

Fire breaks out in Kochi-bound flight

Fourteen passengers suffered minor injuries as Air India Express' Kochi-bound flight from Muscat encountered an engine malfunction on Wednesday. According to the Civil Aviation Authority, Air India Express flight IX 442 was scheduled to leave at 11.30 am local time. A fire broke out in one of the engines before taking off from Muscat Airport, which required the evacuation of passengers. **DETAILS ON P2**



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UAE SWEEP
TOUR JERSEYS
AS TOUR OF
SALALAH ENDS



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MAZOOON ELECTRICITY
INSTALLS 40
SMALL-SCALE SOLAR
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P20

AN INTERACTIVE
AFFAIR WITH AL
JABAL AL AKHDHAR'S
OLIVE TREES



HM greets Presidents on independence anniversary

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Xiomara Castro of the Republic of Honduras on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness. His Majesty also

wished the people of Honduras further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of greetings to President Daniel Ortega of the Republic of Nicaragua on his country Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere

sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Ortega. His Majesty also wished the people of Nicaragua further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty has sent a cable of greetings to President Nayib Bukele of the Republic of El Salvador on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Bukele. His Majesty also wished the people of El Salvador further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Alejandro Giammattei of the

Republic of Guatemala on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Giammattei. His Majesty also wished the people of Guatemala further progress.

His Majesty the Sultan has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Rodrigo Chaves of the Republic of Costa Rica on his country's Independence Anniversary.

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Chaves and the people of Costa Rica. — ONA



4 VULTURES RELEASED INTO ASSARAIN NATURE RESERVE

Acting in cooperation with Environment Society of Oman (ESO), the Environment Authority has released four lappet-faced vultures in Assarain Nature Reserve, following a caretaking programme at the authority's breeding centre in the Wilayat of Barka. This coincides with a workshop organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with the ESO and Disney Conservation Fund. **DETAILS ON P3**

HM gets message from Algerian President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received a written message from President Abdel Majid Taboun of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

The message was handed over to HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, by Mohamed Arkab, Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines. During the meeting

of HH Sayyid Asaad with the Algerian minister, the two sides reviewed the distinguished relations binding the two countries, and means of promoting them in all areas.

The meeting was attended by the Secretary General and the two Advisers at the Office of HH Sayyid Asaad, as well as Filali Guenni, Ambassador of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman, and members of the delegation accompanying the guest.

(SEE ALSO P2)



Stamping of renewed visa on passports not mandatory

KABEER YOUSUF
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The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has clarified that stamping of renewed visa on passports is not necessary. A renewed resident card would serve the purpose.

The ROP's clarification comes in the wake of a flurry of doubts being raised by residents in the Sultanate of Oman regarding online renewal instead of the traditional visa stamping on passports.

The ROP sources have further said that the new practice, which has been in force for a few weeks, is meant for an easy visa-stamping process and to make it more effective.

"The decision has been made to stop renewal visa stamping on passports of the residents. It

is sufficient to renew the same in the system and the resident card," a top ROP official has confirmed.

"It does not matter to the individual if the stamp is found on the passport or not, but he or she will be able to travel and submit the resident card as a proof of residence," he added.

However, some people have expressed concern if the same will apply to ports of entry in other countries as the immigration authorities check stamped visas on passports.

"This move (of not stamping the visa on the passport) is a great step towards ease of travel, but I wonder if resident card would suffice as a proof of my residence in the Sultanate of Oman," said businessman Naushad Sulaiman.

OMAN FM 90.4

MUSCAT
CANDID

WEEKDAYS 12-3PM
HOSTED BY ASMA AL RIYAMI





SAYYID ASAAD, ALGERIAN MINISTER DISCUSS BILATERAL TIES



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq received a written message from President Abdel Majid Taboun of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria. The message was handed over to His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, by Mohamed Arkab, Algerian Minister of Energy and Mines, in Muscat on Wednesday. During the meeting, they reviewed the distinguished relations binding the two countries, and means of promoting them in all areas. The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General and the two advisers at the Office of Sayyid Asaad, as well as Filali Guenni, Ambassador of Algeria to the Sultanate of Oman, and members of the delegation accompanying the guest. — ONA

Oman, Saudi to boost investment

RIYADH: The Oman-Saudi Business Council held its 4th meeting in Muscat on Wednesday. The meeting aims to boost business relations and address challenges facing the private sectors of the two countries, as well as review establishing joint projects.

The Omani side was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, while the Saudi side was headed by Khalid al Falih, Minister of Investment. During the meeting, the website of the Oman-Saudi Business Council was launched.

The website aims to highlight the activities of the council and investment opportunities in the two countries. The meeting reviewed the initiative of establishing the Saudi Franchise Exhibition. It also discussed operating the Empty Quarter border checkpoint for truck movement 24/7 and allowing transit. The council's meeting also



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with Saudi minister Khalid al Falih in Riyadh on Wednesday.

covered the matter of facilitating the entry of Omani products to Saudi markets.

Several B2B meetings were held on the sidelines of the council's meeting between Omani and Saudi businesspersons. Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), said that indicators show a constant rise in trade between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Al Saleh added that trade exchange by the end of May 2022 reached RO 1.009 billion between the two countries. The volume of Saudi investments registered in Oman amounted to RO 1.477 billion. Shaikh Ali bin Hamad al Kalbani, Head of the Oman-Saudi Business Council (Omani side), affirmed the keenness of the two countries' private sectors to contribute to economic

integration.

Tariq al Haidari, First Vice-President of the Federation of Saudi Chambers of Commerce, said that the council will play a leading role in bolstering economic partnerships by implementing an action programme that prepares a suitable milieu for the enhancement of economic cooperation between businesspersons of the two countries.

Nasser bin Said al Hajri, Head of the Oman-Saudi Business Council (Saudi side), indicated that Saudi Arabia is keen to achieve greater and broader cooperation in the field of investment and to attract Omani investors to invest in the KSA. Al Hajri added that six specialised sectoral committees stemmed from the Oman-Saudi Business Council, particularly in the fields of energy and mining, food security, technology, logistics, industries and construction, and services. — ONA

Oman, Lithuania eye cooperation in transport, ICT

MUSCAT: Oman and Lithuania will explore investment opportunities in logistic services, ports, information and communication technology (ICT). This came in a meeting of Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology met Marius Skuodis, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, in Muscat on Wednesday.

The ministers discussed enhancing the existing cooperation between the two countries.

Al Maawali underscored the importance of developing the joint relations with Lithuania particularly laying focus on logistic services and IT, as well as expanding partnership and augmenting

the volume of trade exchange between the two countries. A presentation was given during the meeting highlighting Oman's ports and their associating infrastructure and investment opportunities available in partnership with the private sector. Oman Logistics Centre also gave a briefing on its works, tasks and initiatives.

The Oman Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040 of which implementation supervised by the centre, was also highlighted. They also discussed the government digital transformation programme in both countries. They also explored aspects of cooperation in digital transformation at various government sectors. The two sides also reviewed successful experiences and sharing expertise between them. — ONA



Said Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology with Marius Skuodis, Minister of Transport and Communications of the Republic of Lithuania, in Muscat on Wednesday. — ONA

DANCE AND TEXTILE TRADITIONS OF INDIA ON DISPLAY



The Embassy of India in Muscat hosted an exclusive event, 'SUTRA', to showcase the vibrant dance and textile traditions of India. The event featured a lecture-demonstration of Indian classical dance as well as an exposition of the rich textile legacy of India with a peek into the diverse handloom traditions representing the kaleidoscopic diversity of India. The event features a live display of weaving techniques practised by artisans in India. Samples of textile designs and techniques on display took the audience on a veritable sensory dive into the world of Indian fabrics and textiles.

14 injured after engine fire in Muscat-Kochi flight

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Fourteen passengers suffered minor injuries as Air India Express' Kochi-bound flight from Muscat encountered an engine malfunction on Wednesday.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, Air India Express flight IX 442 was scheduled to leave at 11.30 am local time.

A fire broke out in one of the engines before taking off from Muscat International Airport, which required the evacuation of passengers. Some minor injuries were reported because of the stampede of passengers during the evacuation process. The injured passengers were given the necessary treatment." Sources in the CAA and Oman Airports added there was no impact on the safety of the passengers and air traffic.

In its final and third statement, released in the evening, CAA said, "The emergency has ended, and the situation was dealt with professionally as per the procedures with help from specialists and experts, who will complete their investigations to avoid such incidents in the future." CAA extended thanks to all the aviation sector partners as they helped minimise the potential damage and risks.

Initially confirming the



incident, an official at Air India told the Observer, "The flight (IX442) with 145 passengers onboard was taxiing towards the runway. It was immediately brought to the remote stand, and passengers were evacuated. While investigations are underway, alternative arrangements will be arranged for the passengers. Some people suffered injuries during the emergency evacuation." Comments from passengers were not available at the time of writing.

Air India Express in its official statement said, "Muscat to Kochi flight IX 442, with 141 passengers on board, was preparing to depart from Muscat at 11:20 hours (local time) today. While it was on the taxiway, another aircraft reported observing fumes from one of the engines. However, there was no fire warning indication in the cockpit.

"As a matter of abundant precaution and following the prescribed SOPs (standard

operating procedures), the crew stopped on the taxiway and activated the onboard engine fire extinguishers. Thereafter, passengers were evacuated from the aircraft.

"Full support was extended by Muscat Airport authorities and the passengers were brought to the terminal building. There are no major injuries reported, except minor bruises to some passengers while evacuating." The airline further stated that the matter is being investigated by its own Flight Safety Department, as well as the regulatory authorities.

The airlines said it extended all facilities to the guests at Muscat and that a relief flight has been arranged to fly the guest to Kochi later on Wednesday.

In July, Kozhikode to Dubai flight (also Air India Express) was diverted to Muscat after a burning smell was observed from one of the vents in the forward galley of the flight.



In brief

MUSCAT



OMAN TO HOST GCC PARLIAMENTARY MEET

The Sultanate of Oman will host on September 21 the 16th ordinary meeting of GCC Chairmen of Shura, National and Ummah Councils. The meeting will be chaired by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura. Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'shura, in a statement, said that the Sultanate of Oman is keen to support the GCC to achieve the aspirations of GCC peoples.

NUR-SULTAN



OMAN AT CONGRESS OF RELIGIONS

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry Awqaf and Religious Affairs, took part in the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, held at Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan. It is part of enhancing dialogue between religions through tolerance, mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. Oman's delegation was headed by Shaikh Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, Secretary-General of the Ifa Office.

MUSCAT



PACT TO PROVIDE HEARING AID

Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation and Oman Association for the Hearing Impaired on Wednesday signed an agreement for the provision of hearing aid devices. The agreement was inked by Ismail bin Sulaiman al Sawafi, Chairman of Al Ata'a Committee at Imam Jabir bin Zaid Waqf Foundation, and Mohammed bin Mubarak al Amri, Chairman of Oman Association for the Hearing Impaired.

MUSCAT



SQU DOCTORS CONDUCT RARE SURGERY

A surgical team from Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) conducted a successful catheterisation surgery to patch two atrial septa and lend relief to a patient who suffered a rare case of shortness of breath. The team was led by senior surgeons Dr Fahd bin Abdullah al Kindi and Dr Khalfan bin Salim al Sunaidi. — ONA

Oman lauded for archaeology support

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies (ISMEO) honoured Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, and nominated him as a honorary member of the Institute for 20 years for the ministry's outstanding support to the Italian archaeological researches in the Sultanate of Oman.

As a mark of honour, Prof Sergio Ferdinandi bestowed on him a plate by Prof Adriano Rossi, President of the ISMEO, an Italian research institute.

An event marking the handing over of plate and honorary membership was held at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in the presence of dignitaries and Italian Ambassador Federica Favi.

Based in Rome since 1934, the ISMEO conducts study, training and research programmes related



Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, was nominated as honorary member of the International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies.

to the cultures and countries of Asia and Africa and their interactions with the Mediterranean basin. It promotes and develops cultural

and scientific contacts and collaboration with institutions and international organisations and funds archaeological research,

excavations and publications internationally.

"ISMEO is considered one of the most prestigious institutions in this field in Italy and internationally. Since 1970s, it financed several archaeological missions and sent Italian university academics and scholars to the Sultanate of Oman," said Favi.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy is the other strong financial supporter of the Italian archaeological research in the Sultanate of Oman, with projects across the country held in partnership with ISMEO."

