from a small bookstore in Madison, Wisconsin, called A Room of One's Own.

Fawzy Taylor, the social media and marketing manager of the store, which is described as queer, feminist and trans-owned, designed the graphics and posted them on the store's accounts. The flowcharts bring to mind the candy-coloured quizzes of early 2000s teen magazines. But instead of questions like, "Who's your 'Twilight' soul mate?" these charts offer a choose-your-own-adventure approach to finding your new favourite book.

They inspired a fellow bookseller, Mariah Charles, 24, of Austin, Texas, to make a set of book charts of her own. The charts seem to speak the Internet's language, one that meets people where they are by acknowledging that literature can be overwhelming, and people often don't know where to start.

That desire — to provide a guide for the overwhelmed reader — is what inspired Taylor, 32, to make the first chart. A James Baldwin superfan, Taylor runs an Instagram account called the James Baldwin Archive, which celebrates the author's work. For Baldwin's birthday, August 2, Taylor made a display at the bookstore, but found that customers hadn't touched it a few days later.

"So I just assumed that people were overwhelmed," Taylor said. "I'm easily overwhelmed, especially with things I think I should already know about."



The first flowchart was born. Titled "Never read Baldwin before?" the chart gives readers various options: "I wanna be happy" tells the reader to "Go read a different author." The "It is hard for me to focus" option leads to "The Last Interview." The chart received over 37,000 "likes" on Twitter, reaching far beyond the bookstore's own following.

"A lot of our work at the bookstore is to have these conversations that the flowcharts really mimic," Taylor said.

Book recommendation flowcharts aren't a new phenomenon, said Naomi S Baron, an emerita professor of linguistics at American University and the author of "How We Read Now." But if these charts are uniquely resonating with people now, she hypothesises that it's because they fulfil a need for the specialised book recommendations that readers used to get at independent bookstores.

"If these charts are well done, they can serve a function that's all too rarely available now," Baron said. "Because there are so few independent bookstores, No 1. And No 2, depending on how immunocompromised you are, going on 21/2 or more years, you haven't been going to those bookstores and you had to rely on Amazon's 'You might also like.'"

She added: "I think it's important, if you want to talk about what's going on over the last couple of years, we need comfort food. And these are friendly and welcoming."

Lynn Lobash, the associate director of reader services at the New York Public Library, said that these flowcharts capture the kind of reading recommendation conversations that she and her colleagues have every day. The charts "give everyday language to something that can be really hard to talk about," Lobash said.

Compared to more traditional reading lists, Lobash said the flowcharts are "more interactive" and honour the way that readers' tastes, feelings and moods change. "We don't want to read the same book over and over again," she said. "When you love something, you want to repeat that feeling of love for it."

But will the charts lead people to actually read or even just buy the books? Lobash is hopeful. "I think that these flowcharts will definitely lead to reading," she said. "People love a book recommendation."

Taylor is happy the charts seems to have reignited some joy and excitement in reading, and given readers an entry point into unfamiliar texts. "I just want reading to be fun for people," Taylor said. "I do not care what they read. I just want them to read joyfully." Of course, a little business for the bookstore wouldn't hurt, either. — NYT



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Climate change causes wonky bumblebee wings: scientists



WARMER AND WETTER weather linked to climate change appears to stress out bumblebees and make their wings more asymmetrical, which could ultimately affect their future development, according to UK scientists in a new research paper.

"With hotter and wetter conditions predicted to place bumblebees under higher stress, the fact these conditions will become more frequent under climate change means bumblebees may be in for a rough time over the 21st century," scientists at Imperial College, London, wrote in the *Animal Ecology* journal on Wednesday.

The large furry bees, known for their distinctive buzz, only feed on flowers, making them vulnerable to changes to the countryside due to intensive farming.

Their population has declined in Britain over the past century, with two species becoming extinct, according to the Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

The Imperial College scientists looked at more than 6,000 bumblebee specimens in natural history museums, collected across Britain during the 20th century.