"ISMEO has been supporting a wide range of studies that were key to understand the historical developments of South Arabia since the Neolithic and its relations with the neighbouring regions," commented ISMEO Vice-President, Prof Sergio Ferdinandi.

"A significant example of the cooperation with the Omani authorities is the research in Daba collective tombs in Musandam, where La Sapienza University of Rome and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism have been excavating since 2013 bringing back the traces of a sophisticated and connected society that can attract the interest of tourism in the area. With the cooperation of the Embassy of Italy, a training project for local guides was held to build the capacity and strengthen the ownership of the local communities. Minister Al Mahrouqi's support has been fundamental in this regard," he said.

Upon receiving the award, Al Mahrouqi expressed gratitude for the acknowledgement and reaffirmed his appreciation for the strong collaboration with Italy in the field of heritage protection as a way to promote tourism in the Sultanate of Oman.

4 vultures released in Assarain reserve

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Environment Authority, in association with Environment Society of Oman (ESO), has released four lappet-faced vultures in Assarain Nature Reserve, following a rehabilitation programme at the Authority's breeding centre in the Wilayat of Barka.

The action coincides with a workshop organised by the Environment Authority in cooperation with the ESO and Disney Conservation Fund. The workshop underlines the significance of conducting surveys and studies and forming teams from the departments concerned and volunteers to follow up the protection of eagles and birds of prey in Oman.

The seminar aimed at the importance of conducting surveys and studies, and forming a working group of stakeholders and volunteers to conserve and protect eagles and birds of prey in



Oman.

The authority has placed satellite tracking devices on eagles to track them and study their behaviour and habitats.

ESO launched several initiatives including a survey of birds of prey by visiting 89 sites across 7 governorates to monitor

reproduction, nesting and potential threats to eagles.

It has carried out various initiatives focused on encouraging civil society to adopt a more sustainable lifestyle at home and in the workplace and developing strategies to reduce environmental risks.

70,000 saplings to be planted in Dhofar

STAFF REPORTER

SALALAH, SEPT 14

The Environment Authority (EA) is pressing ahead with the project to plant 70,000 saplings in different wilayats of the Governorate of Dhofar. The project is part of the national initiative to plant 10 million saplings of wild trees across the Sultanate of Oman.

Mohammed bin Salim al Hardan, Director-General for Environment Conservation, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the project includes planting trees in government-owned and private land.

Al Hardan added that 9,278 saplings have already been planted at different areas in Dhofar.

Moreover, the national initiative to plant wild trees aims to improve the green cover in



9,278 saplings have already been planted at different areas in Dhofar.

depleted natural grazing areas.

The Ashjar Initiative was launched to combat desertification, reduce land degradation and preserve wild plants through their multiplication and expansion of their cultivation, due to their environmental, economic and cultural importance.

Madha to get new 4-star hotel at cost of RO 3 million



MUSCAT: The Wilayat of Madha in the Governorate of Musandam is seeing a rush of tourists from the Sultanate of Oman and other GCC countries to explore its natural and archaeological attractions.

Al Sarooj Dam and Sahana Dam are filled to the brim after the recent rains making it a beautiful sight.

Mohammed bin Ahmed al

Madhani, representative of the wilayat in Majlis Ash'shura, said work is under way to construct a 4-star hotel with 89 rooms at a cost RO 3 million, which will boost tourists traffic into Musandam. The authorities are also looking at measures to boost ecotourism in the wilayat.

The municipality is widening roads leading to the farms and beautifying avenues to attract



tourist destination.

The wilayat also hosts many historical sites and forts including Al Ghona, Madha and Hajer Bni Hamid. The Madha Museum features a large collection of rare artefacts dating back to prehistoric periods. The projects that were implemented and are being implemented in the wilayat stand as a witness to the march of development in the

wilayat.

A water desalination plant was opened in July with a production capacity of 2,000 cubic metres per day. Many government departments were opened in the wilayat to facilitate and provide services to citizens with an aim to create an ideal environment for development.

Work is under way to start construction of Madha Hospital,

which is expected to be completed by the end of the next year. The hospital will include more than 30 beds and 14 departments including internal medicine, paediatrics and gynaecology. Raising the efficiency of the health system and reducing travel long distances to get healthcare services are among key goals of setting up Madha Hospital.

— ONA



W o r l d A l z h e i m e r ' s M o n t h



CONFUSION
WITH
TIME AND
LOCATION

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

As part of marking September month as World Alzheimer's Month, Oman Alzheimer's Association has been having a series of talks in Ibra, Salalah. On September 15, an event will be held at the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital. The good news is that according to psychiatrist Dr Hamed al Sinawi, families have begun to notice early signs of Alzheimer's, which also means patients receive treatment in the initial stages of the disease.

This year's theme, 'Know Dementia, Know Alzheimer's,' continues on from the 2021 campaign, which focused on diagnosis, the warning signs of dementia, the continued impact of Covid-19 on the global dementia community and more.

Families bring their relatives for diagnosis. Sometimes it is a change in the mood, or the symptoms are not severe enough for diagnosis.

"Whatever the case is, it is reassuring for the family to know what is going on with the concerned person once the diagnosis is done. Dementia is a group of conditions, and one of them is Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is well known because it makes up 60 per cent to 70 per cent of cases of



DIFFICULTY
COMPLETING
FAMILIAR
TASKS

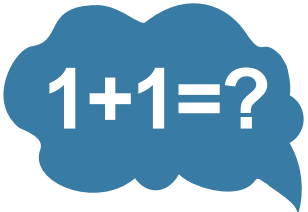
dementia. It makes it easier for families to accept," pointed out Dr Hamed.

Genetics is just one component of Alzheimer's and dementia. Some people have dementia, so the symptoms would be similar to Alzheimer's, but actually, they develop it after a stroke, due to head injury, consuming alcohol for a long time or having other conditions such as Parkinson's disease or having rigidity, being very slow or having tremors.

He explained, "Part of the clinical assessment is to make the diagnosis to find out the exact cost and how to deal with it as well as to know what kind of medication should be used and what medications to avoid because some of them could make the conditions worse."

This year the theme is 'Know Alzheimer's, Know Dementia,' and there is also a tagline with it that says, 'Together we can do so much more.'

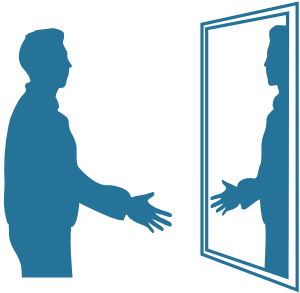
"This line was added to emphasise global contribution so that we all can learn from each other because, interestingly, more people with Alzheimer's are living in the developing world where resources are limited. Alzheimer's is related to old-age so after the age of 65 the



DIFFICULTY
SOLVING
PROBLEMS



DIFFICULTY
WITH
WORDS



TROUBLE WITH
IMAGES AND
SPACES

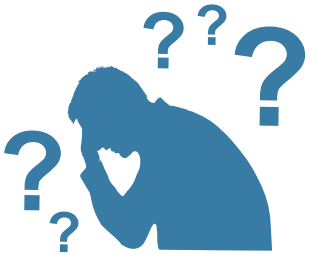
risk of having Alzheimer's doubles every five years. Now we are seeing people living up to old age, so there are more chances for Alzheimer's and other dementias."

According to the senior psychiatrist, the idea is to increase awareness, exchange resources because there is a lot of ongoing research and find the best ways to conduct early diagnosis as well as discover ways on what can be done on medication, as well as in terms of support as the person becomes fully dependent on the caregiver who would have to learn on different symptoms.

"Alzheimer's is a brain disorder. It is not due to black magic or related to being a non-religious person and is not related to bad luck; instead, it is a disease of the brain. In fact, the scientists have proven that there are changes in the chemistry of the brain," noted the President of Oman Alzheimer's Association.

The disease also has to do with protein accumulation. Dr Hamed explained that normally people's brains are capable of clearing the protein, but the people who are at risk of developing Alzheimer's are unable to clear the protein, so it becomes like a lump of hair that blocks the sink.

"This begins to destroy



POOR
JUDGEMENT

neurons. The current understanding is that the process begins at the memory centre - hippocampus. This is the time when we find individuals forgetting and misplacing keys, and glasses, forgetting to lock the doors and so on. Slowly it moves to other areas of the brain. Later the individuals become easily irritable, crying for no reason, less tolerant of people around them and eventually withdraw and find it difficult even to understand space. So they find it difficult to judge while driving and understand when to overtake a car while on the road," he said.

They might not recognise the signboards and the rules to be followed, such as when to enter the roundabout and know whose right of way it is. The ability to interpret things also gets affected. And soon, the person is not able to recognise their own image in the mirror.

They might not be able to differentiate between television images and reality.

The journey is difficult for the patient, family members and caregivers. So this year in the Sultanate of Oman, presentations have been held for doctors and the general public to recognise symptoms and learn tips to handle the situation.



KNOW
DEMENTIA,
KNOW
ALZHEIMER'S



UNGROUND
ED
EMOTIONS



WITHDRAWAL
FROM SOCIAL
ACTIVITIES



MEMORY
LOSS



MISPLACING
ITEMS



Whatever the case is, it is reassuring for the family to know what is going on with the concerned person once the diagnosis is done. Dementia is a group of conditions, and one of them is Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's is well known because it makes up 60 per cent to 70 per cent of cases of dementia. It makes it easier for families to accept

DR HAMED AL SINAWI
Psychiatrist



Imperial State Crown placed on casket

LONDON: Britain's Imperial State Crown, which rests atop Queen Elizabeth II's coffin as her casket lies in state, is a powerful symbol of royal wealth, majesty and sovereignty.

The crown, placed on a purple cushion, bears 2,868 diamonds, 269 pearls, 17 sapphires and 11 emeralds which sparkled as the coffin travelled from Buckingham Palace and lay in state in Westminster Hall.

Commissioned for her father king George VI's coronation in 1937, the crown was worn by the queen at her coronation in 1953 and features in a famous portrait of the event.

It was also worn by the monarch at the annual ceremony marking the opening of parliament and is stored along with the other priceless crown jewels in the Tower of London. Another royal crown -- St Edward's -- was made in 1661 for the coronation of King Charles II and is made from solid gold. It is used only in the moment of crowning and was long considered too heavy to wear, weighing around two kilogrammes -- twice as much as the Imperial State Crown.

The queen once joked that even

the Imperial State Crown was so heavy that if she looked down while wearing it, "it would break your neck"

"Fortunately, my father and I had the same sort of shaped head, but once you put it on it stays. It just remains, itself," she told the BBC in 2018.

"You can't look down to read the speech: you have to take the speech up," she said of her annual address to parliament.

Given its weight, she stopped wearing the Imperial State Crown to the state opening of parliament in her 90s. Instead, it was carried in on a cushion.

The main diamond at the front of the Imperial State Crown is called the Cullinan II.

It was cut from the Cullinan Diamond, the largest diamond ever mined when it was discovered in South Africa in 1905.

Other famous jewels include the Black Prince's Ruby -- cut from a stone called ruby spinel that resembles ruby -- and the Stuart Sapphire at the back of the crown.

The latter 104-carat gem has an uncertain history but is thought to date back to King Charles II who ascended to the throne in 1660. — AFP



King Charles III and Princess Anne, Princess Royal; followed by Prince William, Prince of Wales, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Vice Admiral Timothy Laurence, walk behind the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II during a procession from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster, in London on Wednesday. — AFP

King Charles, William and Harry reunited in grief to escort queen

LONDON: King Charles, his sons Princes William and Harry and other senior royals joined a solemn procession taking Queen Elizabeth's coffin as the late monarch made her final journey from Buckingham Palace on Wednesday.

Huge crowds gathered in central London to witness the queen being taken from the palace to parliament as artillery guns fired salutes and Big Ben tolled, the latest in a series of poignant ceremonies as the nation mourns the queen who died last week aged 96 after seven decades on the throne.

Lying on a gun carriage, covered by the Royal Standard flag and with the Imperial State Crown placed on a cushion on top alongside a wreath of flowers, the coffin bearing Elizabeth's body was taken in a slow, sombre procession from her London home to

Westminster Hall. There it will lie in state for four days.

Walking directly behind were Charles and his siblings, Anne, Andrew and Edward.

In a group that followed were Charles's sons Princes William and Harry, a doleful scene reminiscent of when, as boys 25 years ago, they followed the casket of their mother Princess Diana when it was taken on a similar procession through central London.

It was also a symbolic show of unity as William, 40, now the Prince of Wales, and Harry, 37, the Duke of Sussex, are said to be barely be on speaking terms after a bitter falling out in the last couple of years.

"It was very moving, seeing the family. It was a powerful show of unity," said Jenny Frame, 54, who waited for more than four hours to see the procession. "I think it's the very best of British and ... very fitting for her."

A military band playing funeral marches and soldiers in ceremonial scarlet uniforms, some with shiny silver breastplates and helmets, accompanied the gun carriage pulled by the King's Troop, Royal Horse Artillery, as it moved slowly through central London, where many roads were closed to traffic.

Guns fired every minute at Hyde Park, while parliament's famous Big Ben bell also rang at 60-second intervals. The crowds stood in a hushed silence as they watched the procession but then broke into spontaneous applause when it passed. Some threw flowers.

Other senior royals including Charles' wife Camilla, now the Queen Consort, Kate, William's wife and now Princess of Wales, and Harry's wife, Meghan, travelled by car.

When the procession reached Westminster Hall, a medieval

building with origins dating back to 1097 and the oldest part of the Palace of Westminster that houses the British parliament, the coffin was carried inside by soldiers from the Grenadier Guards and placed on a catafalque surrounded by candles.

A short service followed, conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the spiritual head of the Anglican Church, as senior politicians watched on. The royals quietly departed, with Harry and Meghan holding hands.

From around 5 pm the public will be allowed to file by in a constant stream, 24-hours a day, during four days of lying in state that will continue until the morning of the funeral on September 19.

A constant vigil will be held by soldiers in full ceremonial uniforms at the four corners of the catafalque.

— Reuters

Queen's funeral

Planned events on Friday, Sept 16 ahead of state funeral Monday, Sept 19

- King Charles III and his wife Camilla visit Wales for a service at Cardiff's Llandaff Cathedral. Charles receives message of condolence at the Senedd, the Welsh national assembly building
- The visit to Wales completes trips to all four nations that make up the United Kingdom
- Queen's lying in state continues at Parliament's Westminster Hall. Open to the public until morning of Sept 19

Source: Buckingham Palace



As Britain shuts down for funeral, thousands face disruption

LONDON: While Queen Elizabeth's funeral on Monday will be observed across Britain, thousands of people face cancelled doctor appointments, closed food banks and shut supermarkets because of a surprise national holiday.

Many patients have been left frustrated after being told that National Health Service (NHS) appointments they had waited months to secure were suddenly cancelled.

"For patients who may have been waiting up to two years for elective surgery or appointments - if they are then cancelled on the 19th, this will be incredibly distressing," Ellen Welch, co-chair of doctors' lobby DAAK, said.

"As frontline NHS staff, DAAK are left wondering if the decision makers in government really understand how their decisions play out on the ground," Welch said.

Britain's state-run NHS is already facing its worst ever staffing crisis and has more than 6 million people on waiting lists for hospital treatment. It handles an average 888,000



Guardsmen and other soldiers march beside the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, during a procession from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster, in London. — AFP

general practice appointments each day, according to Reuters calculations from data from the last six months.

There are also concerns about the NHS resources needed to rebook appointments and doctors having to make childcare arrangements at short notice.

"The issue is the short notice, really. We can always organise around planned holidays," said Helen Salisbury, a doctor and Oxford University professor.

"If you think about people who are waiting for cancer diagnostics, or chemotherapy, it's really difficult to know how they're going to proceed."

As with any national holiday, NHS staff will ensure urgent and emergency services are available, a spokesperson said.

The NHS will "continue to operate and operate at scale on that day," a spokesman for Prime Minister Liz Truss said.

— Reuters

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Site Visit Date	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Fees
CCCCRC/T/565/2022	Supply of Disaster Recovery Hardware and Software Requirements for SAP-HIS, Laboratory Information System: MediLab and Dietary System: MenuLogistics	21/09/2022 10:00AM	26/09/2022	06/10/2022	200 OMR

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:
Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre – Purchase Department.
Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope (hardcopy & softcopy) and should be delivered and deposited in the tender box at SQCCRC.
Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than Two weeks before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@cccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

TWO-DAY SCO SUMMIT BEGINS TODAY

XI VOWS BACKING KAZAKHSTAN ON CENTRAL ASIA VISIT

NUR SULTAN: China's President Xi Jinping was in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan on Wednesday on his first trip abroad since the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, ahead of a meeting with Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Their highly-anticipated meeting comes as Russia suffers serious setbacks in Ukraine, but China has stood firm in its support of Putin and their "no limits" friendship.

During a meeting with President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Xi vowed full support for Kazakhstan's sovereignty at a time when the ex-Soviet Central Asian region has been spooked by Russia's war of Ukraine.

"No matter how the international situation changes, we will continue to resolutely support Kazakhstan in protecting its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity," Xi said, according to a Kazakh government statement.

Beijing "firmly supports the reform measures President (Tokayev) has taken to maintain national stability and development, and firmly opposes any forces that interfere in Kazakhstan's internal affairs," Xi said.

Tokayev hailed Xi's visit as a reunion of "historic importance", saying the Chinese leader's decision to visit Nur-Sultan first since the start of the pandemic was a sign of "high-level... mutual trust and cooperation".

The ex-Soviet Central Asian region, which Russia sees as in



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev attend a signing ceremony during a meeting in Nur-Sultan. — Reuters

Kazakh president hailed Xi's visit as a reunion of 'historic importance', and the Chinese leader's decision to visit Nur-Sultan first since the start of the pandemic was a sign of 'high-level mutual trust and cooperation'

its sphere of influence, is key to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a trillion-dollar push to improve trade links across the globe by building landmark infrastructure.

Tokayev said Beijing and Nur-Sultan had "set an example" for cooperation within the huge BRI initiative and praised prospects for further cooperation.

Xi, during his three-day visit to Central Asia, is scheduled to

attend a summit of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) leaders in Uzbekistan, where he is expected to meet with Putin.

The SCO was established in 2001 as a political, economic and security organisation to rival Western institutions and the summit will bring together Xi, Putin, Tokayev, leaders from India, Pakistan and three more ex-Soviet Central Asian countries. Xi wrote ahead of the visit that the group

had "set a fine example of a new type of international relations featuring mutual respect, fairness, justice and win-win cooperation, and proved itself an important and constructive force". Those were comments echoed by the Kremlin's foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov who told reporters in Moscow that the SCO members "stand for a just world order".

"The SCO offers a real alternative to Western-centric organisations," he added.

Ushakov said that among Putin's meeting in Samarkand this week, his talks with Xi would be "of particular importance", focusing on the conflict in Ukraine and Russia's growing economic ties with China. — AFP

Thai court to decide on PM Prayuth's tenure this month

BANGKOK: Thailand's Constitutional Court on Wednesday set September 30 as the date to deliver its verdict on the tenure of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha, in a case that seeks to determine when he reaches an eight-year limit as premier.



Prayuth, who seized power in a 2014 coup before formally becoming prime minister a few months later, is currently suspended while the court deliberates on the case filed by the opposition.

His deputy, Prawit Wongsuwan, is serving as caretaker premier.

The court last month suspended Prayuth from duty after accepting a petition from the Pheu Thai party, which argued Prayuth's time as junta chief should be included in his tenure as prime minister, which should have ended last month.

Prayuth, 68, is still active in his other post of defence minister and could return as premier if the court decides he has yet to reach the eight-year mark.

Prayuth has not given his opinion on the case and has said he will respect the court's decision.

The court must decide whether the eight years should include his time as leader of the military government. Some of his supporters had argued the eight years should be counted after 2017, when a new constitution took effect, or even from 2019, when an election was held.

Prayuth was initially appointed premier by a legislature hand-picked by the military, but he was able to stay on as prime minister after a 2019 election, after he was chosen by parliament. — Reuters

Thousands protest military coup in Sudan



Sudanese demonstrators during a rally to demand the return to civilian rule in Khartoum. — AFP

KHARTOUM: Thousands of Sudanese protesters took to the streets on Tuesday to press demands for a return to civilian rule following a military coup last year.

Sudan has been rocked by waves of demonstrations since the armed forces led by General Abdel Fattah al Burhan grabbed power in October.

The takeover upended a transition to civilian rule that was launched after the 2019 ouster of Omar al Bashir,

following three decades of authoritarianism.

Demonstrators at Tuesday's rally in the capital Khartoum called for the military to "go back to the barracks", according to correspondents.

They also carried posters of some of the 116 people that pro-democracy medics say have been killed in a crackdown on the anti-coup protests. Some bore a portrait of Burhan with a cross sign and a caption telling him to "leave". — AFP

10 people trapped in collapsed building in Jordan

AMMAN: Jordanian rescue teams kept searching on Wednesday for 10 people still missing under the rubble of a collapsed four-storey building in Amman, where five bodies were recovered the day before.

Anxious relatives waited at the disaster site in downtown Amman where emergency services were racing against the clock to dig any survivors from the debris of the residential building.

"According to our information, 10 people are still under the rubble of the collapsed building, and some of them are still alive," government spokesman Faisal Shboul told the Al Mamlaka state television channel.



Rescuers search for survivors under the rubble of a collapsed building in Amman. — Reuters

"Search operations are continuing at the site. The terrain is rough, the buildings are close to each other and the corridors

are narrow, which makes the search difficult." According to an eyewitness who asked not to be identified, rescue workers, some

toiling by hand, had been able to communicate with at least three trapped people.

The head of the civil defence service, Hatem Jaber, said on Wednesday that "more than 300 civil defence personnel have taken part in the search for those trapped under the rubble".

Rescue teams "will not rest" until all have been accounted for, he said. Fourteen people have been reported injured in the collapse.

The site was cordoned off on Wednesday morning and police stopped local residents from approaching it to avoid hampering the search operation, a correspondent said. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

CAIRO

Egypt, Qatar sign pacts to boost cooperation

Egypt and Qatar signed three memoranda of understanding, including one between the two nations' sovereign wealth funds, the Egyptian presidency said on Wednesday during a two-day trip by Abdel Fattah el Sisi to Doha.

Sisi's trip to Qatar is his first since Cairo and Doha restored relations last year following a regional diplomatic rift.

Qatar and Egypt have moved quickly to rebuild relations since, striking deals worth up to \$5 billion.

The visit comes as Egypt seeks further financial support and investment to cushion an economic shock caused by the war in Ukraine. — Reuters

NEW DELHI

France to work with India on N-power project

France will continue to work with India on the Jaitapur nuclear power plant project in the state of Maharashtra, Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said.

"We have a special partnership between India and France," Catherine Colonna said in New Delhi. India and France also reiterated calls for negotiation to end the conflict in Ukraine.

"There should be a return to dialogue and diplomacy," India's foreign minister, S Jaishankar, told reporters after a meeting with his French counterpart Colonna.

On Thursday, she will travel to Mumbai for engagements with industry leaders and site visits. — Reuters

BEIJING

Typhoon Muifa pounds eastern China

Powerful gales and torrential rains battered Zhoushan in eastern China as Typhoon Muifa made landfall at the port city in what local media called the strongest tropical cyclone to hit the populous Yangtze River Delta in a decade.