The scientists examined the right-left symmetry between the bees' four wings, because asymmetry is an indication that the insect experienced stress during development.

They found that bees from the second half of the 20th century consistently had a higher average rate of asymmetry.

Asymmetry was also "consistently higher in warmer and wetter years," according to the paper's senior co-author Richard Gill.

"Overall, these results could suggest bumblebees experienced increasing stress as the century progressed and that aspects of climate change could have contributed to this trend," the paper said.

The weather conditions linked to wonky wings "will likely increase in frequency with climate change", it continued.

In April, scientists in the United States who studied more than 20,000 bees in the Rocky Mountains found that bumblebees had lower heat tolerance than smaller bees and were "more threatened under climate warming than other bees".

Insects are facing a huge impact from both warming climate and intensive agriculture.

Another study released in April in the journal *Nature* found that these factors cause insect populations to plummet by nearly half compared to areas less affected by temperature rises and industrial farming. — AFP

DINING

Tokyo diners nosh on Demogorgon pasta, Eleven's waffles at 'Stranger Things' cafe



JAPANESE FANS of the sci-fi hit "Stranger Things" can chow down on demonic pasta and rock out to retro 1980s tunes at a pop-up cafe inspired by the Netflix Inc horror drama.

The shop, a partnership with local restaurant chain Pronto Corp, recently extended its run in the fashionable Shibuya district of Tokyo several months amid overwhelming demand. "Stranger Things" has remained one of the streamer's top 10 shows in Japan since the release of its fourth season in May.

The interior has replicas of shops and sets from the show, set in fictional U.S. town of Hawkins, Indiana, along with its dark-mirror underworld that the pre-teen protagonists call the "Upside Down."

Patrons can take pictures next to the drama's signature Demogorgon monster while songs from the show, such as Kate Bush's "Running Up That Hill," play in the background.

Diners can nosh on food inspired by the show, such as squid-ink pasta arranged like the monster's head or the waffles

craved by the psychically powered star character, Eleven.

To reduce the risk spreading COVID-19, now battering Japan in record

tion of themed restaurants and cafes, featuring everything from ninja waiters and exotic animals to vampire-inspired cuisine.



infections, the cafe requires visitors to make a reservation and only about 20 are allowed inside every hour.

"Every day at midnight, I have been trying to book a table on my phone," said 29-year-old mother Kimiko Nakae. "Finally there's an opening today because someone had cancelled the reservation."

Tokyo has a long tradi-

But like many tourist-oriented businesses, the sector has been hard hit by the pandemic. The Lockup, a chain of haunted prison eateries, ended a 23-year run when its final location closed last month, joining the fate of the famous Robot Restaurant, a gaudy music and dance spectacle in the red-light district of Kabukicho that closed in March 2020. — Reuters

SPACE

Space mission shows Earth's water may be from asteroids: study



WATER MAY HAVE been brought to Earth by asteroids from the outer edges of the solar system, scientists said after analysing rare samples collected on a six-year Japanese space mission.

In a quest to shed light on the origins of life and the formation of the universe, researchers are scrutinising material brought back to earth in 2020 from the asteroid Ryugu.

The 5.4 grams (0.2 ounces) of rocks and dust were gathered by a Japanese space probe, called Hayabusa-2, that landed on the celestial body and fired an "impactor" into its surface.

Studies on the material are beginning to be published, and in June, one group of researchers said they had found organic material which showed that some of the building blocks of life on Earth, amino acids, may have been formed in space.

In a new paper published in the journal *Nature Astronomy*, scientists said the Ryugu samples could give clues to the mystery of how oceans appeared on Earth billions of years ago.

"Volatile and organic-rich C-type asteroids may have been one of the main sources of Earth's water," said the study by scientists

from Japan and other countries, published on Monday.

"The delivery of volatiles (that is, organics and water) to the Earth is still a subject of notable debate," it said.

But the organic materials found "in Ryugu particles, identified in this study, probably represent one important source of volatiles".