Muifa landed around 8:30 pm as a strong typhoon, the second-highest in China's tropical cyclone classification system, with the maximum wind speed near its centre reaching 42 metres per second. It is powerful enough to damage homes, topple trees and down power lines. Muifa is expected to spin across Hangzhou Bay to make its second landfall around midnight near Shanghai. — Reuters



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In brief

WASHINGTON



US HOSTING TALKS WITH RAILROADS TO AVERT SHUTDOWN

US Labor Secretary Marty Walsh is hosting talks in Washington with freight railroad and union officials aimed at heading off a rail shutdown that could happen as early as Friday. The Labor Department said the meeting was the latest in the Biden administration's "sustained engagement and hands-on efforts to encourage the parties to come to a mutually beneficial agreement." President Joe Biden's administration said it was making contingency plans aimed at ensuring deliveries of critical goods in the event of a shutdown of the rail system while pressing railroads to reach a deal. — **Reuters**

ROME



ITALIAN GOVT MOVES TO RESTORE PAY CAP

The Italian government moved to reverse a controversial attempt by the outgoing parliament to weaken a salary cap for senior public servants. In a surprise vote on Tuesday, the upper house Senate had approved a measure to allow top officials in the police, the armed forces and in government ministries to be paid more than the current ceiling pegged at \$239,688 a year. The proposal, promoted by the centre-right Forza Italia party of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, was included at the last minute in an aid package drawn up to help businesses and families cope with the energy crisis. — **Reuters**

PARIS



FRENCH COURT CONVICTS YEMENIA AIRWAYS OVER CRASH

A Paris court convicted Yemen's national airline of involuntary homicide and injuries over a 2009 crash that killed nearly everyone onboard except a 12-year-old girl who miraculously survived. Yemenia Airways was sentenced to the maximum fine of \$225,000 and ordered to pay one million euros for damages and costs. Its executives did not attend the hearings, blaming the civil war raging in their country. Flight Yemenia 626 was on approach to Moroni, the capital of the Comoros islands that lie between Mozambique and Madagascar, on June 29, 2009. — **AFP**

Zelenskiy promises victory during frontline visit



Ukraine's President Zelenskiy sings a national anthem during a flag rising ceremony in the town of Izium during a counteroffensive operation in Kharkiv region. — **Reuters**

IZIUM, Ukraine: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy promised he would lead Ukraine to victory in its war against Russia as he visited shrapnel-blasted, recently recaptured towns on Wednesday, but pro-Russian officials said they had halted Kyiv's forces for now.

Russian forces suffered a stunning reversal this month after Ukrainian troops made a rapid armoured thrust with special forces in the northeastern region of Kharkiv, forcing a sometimes rushed and chaotic Russian withdrawal.

Zelenskiy on Wednesday made a surprise visit to the town of Izium, around 15 km from the

current frontline in the east. He thanked his soldiers for liberating the town, an important logistics hub, whose buildings and people now bear the scars of war

"Our blue-yellow flag is already flying in de-occupied Izium. And it will be so in every Ukrainian city and village," Zelenskiy said in a social media post coinciding with the visit.

"We are moving in only one direction - forward and towards victory."

Earlier on Wednesday, an emotional-looking Zelenskiy handed out medals to soldiers who had taken part in the operation to free the area in Balakliia, another

Zelenskiy visits liberated town and pledges total victory as Ukraine now is on offensive in both south and east

town retaken in recent days where citizens and local police told reporters civilians were killed during months of Russian occupation.

Reuters could not independently verify the claims. Russia denies deliberately targeting civilians.



A local resident rides a scooter near a destroyed Russian tank in the town of Izium, recently liberated by Ukrainian Armed Forces, in Kharkiv region. — **Reuters**

The president says his army had liberated around 8,000 square km of territory so far this month, a swath of land nearly equivalent to the island of Cyprus.

Reuters was not able to immediately verify the full scope of battlefield successes claimed by Ukraine.

Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Zelenskiy, said Ukrainian troops were now trying to retake the Russian-held town of Lyman in Ukraine's Donetsk region and were eyeing territorial gains in the neighbouring Luhansk region which is under Russian control.

"There is now an assault on Lyman," Arestovych said in a

video posted on YouTube.

"And that is what they fear most - that we take Lyman and then advance on Lysychansk and Sievierodonetsk," he said, referring to twin cities in the Luhansk region taken by Russia after fierce fighting in June and July.

Denis Pushilin, head of the Russia-backed self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, said troops loyal to Moscow had successfully pushed back Ukrainian forces trying to make inroads into Lyman, and to the north and south of the town. "Nothing worked out for the enemy," said Pushilin. — **Reuters**

Ten killed in air strikes on Ethiopia's Tigray region

NAIROBI: A second day of air strikes against the capital of Ethiopia's northern Tigray region killed 10 people on Wednesday, hospital officials said, while local forces accused troops from neighbouring Eritrea of again joining the war against them.

Ethiopia's government, which has been fighting the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) since late 2020, did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the airstrikes, fighting, or presence of Eritrean troops.

Wednesday's reported drone strikes in Mekelle followed a TPLF ceasefire offer at the weekend.

Among the casualties in Mekelle were a father killed in the second strike and his son, a doctor, wounded when tending victims, said Fasika Amdeslasie, a surgeon at Mekelle's Ayder Referral Hospital.

Some 13 people were wounded.

Five of the victims died en route to the hospital, said Ayder's

CEO Kibrom Gebreselassie. Another five died at the scene in an area called Dagim Amsal, he said, citing Mekelle's emergency coordinator.

Kibrom said the hospital was struggling to save the wounded because of supply shortages in a region largely cut off from aid. "I don't know what to do. Am I to lose every salvageable victim because there is no oxygen or medicine?" he said.

The conflict has killed thousands of civilians, uprooted millions, destroyed hundreds of schools and clinics, and caused starvation in the already impoverished region of Tigray.

With fighting flaring in several parts of Tigray and neighbouring Amhara region, TPLF commander-in-chief Tadesse Werede said in an interview broadcast on Tigrayan television on Tuesday that Eritrea's military had taken the town of Shiraro near the border.

Yemane Gebremeskel, Eritrea's minister of information, did not respond to requests for comment. — **Reuters**



A man injured in an air strike receives treatment at the Ayder Referral Hospital in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray region. — **Reuters**

Sweden readies for final count in nail-biter election



Envelopes with votes are pictured as helpers count the last votes in the municipality of Stockholm at the Stockholm City Hall, a few days after the general election for which the final results are expected to be announced. — **AFP**

STOCKHOLM: Sweden was expecting a full count of votes on Wednesday in its closely fought general election, with an unprecedented right-wing and far-right bloc holding a razor-thin lead. Never before has a Swedish government relied on the support of the anti-immigration and nationalist Sweden Democrats, the big winners of the vote.

The party has so far won more than 20 per cent of ballots, becoming the second-biggest party behind outgoing Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson's Social Democrats, which have dominated Swedish politics since the 1930s.

The final results were expected by day's end, the administrative director of the election authority said.

"The votes are counted first and the results are expected to be ready this evening", Anna Nyqvist said, in a country with an electorate of 7.8 million. According to the

ballots counted so far, just 47,000 votes separate the right- and left-wing blocs.

The right-wing bloc, led by conservative Moderates leader Ulf Kristersson, has been credited with an absolute majority of 175 out of 349 seats in parliament, with 174 for the left wing.

The ballots still to be counted on Wednesday included votes from abroad and those cast in advance but too late to be counted on election day, as well as ballots that required a decision on whether they were valid or not.

Their exact number was not immediately known, but on the last day of counting in the previous election in 2018 there were 202,000.

Political analysts said it was unlikely the final ballots would change the result.

"The result could flip and give the left a majority, but no one really expects that", Gothenburg University political scientist

Mikael Gilljam said.

In Stockholm, dozens of people were seen sitting at long tables at City Hall opening envelopes with ballots, a journalist reported.

"All eyes are on the Riksdag, the parliament's, votes," counter Eva Tofvesson Redz, 55, said.

"We are very careful every time we do this" but this time "there is a lot of media attention, there is a lot of political attention on this, so we are making sure that we do a good job", she added.

The exact make-up of possible governments on both the left and the right remained uncertain.

In the most widely expected scenario of a right-wing victory, the thorny question remains of whether the far-right would be given cabinet posts.

The Sweden Democrats rose up out of neo-Nazi groups and the "Keep Sweden Swedish" movement in the early 1990s, entering parliament in 2010 with 5.7 per cent of votes. — **AFP**

Are smart devices affecting health aspects



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician, content creator

Whether you are watching your favourite web series or scrolling through social media you don't realise that you would spend hefty hours and this prolonged exposure can be detrimental.

We all know that digital screens emit blue light which scientists believe can be both good and bad for your skin depending on the intensity and duration.

What is blue light?

Sun is the chief emitter of blue light contained in the visible light spectrum with a wavelength in the range of 380-500 nanometres yet smart devices (computers, laptops, cell phones, TV screens, LEDs) too emit blue light.

Is blue light really damaging to your skin?

It's evident through various

scientific resources that blue light is damaging to the eyes and can lead to dryness, itching, redness, and macular degeneration. Moreover, it hinders the circadian rhythm or the sleep-wake cycle causing sleep disturbances.

But what about skin?

Kathleen Suozzi, MD, a dermatologic surgeon and the director of aesthetic dermatology at Yale Medicine in New Haven, Connecticut, says there is no solid scientific evidence that blue light damages skin.

"It is suspected that blue light may induce harmful effects on the skin, specifically pigmentation and photoaging; however, this has not been proven," she says.

She points out that some dermatologists even use blue light

SCIENTISTS HAVE CONCLUDED THAT DAMAGE THROUGH BLUE LIGHT FROM SCREENS IS MINIMAL COMPARED TO EXPOSURE TO BLUE LIGHT EMITTED FROM THE SUN

to treat certain skin conditions, such as acne, and there have been no reports that these treatments damage skin pigmentation.

So, how worrying is blue light exposure to the skin?

As you stroll down the cosmetics aisle in any store, you'll find countless products claiming to protect your skin against blue light.

However, as per various studies conducted, scientists have concluded that damage through blue light from screens is minimal compared to exposure to blue light emitted from the sun.

As stated, blue light is used for photodynamic therapy for treating acne, eczema, and certain cancers. It also boosts the healing of wounds.

But this doesn't mean you should go off guard while working or spending time on your screens for longer periods.

Compared to computer or laptop screens, using cell phones is more damaging as they are held much closer to the face and eyes.

Secondly, opt for skincare products containing vitamin C (ascorbic acid), iron oxide, or other antioxidants to counteract the

damage from free radicals. Also, they aid in collagen production (needed to keep skin elastic and youthful) and prevent photo aging and hyperpigmentation.

While several claims emphasise the usage of sunscreens as a shield for blue light from devices but experts believe that SPF's (sun protection factors) are effective against UVA and UVB radiations from sunlight only.

Mineral-based sunscreens containing zinc oxide and titanium dioxide (US FDA approved) provide better and broader protection against blue light rays.

Concisely, setting limits on your screen time, wearing proper sunscreen everyday, and opting for appropriate skincare products is the key to radiant and youthful skin.

God does not back war, pope says in criticism of Russian patriarch

PHILIP PULLELLA

Pope Francis said on Wednesday that God does not guide religions towards war, an implicit criticism of Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, who backs the attack on Ukraine and has boycotted a conference of faith leaders.

On his second day in Kazakhstan, Francis addressed the Seventh Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, a meeting that brings together Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other faiths.

Kirill was to have attended, but pulled out.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) sent a delegation headed by its number two, Metropolitan Anthony, who later briefly met the pope.

"God is peace. He guides us always in the way of peace, never that of war," Francis said, speaking at a huge round table in the Independence Palace, a massive modern structure made of steel and glass in the capital of the former Soviet republic.

"Let us commit ourselves, then, even more to insisting on the need for resolving conflicts not by the inconclusive means of power, with arms and threats, but by the only means blessed by heaven and worthy of man: encounter, dialogue and patient negotiations," he said.

The pope, who earlier this year said Kirill could not be Russian President Vladimir Putin's "altar boy", told the conference: "The sacred must never be a prop for power, nor power a prop for the sacred!"

Kirill has given enthusiastic backing to Russia's attack on Ukraine, which the patriarch views as a bulwark against a West he calls decadent.

His stance has caused a rift with the Vatican and unleashed an internal rebellion that has led to the severing of ties by some local Orthodox Churches with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan Anthony told reporters his meeting with the pope was "very cordial" but said Francis' "altar boy" remark about Kirill was "not helpful for the unity of Christians" and that it surprised the Russian Orthodox Church.

Anthony said the pope told him he wanted to have a second meeting with Kirill. The first was in Cuba in 2016.

Francis also said that, while violence in God's name was never justified, the "viruses" of hate and terrorism would not be eradicated without first wiping out injustice and poverty.

He said religious freedom was essential for peaceful coexistence in any society and no creed had a right to coerce others to convert.

"It is time to realise that fundamentalism defiles and corrupts every creed," he said. — AFP

King Charles inherits untold riches and passes off his own empire



Jane Bradley

The writer is an investigative reporter covering the UK for NYT



Euan Ward

The writer is a reporter on the International desk at NYT

King Charles III built his own empire long before he inherited his mother's.

Charles, who formally acceded to the British throne on Saturday, spent half a century turning his royal estate into a billion-dollar portfolio and one of the most lucrative moneymakers in the royal family business.

While his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, largely delegated responsibility for her portfolio, Charles was far more deeply involved in developing the private estate known as the Duchy of Cornwall.

Over the past decade, he has assembled a large team of professional managers who increased his portfolio's value and profits by about 50 per cent.

Today, the Duchy of Cornwall owns the landmark cricket ground known as The Oval, lush farmland in the south of England, seaside vacation rentals, office space in London and a suburban supermarket depot.

(A duchy is a territory traditionally governed by a duke or duchess.)

The 130,000-acre real estate portfolio is nearly the size of Chicago and generates millions of dollars a year in rental income.

The conglomerate's holdings are valued at roughly \$1.4 billion, compared with around \$949 million in the late queen's private portfolio.

These two estates represent a small fraction of the royal family's estimated \$28 billion fortune. On top of that, the family has personal wealth that remains a closely guarded secret.

As king, Charles will take over his mother's portfolio and inherit a share of this untold personal fortune.

While British citizens normally pay around 40 per cent inheritance tax, Charles gets this tax-free.

And he will pass control of his duchy to his elder son, William, to develop further without having to pay corporate taxes.

The growth in the royal family's coffers and Charles' personal wealth over the past decade came at a time when Britain faced deep austerity budget cuts.

Poverty levels soared, and the use of food banks almost doubled. His lifestyle



King Charles III spent years turning his royal estate into a billion-dollar portfolio.

THE GROWTH IN THE ROYAL FAMILY'S COFFERS AND CHARLES' PERSONAL WEALTH OVER THE PAST DECADE CAME AT A TIME WHEN BRITAIN FACED DEEP AUSTERITY BUDGET CUTS

of palaces and polo has long fueled accusations that he is out of touch with ordinary people. And he has at times been the unwitting symbol of that disconnect — such as when his limo was mobbed by students protesting rising tuition in 2010 or when he perched atop a golden throne in his royal finery this year to pledge help for struggling families.

Today, he ascends to the throne as the country buckles under a cost-of-living crisis that is expected to see poverty get even worse.

A more divisive figure than his mother, Charles is likely to give fresh energy to those questioning the relevance of a royal family at a time of public hardship.

Laura Clancy, author of "Running

the Family Firm: How the Monarchy Manages Its Image and Our Money," said Charles transformed the once-sleepy royal accounts.

"The duchy has been steadily commercialising over the past few decades," Clancy said.

"It is run like a commercial business with a CEO and over 150 staff."

What used to be thought of as simply a "landed gentry pile of land" now operates like a corporation, she said.

The Duchy of Cornwall was established in the 14th century as a way to generate income for the heir to the throne and has essentially funded Charles' private and official expenses. One example of its financial might: The \$28 million profit he made from it last year dwarfed his official salary as prince — just over \$1.1 million.

Piecing together the royal family's assets is complicated, but the fortune falls generally into four groups.

First, and most prominent, is the Crown Estate, which oversees the assets of the monarchy through a board of directors.

Charles, as king, will serve as its chairman, but he does not have final say over how the business is managed.

The estate, which official accounts value at more than \$19 billion, includes shopping malls, busy streets in London's West End and a growing number of wind farms. — *New York Times*

Queen Elizabeth II: selfless and ‘very funny’

BRIGITTE DUSSEAU

Since her death last Thursday, King Charles III has been lavish in his praise for his “beloved” mother’s life of “selfless duty”. But the new monarch could have added another quality to the list attributed to Queen Elizabeth II — her sense of humour.

Royal protocol may have kept the monarch’s humour largely out of the public domain. But behind the scenes, the queen was well known to be highly amusing and a good mimic, with a dry wit and an ability to send herself up.

Paddington and 007: In June for her platinum jubilee, the queen took part in a comedy sketch — shown during the concert outside Buckingham Palace — in which she has tea with Paddington Bear, with predictably chaotic results.

Paddington drinks from the teapot, loses his balance and sends food flying before retrieving a marmalade sandwich from his hat and offering it to Elizabeth. With perfect comic timing, the monarch reveals she too has one. “I keep mine in here,” she says, reaching into her handbag. “For later!” she adds, before tapping a teaspoon on her china cup in time to the opening bars of Queen’s “We Will Rock You”.

It followed the equally successful sequence she filmed with James Bond actor Daniel Craig for the opening ceremony of London’s 2012 Olympic Games in which she appears to skydive into the stadium from a helicopter. Clips of both sketches have been viewed millions of times on YouTube.

ROYAL PROTOCOL MAY HAVE KEPT THE MONARCH’S HUMOUR LARGELY OUT OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN. BUT BEHIND THE SCENES, THE QUEEN WAS WELL KNOWN TO BE HIGHLY AMUSING AND A GOOD MIMIC, WITH A DRY WIT AND AN ABILITY TO SEND HERSELF UP

She was “very funny, very funny”, Craig recalled last week on US television hours after the queen’s death, adding how the queen then “cracked a joke about me”. “Oh no, he’s the one that doesn’t smile,” she quipped as they were having their photograph taken, he said.

Trudeau and Bush: In 2015, an exchange with the famously fresh-faced Canadian Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau prompted laughter too. Paying tribute to her at a Commonwealth banquet in Malta, Trudeau explained that she had first featured on a Canadian stamp in 1935 and that he was the 12th Canadian premier that she had known.

A smiling monarch replied: “Thank you Mr Prime Minister of Canada, for making me feel so old.” Nor did former US president George Bush escape her wit. Getting in a muddle while welcoming her to the White House in 2007, he declared she had come to the United States for the bicentennial in 1776 instead of 1976.

The next day, proposing a toast to the president at a dinner at the British ambassador’s residence, she told him: “I was wondering if I should start this toast by saying ‘when I came here in 1776.’”

Open mic: Open mics can be the bane of public figures, but for the queen an incident during a family photo at the G7 in Cornwall in June 2021, only served to show her at her most jovial and amusing despite the ongoing pandemic.

As the socially distanced leaders posed for the photo, the queen called out: “Are you supposed to be looking as if you’re enjoying yourself?”

The queen was famously discreet for a woman who had met and been confided in by so many world leaders — a quality that served to make her pithy observations all the more amusing.

After meeting democracy hero Lech Walesa, she told an aide the Polish president only had two words in English. She paused before adding: “They are quite interesting words.” More recently, even despite her ongoing health problems, the queen was still able to see the funny side of life.

At a reception on the royal’s Sandringham estate on the eve of the 70th anniversary of her reign, she was invited to cut a cake. On being informed that the design on top was upside down so that the press could photograph it, she replied to laughter “I don’t mind, I don’t matter”, adding: “I can probably read it upside down too.” Among the most famous anecdotes is one related by former royal protection officer Richard Griffin who was with her when she bumped into a couple of American hikers on a walk on her huge Balmoral estate in Scotland. — AFP



A VICTIM OF WAR

Nina Gonchar, sits on a bed inside a bunker in Bohorodychne village in Kramatorsk, Donetsk region, on Wednesday, amid the Russian war on Ukraine. Russia said it was carrying out “massive strikes” across the Ukrainian front line and accused Ukrainian soldiers of abusing civilians in territories recaptured in a dramatic counter-offensive. – AFP

Investing in Africa’s health



Donald P Kaberuka

The author is a former president of the African Development Bank, is Board Chair of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria

There was a time, not so long ago, when an HIV diagnosis was a death sentence. Aids, together with tuberculosis and malaria, killed millions of people and overwhelmed health systems worldwide – especially in Africa.

But the world came together and fought back. The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, established in 2002, is an unparalleled success story.

Cooperation between developed and developing countries, the private sector, civil society, and affected communities has saved 44 million lives, and the combined death rate from these three diseases has been reduced by more than half.

Saving this many lives has had a huge economic impact.

The Global Fund estimates that an investment of \$1 through the health programmes it supports will result in \$31 in health gains and economic returns over three years.

And since most of its investments are in Africa, the benefits will spread across the continent.

But the Covid-19 pandemic curtailed this rapid progress.

While the death rate on the continent has not been as catastrophic as many feared, the pandemic has had a profoundly negative impact on Africa’s health systems and on the fight against Aids, TB, and malaria.

Testing, diagnosis, and treatment for these diseases have been severely affected, threatening the gains made in previous decades.

Worldwide deaths from malaria, for example, increased by 13 per cent in 2020, to a level not seen since 2012. Unless things change, the gap in health and economic outcomes between Africa and the rest of the world will widen.

Overseas aid remains vital. If we are to reverse the losses created by the pandemic and continue to do lifesaving work, the Global Fund needs to meet its fundraising target of \$18 billion over the next three years.

The Fund’s Replenishment Conference this month will bring together representatives from donor countries, the private sector, and civil-society groups

COVID-19 HAS REVERSED SOME OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE FIGHT TO ERADICATE AIDS, MALARIA, AND TUBERCULOSIS IN AFRICA. BUT, DESPITE HIGH INFLATION AND AN UNCERTAIN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE SEVERAL STEPS TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL HEALTH SYSTEMS AND BOLSTER THE CONTINENT’S DEFENCES AGAINST FUTURE EPIDEMICS

seeking to renew commitments and ensure overarching support for the fight against Aids, TB, and malaria.

But domestic investment is also crucial for securing health sustainability, especially given the impact of recent global shocks on both advanced and emerging economies.

To this end, the Global Fund supports initiatives like the African Union’s African Leadership Meeting (ALM), which advocates for increased domestic resources for health.

While the Global North can look forward to the post-Covid economic recovery, Africa is still lagging behind the rest of the world in vaccine access and uptake.

The continent will need more time to recover fully from the pandemic. How, then, in the face of an uncertain economic outlook – with African GDP dropping, inflation rising, and food and energy costs soaring – can governments realistically increase health spending?

While there is no silver bullet, we have identified several actions that governments can take to promote investment in the health sector.

For starters, economic recovery is a virtuous circle: GDP growth enables greater investment in health, and a

healthier population is more productive. The next few years could be challenging as the longer-term consequences of the pandemic and the ripple effects of the war in Ukraine adversely affect investment and trade.

But fully implementing initiatives like the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could help reduce Africa’s dependency on food and fuel imports.

Another way to prop up local health systems would be to increase tax revenues.

Many African governments face a significant “tax gap” — the difference between what their tax laws should, in theory, deliver and what governments manage to collect.

Removing loopholes and reinforcing the efficacy of tax administration are powerful ways to make more money available for health.

Governments should also allocate more funds to public health. Very few African countries currently devote 15 per cent of their national budgets to the health sector – the target set by the 2001 Abuja Declaration.

This, in turn, impedes their ability to ramp up efforts to eradicate Aids, TB, malaria, and other epidemics, and thus reduces their chances of achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The private sector must do its part as well, whether through corporate taxes, employer-led health insurance, or workplace health schemes.

Private companies benefit enormously from a healthier population and — as we have seen during the Covid-19 pandemic — can suffer dramatic losses when infectious diseases run wild.

Of course, it is also important to make health spending more efficient.

This would involve coordination between finance and health ministries.

Finance ministries can support planning, budgeting, and spending by providing a clear indication of available resources over the medium term and by being responsive to changing needs, including health emergencies.

Meanwhile, health ministries can design more streamlined and cost-effective public programmes.

Pulling these levers requires political leadership and sustained effort.

The Global Fund directly supports African communities and governments as they work to strengthen local health systems.

But only a combination of international aid and domestic financing can turbocharge the efforts to eliminate Aids, TB, and malaria by 2030.

And only by ending these epidemics can we propel Africa’s economies, bolster the world’s defences against future outbreaks, and free millions from the burden of disease.