The scientists hypothesised that such material probably has an "outer Solar System origin", but said it was "unlikely to be the only source of volatiles delivered to the early Earth".

Hayabusa-2 was launched in 2014 on its mission to Ryugu, around 300 million kilometres away, and returned to Earth's orbit two years ago to drop off a capsule containing the sample.

In the *Nature Astronomy* study, the researchers again hailed the findings made possible by the mission.

"Ryugu particles are undoubtedly among the most uncontaminated Solar System materials available for laboratory study and ongoing investigations of these precious samples will certainly expand our understanding of early Solar System processes," the study said. — AFP

By Abdulaziz al Jahdhami

Graphic design is an extraordinary talent and skill that require special competencies and personal qualities to master. Thus, the ability to create something out of nothing is a difficult one indeed, especially when the outcome can become stunning visuals and engaging illustrations that can make an impact or an impression! As graphic design is not everyone's cup of tea, those of us without such specific skills can reach out to designers to hire them firsthand to get our designs done.

Inspiration is an essential part of graphic design. Thus, an artist needs to have a great idea to start with, a visual to draw inspiration from and the motivation to get the job done of course. As it has been said that design is thinking made visual and intelligence made visible. However, everyone could use some inspiration; we just need a little reminder of our courage and strength, so we could be creative in what we are good at, especially if one is a graphic designer or an artist.

As a matter of fact, creativity in arts is mirrored in different forms and styles of drawing and sketching. Among the most inspiring and mesmerising of these arts is doodling, an art being loved by millions of people worldwide. Perhaps, it is becoming a trend nowadays for its attractiveness, simplicity and beauty to express feelings and reflect on the experiences of artists. With Doodle art, one can create stunning illustrations and sketches, wonderful illustrations and beautiful colourful paintings!

Doodle art is an absent-minded graffiti or scribble, which is usually executed in some unexpected material such as the margin of a book or manuscript. Sometimes, it is practised when a doodler is preoccupied with another activity like attending a meeting or a lecture. Doodle art is sometimes undervalued as art for it is a fun way of expressing oneself. However, it is a brilliant way of experimenting and learning to draw. Doodling gives a unique insight into your artistic style, conveying parts of your personality not shown through other mediums of art.

As a creative and well-experienced graphic designer, Maryam bint Khamis al Ismaili was spellbound by Doodle Art, who could master it after a couple of years of practice and experience. "Finding your own style of creative drawing is a process that can only be achieved through long and intensive practice. In fact, when sketching becomes a continuous habit, then creativity comes naturally, ringing various possibilities and ideas that can be reflected in final illustrations and designs", Maryam commented.

Maryam, as a creative doodle artist, was inspired by cartoon and animation characters, she first came to know about doodling in 2012 through an international art forum organised in Oman. From there started the spark of inspiration, backed by reading and more practice over the years. Her first doodle piece was successfully and passionately made in 2016. So far, Maryam has produced over 100 pieces of doodle artworks, most of which are personal requests and orders from customers.

Today, she produces doodle illustrations in different objects such as t-shirts, mugs, notebooks, walls and others. She likes to draw cartoon characters and Omani landmarks in her doodles. She believes that doodling adds a different taste and beauty to the places and objects where doodles are executed. In fact, it marks a way of inspiring people and attracting their attention. Further, Maryam conducts specialised courses in doodle art too for artists and doodle enthusiasts. She could be approached on Instagram at @mrym_iam.

Reflecting on her experience in graphic design, though she acquired the talent by practice and not study, Maryam pointed out, "Design is a way of life, a point of view. It involves a combination of visual communication including talent, creative ability, manual skill, and technical knowledge. Technology and psychology are also essentially related to the process".

"We are visual creatures. Hence, doodling, as an art, attracts not only the eyes but the mind and heart as well. Being creative, opens up new ideas, exercises our brain and makes us feel good. Doodling is a quick and fun art, combining thinking and making at the same time", Maryam stated.



Creatively doodling feelings and experience