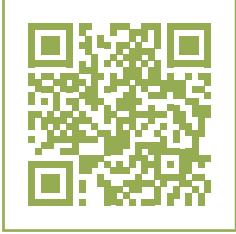
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Worldwide deaths from malaria, for example, increased by 13 per cent in 2020, to a level not seen since 2012.

sport

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OSSA launches new strategy for school sports

AL HABSI, FATMA AND BARAKAT AMONG AMBASSADORS



ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Oman School Sports Federation unveiled its strategy for the 2022-27 period and introduced its ambassadors during a glittering ceremony at the Grand Millenium Hotel here on Wednesday.

The event was held under the auspices of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser Al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education.

The dignitaries at the ceremony included Shaikh Khalid al Zubair, Chairman of Oman Olympic Committee, in presence of Dr Marwan bin Juma al Juma, Chairman of Oman Hockey Association, Abdullah Bamakhalef, Chairman of Oman Table Tennis Associations and Dr Said al Shahri, Chairman of Oman Handball Association, among other top officials and invitees.

Other dignitaries included general managers and heads of sports associations and committees, secretaries of sports committees in educational directorates and several sports supervisors and experts.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and OSSA President, said: “The strategy of the OSSA (2022-2027) will be a turning point in the functioning of the association influencing and adding value to sports in schools. The OSSA will give a foundation to the students providing them with the

best knowledge, skills and tools that enable them to build a healthy, balanced lifestyle and establish a conscious vision to reconcile school achievement, school sports and physical activity.”

“Since the establishment of the Oman School Sports Association in 2016, it has been striving through all its activities and initiatives to improve the practice environment and environment for school sports to enable the value of sports as a way of life in the educational community. Hence the framing of this strategy will help as a scientific and methodological aid for designing activities, programmes and initiatives for the school sports curriculum.”

“The current path charted by the strategy is consistent with the Oman Vision 2040, which has set within its strategic objectives ‘a stimulating environment and systems for sport that contributes economically and compete globally,” Dr Abdullah added.

“The work on this strategy was based on an accurate and systematic diagnosis of the reality of school sports and was guided by the best international practices in this context, in order to formulate an ambitious vision for the OSSA’s work during the next stage.”

“Our mission is to “proceed with an institutional approach in accordance with best practices to push school sports to be an added development value. This strategy needs the cooperation and support of all relevant parties, including the Ministry of Education in its various



sectors, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, partner sports federations, sports media, the private sector and other relevant parties to achieve its goals.”

“Also, in line with the announcement of the strategy, the launch of the new identity of the OSSA today will represent a key direction for the association in creating a balanced sports culture among the young people of Oman.”

SPORTS AMBASSADORS

The OSSA also introduced its ambassadors – sports heroes of the country.

The ambassadors include Oman football great Ali al Habsi, tennis ace Fatma al Nabhani, star athlete Barakat al Harthy, former national football team player Imad al Hosni,

Oman sprint star Barakat was ecstatic to join the ambassadors list.

“I had started my athletics career in my school. So, I feel honoured to be an ambassador for the school sports body. I will give my best contribution towards the role,” the athlete, who recently won medals at the Islamic Games in Turkey, said.

Tennis star Fatma also offered her best support for the vision.

“I’m honoured to be a sports ambassador for the OSSA. It is a privilege to help the upcoming student talents and give proper recognition for sports in schools,” she said.

Hisham bin Salem al Adwani, OSSA Vice-President and head of the strategy work team, made a presentation on the new strategy.

The OSSA had taken consideration of the stakeholders from the school sports field and partners before framing the strategy.

“We had assessed the infrastructure of the stadiums, and the challenges faced by students and teachers in sports were reviewed. The team analysed the reality of the sports committees in the governorates, the OSSA’s internal and external activities at the regional level and the international practices in school sports. An intense study of international practices in organising school sports events through Gulf, Arab, Asian and international experiences was also made.

NEW LOGO

The OSSA’s new logo was launched, which consists of the shield shape symbolising sports and corresponds to the vision of the association.

The OSSA letters of Oman School Sports Association, symbolises the entity of the federation as a sports institution and all the activities and programmes that it implements for students and teachers in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and for all sports, games, activities, training courses, awareness and health campaigns related to physical activity, movement and sports.

The logo bears gradations of red colour and symbolises passion, ambition, national identity, giving, motivation and perseverance.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the minister honoured the strategy work team: Hisham bin Salem al Adwani, head of the team, Fahd bin Khalfan al Mashaykhi, Vice-President and members Dr Sulaiman bin Ali al Balushi, Abdullah bin Saeed al Qaedi, Khalid bin Ali al Riyami, Asaad bin Mubarak al Hassani, Mubarak bin Khamis al Hamdani, Safa bint Saif al Salmiya, Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Touqi, Dr Nasser bin Yasir al Rawahi, Dr Ali Abdulrahman Al Bakri al Yafei.

The OSSA’s strategic partners are OQ Group and Omantel.

The sponsoring companies included Tamkeen Investment, Bank Muscat, Barzman and Pocari Sweat.

AUSTRALIA HAVE 'READY REPLACEMENTS' FOR FINCH

Starc, Marsh, Stoinis out of India tour

MELBOURNE: Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc and all-rounders Marcus Stoinis and Mitchell Marsh were on Wednesday ruled out of Australia's Twenty20 tour to India with low-level injuries.

Team bosses opted not to risk aggravating niggles in the three-game series beginning on September 21 with Australia's defence of the T20 World Cup on home soil fast approaching.

"Selectors felt with three games in six days across three cities, including travel to India and internally, Marsh, Stoinis and Starc are best served remaining in Australia," Cricket Australia said.

The injuries are all minor with Starc (knee), Marsh (ankle) and Stoinis (side) replaced by Nathan Ellis, Daniel Sams and Sean Abbott. Australia will return to play home T20 series against the West Indies and England in the lead-up to the World Cup, where they will open their campaign on October 22 against New Zealand.



REPLACEMENT FOR FINCH

Meanwhile, paceman Josh Hazlewood said that Australia have experienced T20 players ready to slot in "seamlessly" in place of captain Aaron Finch if required for the World Cup.

Under pressure and out of form with the bat, Finch's place in the team is under scrutiny ahead of Australia's World Cup title defence on home soil.

Team mates and selector George Bailey have backed Finch to dig himself out of his form slump and lead the team at the global tournament but Hazlewood stopped short of describing the opener's captaincy as essential.

Asked how difficult it would be for Australia to have a new captain for the World Cup, Hazlewood said the team had senior players ready to step up.

"All teams at the moment really feel like they're quite senior and there's a lot of guys who sort of take the leadership upon themselves when they're out there in the middle doing their chosen skill," he told reporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

"There's quite a lot of experience out there in the middle and I think it would be quite easy for the next captain to come in and just

seamlessly transition."

Australia are already looking for a new ODI captain, with Finch having played his last match in the format against New Zealand over the weekend.

Fast bowler Pat Cummins has led the Test team since wicketkeeper Tim Paine stepped down last year but Hazlewood said Australia might want to look outside the quicks for a new white-

ball captain. "With the quicks, we're probably going to rest (from) white ball here and there so it's not like, I guess, Patty with the test matches playing every game," Hazlewood said.

"That could create a reshuffle of captaincy and vice-captaincy all the time.

"You probably want someone in there who's stable and playing every game. It makes it a lot easier,

I think," Hazlewood added.

While Cummins is favoured to succeed Finch, Test vice-captain Steve Smith is also seen as a strong candidate.

David Warner also hopes to be considered for leadership positions, though he remains banned from them by Cricket Australia for his part in the Newlands ball-tampering scandal.

— Agencies

OMAN MILITARY TEAMS ADVANCE IN GERMANY



Oman national military beach volleyball teams (A) and (B) managed to reach the round of sixteen of the Military Beach Volleyball World Cup, which started at the German Military Sports College in Varnsdorf, Germany. The teams will compete in the round of sixteen, hoping to qualify for the final rounds of this tournament, which concludes on Thursday.

Broad, Anderson in Ashes squad

LONDON: England's all-time leading Test wicket takers James Anderson and Stuart Broad will be part of the squad for next year's Ashes series against Australia, coach Brendon McCullum said.

Anderson, 40, and Broad, 36, were part of the England squad that suffered a 4-0 defeat in Australia in the last Ashes, and both were then omitted from the three-match series in West Indies where England lost 1-0.

Mired in a run of one win in 17 tests, England named Ben Stokes to replace Joe Root as captain in April and brought in McCullum as coach in May.

Broad and Anderson returned to the squad under the new leadership, helping the team win six of their seven Tests this summer. "Yeah, they'll be here," McCullum told reporters when asked if they would be in his Ashes squad. "They're both smiling. How good's that? Those guys are phenomenal cricketers. They could finish any time they wanted and they'd still be considered greats of the game.



"What they're doing is continuing to build on the legacy they're going to leave for the next generation — the time they're giving other people in the dressing-room is phenomenal," McCullum added.

Australia fast bowler Mitchell Starc was impressed by the prospect of facing the English duo next year. "I certainly won't be bowling balls at 40. "They're incredible talents, incredibly skilled players," he said. — Reuters

Bangladesh axe Mahmudullah from T20 World Cup squad

DHAKA: Bangladesh on Wednesday axed former cricket captain Mahmudullah Riyad and recalled batsman Najmul Hossain in a shake-up to its struggling Twenty20 squad ahead of next month's World Cup in Australia.

This month's disappointing Asia Cup campaign highlighted the team's 20-over woes, with Bangladesh turfed out in the group stage after losing to Afghanistan and eventual winners Sri Lanka.

Mahmudullah's inclusion was under a cloud after a lacklustre 151 runs across his eight match appearances in 2022.

Indian cricketer Sridharan Sriram, appointed last month as the team's T20 consultant, said it was time for the team to think of its future beyond the 36-year-old.

"I think this was the right time for all of us to come together and think of... who can fill in the big shoes of Mahmudullah," he said.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin hailed Mahmudullah's record but added that the decision to omit the all-rounder from the squad was unanimous.

"We have respect for Mahmudullah who has played well for the national team," he said.

"We haven't been doing well in this format," Minhajul added. "Our T20 consultant has given us a one-year plan, which will take us in a different direction. We have gone with this plan."

Najmul returns after he was left out of contention during the Asia Cup campaign while Liton



Das, Nurul Hasan and Yasir Ali have recovered from injury.

Bangladesh will also be without the experienced Mushfiqur Rahim, who retired earlier this month.

The World Cup gets underway in Australia on October 16 and Bangladesh will appear in Group 2 alongside India, Pakistan, South Africa and two qualifiers.

The squad named on Wednesday will travel to New

Zealand beforehand to take part in next month's tri-nation tournament alongside Pakistan.

— AFP

Bangladesh Squad: Shakib Al Hasan (captain), Sabbir Rahman, Mehidy Hasan, Afif Hossain, Mosaddek Hossain, Liton Das, Yasir Ali, Nurul Hasan, Mustafizur Rahman, Mohammad Saifuddin, Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Hasan Mahmud, Nasum Ahmed, Najmul Hossain

UAE sweep Tour jerseys in Salalah

MOHAMMED AND MUNDHER CLINCH FIRST AND THIRD FOR SALALAH CLUB IN LAST STAGE



ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Home rider Mohammed al Wahibi of Salalah Club claimed the fourth and concluding stage honours for an ideal finish of second Tour of Salalah on Wednesday.

UAE cyclists' consistent show earned them all the five general classification titles in the four-stage cycling event.

The four-stage cycling race, which offered a total prize money of RO 7,730, was organised by the Oman Cycling Association and supported by Dhofar Municipality, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

In the 116 km-long stage from Khor Rori to Municipality Entertainment Centre, Mohammed al Wahibi finished on top with a timing of 3 hours and 22 seconds (10 bonus points). Thailand's Supachok Kaewsuya (03:00:22 - 6 bonus points) claimed the second spot and Mundher al Hasani of Salalah Club (03:00:26) finished third.

UAE's Saif al Kaabi clinched the golden jersey with an overall time of 11:12:59 by topping the individual time classification.

Saif earned a purse of RO 600. Stage 1 winner Saif made a safe finish at the 48th in the last stage.

UAE's Khaled Mayouf took the green jersey by topping the points classification with 40 points and got a prize money of RO 600. The Stage 2 winner also followed his team-mate for a safe finish in the fourth stage at 50th spot.

In the KOM individual

classification (best climber), Jaber al Mansoori of the UAE took the top spot and silver jersey with 40 points and a purse of RO 300.

In the under-23 category, UAE's Abdullah al Hammadi grabbed the white jersey by topping with an overall timing of 11:13:52 to take a purse of RO 300.

Omani riders Said al Rahbi (11:20:27) and Mohammed al Wahibi (11:20:44) came second and third respectively in the under-23 time classification.

In the team category, UAE emerged champions with an overall timing of 33:39:46. The UAE team earned a purse of RO 1,000.

Oman-based Cycle KOM - NRO (34:29:05) kept their consistent performance throughout the Tour to retain the second spot and a prize money of RO 800. Thailand national team came third (34:37:27) in their first appearance in the event to earn a prize money of RO 600.

Salalah Club (34:44:54) and Oman Royal Army (34:52:54) finished fourth and fifth among the 10 teams.

SCENIC STAGES

Cycle KOM captain Paul Willcox of the United Kingdom said it was a great team effort.

"We had some misfortune with tyre punctures but we never panicked and continued to work together."

Willcox, a regular presence at the Oman Cycling Association-organised races, said it was great experience of cycling in Salalah.

"The second edition of Tour of Salalah has been another success. Its stages were run amid the backdrop of beautiful scenery with challenging switching climbs to test the riders. I hope it continues in future years," the veteran cyclist told the *Observer*.



The overall winners of the Tour of Salalah receive trophies from the chief guest. **Below:** The Stage 4 top-three winners pose on the podium.



RHRC to hold 20 horse races in new season

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Royal Court Affairs, represented by the Royal Horse Racing Club (RHRC), announced the programme of horse racing for 2022-23 season on Wednesday.

The season will see 20 races at the Al Rahba track in Barka, North Al Batinah Governorate.

The events include the National Day races, the Omani derby and the final race.

The horse racing season will start on October 15 with the first race, the second race will be held



on October 21, the third race will be going off on October 28.

In November, there will be three races. The fourth race will

be on November 5, the fifth race 'National Day Race' will be on November 12 and the sixth race will be held on November 19.



In December, four races are scheduled with the seventh, eighth, ninth and 10th races happening on December 1, 8, 16 and 24

respectively.

In 2023, the RHRC will continue with the remaining 10 races.

In January three races will

be organised -- the 11th, 12th and 13th on January 5, 19 and 24 respectively.

Also, three races will be held in February.

The 14th, 15th and 16th (Omani Derby) races will be staged on February 3, 9 and 24 respectively.

In March, the last month of the season, four races are scheduled.

The 17th race will be on March 2, the 18th on March 9 and the 19th race will be on March 17.

The racing season for the Royal Horse Racing Club will conclude with the 20th and last race on March 18.

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#MAISARAH

Tender floated for design and construction of Oman Cultural Complex

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Acting in cooperation with the National Records and Archives Authority, the Secretariat-General of the Tender Board announced an international tender for the design and construction of Oman Cultural Complex.

The complex, a concept developed by the Ministry of

Heritage and Tourism, aims to establish a national centre of culture as part of the government's wider strategy to promote cultural and artistic innovation.

The project is located at a site within the upscale Airport Heights in Muscat. It spans four hectares with a built-up area of about 73,000 sqm which will house three buildings that are all said to be of national interest including the National Library

that will contain more than five million books, the National Archives that will act as a four-storey exhibition and public events place, and a research and administration building.

It will also have a National Theatre capable of housing up to 1,000 people. The complex will also include a cinema, gallery, a workshop, headquarters for a new literary society, a lecture hall, children's library and retail areas.

Mazoon Electricity installs 40 small-scale solar PV power plants in 2021



HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Mazoon Electricity Company, member of Nama Group, posted a profit of around RO 70 million in 2021, compared to RO 68.8 million in 2020. Total revenues from sales, subsidies and other earnings increased to RO 369.2 million, a growth rate of 5 per cent, compared to RO 350.1 million for the previous year.

The total number of subscribers reached more than 489,500, compared to 473,400 for the year 2020. The annual report issued by the company indicated that its revenues from sales increased by 24.5 per cent to RO 173 million last year, compared to RO 138.9 million for the year 2020.

The number of units sold to various categories of subscribers increased last year to 9,500 GWh, compared to 8,900 GWh for the previous year.

Consumption by the

commercial sector, subject to cost-reflective tariffs, amounted to 1,300 GWh last year, compared to 112,900 GWh for 2020, while the government category consumed 967 GWh of power last year, compared to 628.600 GWh for the year 2020.

The industry sector category recorded a consumption of 114 GWh last year, compared to 109.700 GWh the previous year.

The data also showed that Mazoon Electricity Company has implemented as many as 40 small-scale solar energy projects, with a total capacity of 8.49 megawatts-hours (MWh).

As part of its strategy, the company continues to work on a project to rehabilitate the distribution networks in the coastal areas of the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali.

The company confirmed that it will work to follow all the policies issued by the Oman Investment Authority, ensure the company's daily business and follow up on its decisions in line

with best corporate governance practices.

The report indicated that the number of smart meters installed by the company last year amounted to 38,500, compared to 5,500 for the year 2020, while the prepaid metres amounted to 25,400 metres, compared to 14,800 metres for the previous year.

The report also showed that percentage of electricity losses decreased during the past year to 10.2 per cent, down from 11.1 per cent for the previous year.

The number of new connections for the past year declined from 17,400 in 2020 to 16,300 in 2021 due to the decline in construction activities.

A total of RO 41 million was spent in the implementation of 35 projects last year, compared to 74 projects in the previous year, at a total cost of RO 79.1 million. As many as 12 projects worth RO 25.2 million are currently under implementation, the company added.

SME Development Authority strengthens online access between entrepreneurs and lenders

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Leveraging digital technology, the SME Development Authority has announced that eligible small and medium enterprises (SMEs) can seek funding information and support from as many as 17 banks and financial institutions via its website.

The Authority said on Wednesday that its portal now enables convenient access to the financing solutions and services provided by the 17 entities. The list includes Bank Muscat, Bank Dhofar, Oman Development Bank, Meethaq, Al Malak Investments, SME Development Fund (Inma), GroFin Oman, Sharakah, Bank Nizwa, Ahli Bank, National Bank of Oman, Muscat Finance Company SAOG, Oman Investment & Finance Services, Sohar International Bank and Oman Technology Fund.

In addition, interested SMEs can also submit their queries



INTERESTED SMES CAN ALSO SUBMIT THEIR QUERIES FOR INFORMATION AND OTHER CLARIFICATIONS VIA THE AUTHORITY'S WEBSITE, IT STATED, STRESSING THAT THE INITIATIVE STEMS FROM THE DESIRE TO EASE THE PROCESS OF ACCESSING FACILITIES AND SERVICES VIA THE DIGITAL ROUTE.

for information and other clarifications via the Authority's website, it stated, stressing that the initiative stems from the

desire to ease the process of accessing facilities and services via the digital route.

The number of small and medium enterprises registered with the SMEs Development Authority as of July 31, 2022 surged 46.8 per cent to reach 81,460 institutions, up from a total of 55,491 entities registered a year ago.

The growth in registrations has been spurred by rising interest among SMEs in the incentives and projects contracts offered by government agencies and large companies in the private sector.

PO BOX 78, QURUM CITY CENTRE, PC 102, SULTANATE OF OMAN

INVITATION TO ORDINARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Al Fajar Al Alamia Co. SAOG (the "Company") are pleased to invite the shareholders for the company's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, 28th of September 2022, at Crowne Plaza, Muscat and through the electronic platform for holding General Meetings, which can be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository Company ("MCDC") website (www.mcd.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the first AGM is not met, Wednesday, 05 October 2022, 3:00 pm will be the date of the second AGM, to discuss the following agenda:

- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on Company's activity and its financial position for the financial year ended 30 June 2022.
- To consider and approve the report of the Board of Directors' on corporate governance for the financial year ended 30 June 2022.
- To consider and approve the statutory auditors' report and to approve the financial statements and the profit and loss account for the financial year ending 30 June 2022.
- To approve the sitting fees paid to Directors for attending meetings of the Board and sub-committees for the previous financial year and to determine the Directors' sitting fees for the upcoming financial year.
- To consider the transactions carried out with related parties during the financial year ended 30 June 2022.
- Approve the proposed transactions that the company will carry out with related parties during the financial year ending 30th June 2023.
- To consider the allocation of an amount of RO 10,000/- for Corporate Social Responsibility for the financial year ending 30 June 2023.
- To approve the appointment of a neutral and independent external advisor to evaluate the performance of the board of directors.
- To appoint statutory auditors for the financial year ending 30 June 2023 and determine their fees.
- To approve the appointment of a neutral and independent external advisor to evaluate the performance of the board of directors.
- To elect a new Board Member to fill the vacant seat of the Board of Directors for a current term of office (from the shareholders and/or non-shareholders). Any person wishing to participate may fill the nomination form that can be obtained from the company's head office. The completed form should be delivered to the Company's head office at least 2 days prior to the Annual Ordinary General Meeting, not later than 1:00 p.m., Thursday, 22nd of September 2022.

Pursuant to the Company's articles of association and General Meeting regulations, by means of modern technology issued by the Capital Market Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

(a) A juristic person, exclusively, has the right to authorize a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.

(b) Voting on any of the items on the agenda begins no more than three days before the date set for the Meeting until the end of the voting process on the day of the Meeting, and in the event that the shareholder's balance is increased or decreased, the voting process will be invalid, and he must re-vote again on the day of the Meeting.

Any questions relating to this Notice should be addressed to Ms. Laila Said Salim Al Hadi (Telephone No. +968 92432813 or email : laila@alfajar.co.om).

Chairman	Auditors	Legal Advisors
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Bank Muscat, IKEA join hands on easy payment plan for customers

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has joined hands with global home furnishing brand IKEA to facilitate affordable home furnishing options for customers in Oman through the bank's Easy Payment Plan (EPP).

The EPP facility has been extended to all holders of Bank Muscat Credit Cards (except Corporate Cards) shopping at IKEA Oman, whereby they can repay their total bill amount in 12 monthly instalments at zero per cent interest rate.

Bank Muscat's EPP scheme offers customers the ability to avail goods and services at selected merchant partners across the Sultanate and repay the billed amount in fixed monthly instalments over a 12-month period at zero per cent interest. As a valued merchant partner, IKEA will promote the EPP offer to its



customers in Oman.

The bank also announced that customers will benefit from the dedicated checkout counter that has been provided for Bank Muscat EPP customers at the IKEA Oman store. Customers can utilise the EPP facility at IKEA Oman for all bills that are above RO 100.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasser al Raisi, General Manager personal banking, Bank Muscat, said: "In line with the bank's customer-centric vision and providing of excellent financing facilities, Bank Muscat's Easy Payment Plan allows customers to avail goods and services and pay conveniently over a period of 12 months.

Customers can easily purchase



high-value items without having to delay their purchase decisions or pay very high interest rates. We thank IKEA Oman for partnering with the bank to offer this facility, which will greatly help in making world-class products affordable to as many customers as possible and also improve the quality of life for people in Oman."

Omar Abushaban, Store Manager of Al Futtaim IKEA, Oman Avenues Mall said: "As a brand that believes in creating a better everyday life for many people, it is important that we constantly improve the way we do things. Everyone deserves a space that can be used to create a better everyday life no matter what it is being used for."

Bank Muscat's EPP scheme is

available at over 100 participating merchant outlets including home furniture, electronics, auto services, jewellery, insurance and healthcare. The bank's credit cards are a preferred mode of payment in Oman, and the EPP scheme reiterates the bank's commitment to promoting secure digital payments in Oman.

To make use of the scheme, customers should request for an EPP at the checkout counter of the merchant partner before making the payment. The bank has also announced that credit card cardholders will continue to be eligible for rewards points (for all eligible cards) as per the amount spent through the card.

It is also important to note that customers are not required to provide any additional documents at the time of payment to qualify for the scheme, which makes the option a smooth and quick payment option for customers.

Akbar Group to open new branch in Oman



MUSCAT: Akbar Group will open their new IATA registered branch in the Sultanate of Oman tomorrow, September 16 in Ruwi. This will be their fourth branch in Oman, the others being located in Muscat and Ghubra. Akbar Travels, with a global network of 155 branches worldwide and other network arrangements is India's largest travel agency in terms of the number of IATA registered branches. In the Middle East, they have their offices in UAE, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

Backed by a rich legacy spanning over four decades, Akbar Travels led by KV Abdul Nazar, Chairman of Akbar Group has carved a niche for themselves in the industry and are market leaders in each of the regions they operate with its bouquet of travel and related portfolio.

Being a market leader in their own right, the Group is quite multi-faceted and is known for its best practices in the industry.

The Oman operations of the Akbar Holidays in a short span of five years, have emerged as one of the leading players in the travel sector in the country, not only enhancing the travel experience for the residents and expat community with their customer driven services and special packages but also providing job opportunities and training for Omani work force in the travel industry thereby integrating their share to the country's economic progress.

The recruitment is backed by induction and in house training equipping them with the necessary skill sets to further their personal growth in the industry and enhance their contribution to the nation's continual economic growth.

"To nurture and encourage local talent in an area that holds great potential is an exciting prospect for us at Akbar Group and the expansion plans

envisaged for Oman transcends the conventional travel products. The objective of this is to create opportunities and be a part of the growth story of Oman's Vision 2040", said Ashiana Nazar, Executive Director of Akbar Group, at the side-lines of the event.

Akbar Travels' services extend across the travel spectrum encompassing online and offline ticketing for corporate and individuals with a robust Ecom platform, in-bound and outbound holidays, (Akbar Holidays), MICE, Destination Management (Arabian Journeys), Medical Tourism (Travocure), Umrah, Study Abroad and Al Jazeera Exchange.

Akbar Holidays with its extensive network across the world, have exciting customised and affordable packages suiting varied types of holiday seekers like honeymoon, adventure, family trips, shopping and food & weekend travel etc to exotic destinations.

They are also tied up with hotels across price bands across the globe in cities like Bali, Washington DC, San Francisco, Kuala Lumpur, Budapest, Sydney, Rome, Barcelona and more offering affordable accommodation and value for money.

Akbar Travels also offer excellent 'standard', 'special' and 'premium' Umrah Travel Packages that covers tickets, stay and visa services from various cities. One of the core areas of focus for the Akbar Travels Oman in alignment with His Majesty's Vision 2040 is to promote Oman's inbound tourism industry with the Indo Oman sector being a segment that will be explored and exploited to the full potential on account of its pan India presence. Akbar Travels has plans to open and operate five new additional branches in Oman in the near future as part of their expansion in the Sultanate of Oman.

Swiss-Belhotel International holds blood donation campaign

MUSCAT: As part of 35th year anniversary, Swiss-Belhotel International held a blood donation campaign under the auspices of the Ministry of Health's Department of Blood Bank Services. This was especially important as the Central Blood Bank in Muscat currently requires over 120 donors a day to meet the demand of health institutions in the country.

September 25, 2022 marks the 35th anniversary of Swiss-Belhotel International and the group announces a 'Celebration of Togetherness' for its guests and associates all through the month of September. As part of the celebrations, both guests and staff members can enjoy an exciting line up of activities ranging from guest photo competitions to staff potluck parties.

Gavin M Faull, Chairman and President of Swiss-Belhotel International, said, "We are delighted to celebrate this special milestone with our guests, owners, partners, and colleagues. The past 35 years have given us plenty of reasons to celebrate and we are proud of our accomplishments. It was only possible due to the love and appreciation shown by our guests, the trust and support given by our owners, and the dedication and hard work of each and every member of our team. While looking forward,



we remain committed to make a positive difference to our people, communities, and the planet. As we continue to grow, togetherness lies at the heart of everything we do."

Starting from 1 September, every hotel under the Swiss-Belhotel International banner will run a photo contest for guests whereby they will be invited to take a picture with Swiss-Belhotel International logogram in it and post it on Instagram tagging @swissbelhotel @sbecbenefits and @hotelaccount with hashtag #SBI35Years.

Amaala contracts reach more than \$1.7 billion

MUSCAT: The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC), the developer behind ultra-luxury tourism destination Amaala, has announced tangible progress across the development, with over 300 contracts signed to date, worth in excess of SAR 6.62 billion (\$1.7bn).

More than 98 per cent of the total contract value has been awarded to Saudi firms, highlighting the organisation's commitment to strengthening the local economy. These include agreements for the design and build of state-of-the-art accommodation and facilities at the destination for future employees. An additional 6.1 billion riyals of contracts is currently out to tender, across 54 proposals.

"Surpassing 300 contract awards underscores the scale of this project and the significant progress being made as we press ahead with activity on the ground to bring our destination to life. At Amaala, we are working to create a sustainable, purpose- and meaning-driven destination for the discerning traveller, and remain closely aligned with the goals of the Kingdom's Vision 2030, as we develop one of the top global tourism destinations of the future," said John Pagano, Group CEO of TRSDC.

ahlibank signs pact to provide mortgage loans for customers

MUSCAT: Aiming to provide financial solutions to help clients achieve the goal of owning a decent home that offers peace of mind and ensures their family's future, ahlibank has announced the signing of a new agreement with Al Adrak Contracting and Trading Company to provide attractive mortgage loans for customers aspiring to buy properties at the exclusive Hai Al Naseem Housing Project in Barka. Described as an 'Urban Oasis', the prime property is a pilot initiative under the government's 'The Affordable Housing Project'.

The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Muneer al Balushi, AGM — Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, and by Joseph Thampan — General Manager,

Commercial and Mahmood bin Masoud al Ghafri — Director of HR & Administration from Al Adrak Contracting and Trading Company, at a formal ceremony held in the presence of officials from both parties.

Speaking on the sidelines of the signing ceremony, Muneer called it a decisive step in its endeavours to collaborate with the government in achieving national development goals.

"This significant agreement is a huge affirmation of our commitment to uphold government initiatives and partner with relevant authorities to achieve the objectives of Oman's Vision 2040, which has social well-being as the main pillar. One of the Vision's key features is 'people and society'. Due to this,



we have continually emphasised social responsibility programmes.

"It is an honour for ahlibank to be associated with a project of this stature. I want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our intent to facilitate a way forward to bridge gaps in realising the national development agenda.

Through Hai Al Naseem, the pilot project — in Barka — under the government's 'The Affordable Housing Project' that was launched in 2017, we will, in cooperation with Adrak Developers, contribute to achieving the financial stability that the Omani citizen aspires,

by providing adequate housing units," he added. Reiterating similar sentiments, Muzna bint Sulaiman al Busaidiyah — Corporate Communications Manager of Al Adrak Contracting and Trading Company, said, "We are happy to have ahlibank on board to provide an essential financial link to prospective customers. As the contracting arm of the consortium, our focus has been on creating a rare industry blend of turnkey solutions with complete in-house facilities, and this will prove to be a winning formula for ahlibank customers who have the opportunity and the solution on their hands. We have designed and built the housing unit to reflect a modern lifestyle, with facilities on par with global standards. And with

Barka being a vibrant beachside city, homeowners are guaranteed safety and contentment at the 'Urban Oasis.' The agreement aims to fulfil the homeownership goals of the Bank's customers, by providing a new lease on lifestyle in Hai Al Naseem. ahlibank offers a mortgage loan — at attractive interest rates starting at 4.5 per cent per annum — before issuing the property to provide various housing alternatives to eligible citizens of residential lands. It will also mark a new phase in ahlibank's inspiring growth trajectory, as it demonstrates its flexibility in crafting financial solutions to fit the needs and aspirations of its varied clientele while partnering with the government in its development projects.



Petrofac inks MoU with Oman Hydrogen Center to boost green hydrogen production



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Petrofac, a leading global service provider in the energy sector, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Oman Hydrogen Center to collaborate in enhancing the capabilities of the renewable energy sector in the Sultanate of Oman, particularly with regard to green hydrogen production.

The Oman Hydrogen Center, based at the German University of Technology, is the first research facility of its kind in Oman. It also supports, as part of its vigorous activities, the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to accelerate its transition to renewable energy, in addition to being an international centre for research, technology, education, industry and economic applications, in line with the Oman Vision 2040.

Petrofac has a proven track record of supporting renewable energy projects across a wide range of technologies, having recently completed a front-end engineering design for green hydrogen production facilities, as well as several studies for industrial users around the world.

Petrofac will provide its technical expertise and facilitate the utilisation of its extensive experience in the design, management and implementation of complex projects, and capacity building through knowledge transfer.

This partnership between Petrofac and Oman Hydrogen Center aims to achieve significant benefits, aiming at the effective implementation of green hydrogen projects and

helping to accelerate the energy transition in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to providing expertise and supporting the growth of the hydrogen sector, and developing and empowering national competencies in the country.

Dr Khalid al Jahwari, Regional Director of Petrofac in Oman said: "In response to global energy demand, and in line with the highest standards of efficiency, we, along with our industry partners, are looking to enable all potential technologies. Green hydrogen provides an opportunity to help accelerate the energy transition in the region. The Sultanate of Oman has removed carbon from many parts of our sectors.

This partnership is designed to meet the needs of new complex energy assets, with a focus on engineering excellence and ever more skilled efficiencies. With our combined knowledge, experience and capabilities, we are here to support this transition."

In her comment, Dr Sawsan al Riyami, Director of the Oman Hydrogen Center, said: "We are witnessing unrelenting efforts by government units, industries and scientists to accelerate the energy transition and support the green economy.

Therefore, our cooperation with Petrofac comes with the aim of developing specific studies related to renewable energies and the green hydrogen economy, by focusing on Technical training that includes a hands-on operating session. This will enable us to build our Omani competencies in the energy sector."

Omani state-owned water utility eyes domestic, regional expansion

Going private: Majis Industrial Services, part of Oman Investment Authority, is tipped for partial privatisation via an IPO on Muscat Stock Exchange

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

Wholly Omani government-owned integrated water services utility Majis Industrial Services (MIS) has ambitions to expand its operations, currently limited to Sohar, to other industrial and economic hubs of the Sultanate of Oman, as well as potential markets in the wider Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region.

Majis, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman – is among a number of state-owned entities that are being primed for partial privatisation as part of OIA's divestment strategy. Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) via the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) is the preferred route for privatisation.

At the MSX Investors Roadshow held last week, a top official of Majis provided an overview of the company's business model, operational performance and vision for growth.

Hamed Ali al Wahaibi, Acting CEO, said the company currently



View of Majis' water services infrastructure at Sohar Port

provides an array of water-related utility services to mainly industrial customers operating at Sohar Port and Free Zone, as well as the nearby Sohar Industrial City. As many as 50 customers are presently connected to Majis' comprehensive networks that supply cooling seawater, ultra-pure process water and potable water, as well as benefit from sewage and industrial effluent treatment services provided by the company.

"We have a very attractive business model, with well-invested assets and also sustainable growth acceleration, backed by capable and experienced management," said the Acting CEO.

"We have an exclusive concession with Sohar Port and Free Zone as the sole utility services provider, with ownership of integrated utility assets, such as seawater intake system, RO

plant (and other infrastructure), with the ability to scale and grow the business. We have long term agreements with our customers, with an average remaining duration of 15 years and with over 90 per cent of our agreements based on 'take or pay' arrangements. That gives you an indication that our cash flow is pretty much predictable and also stable."

Commenting on Majis' financial performance, he said the company has been growing at a compound annual rate of about 20 per cent since its establishment in 2007. Majis continues to deliver "double-digit" profits for its shareholders, he noted. Sharing insights into Majis' growth plans, Al Wahaibi said the company aims to set up similar integrated utility networks to support industries in Salalah Free Zone. Following the signing of an

MoU in this regard last year,

Majis recently completed the 'business case' for delivering on this initiative and hopes to "reach an agreement" with the free zone authority to take this forward.

Additionally, Majis is exploring opportunities to provide its integrated model of water utility services to potential customers via the Public Private Partnership (PPP) route, he said. In March, the company submitted its bid for a PPP-based water services project planned for procurement by Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), which emerged from the restructuring and merger of Haya Water and Diam.

Going forward, Majis also has its sights on opportunities in the wider GCC region, based on an outward expansion envisioned within the next "3 – 4 years", he added.

Fisheries and Food Industries Zone receives power supply

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 14

The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), in cooperation with the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer), completed the construction of main electricity transformers station in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, with a capacity of 40 megavolt-amperes and possibility to expand in the future up to 60 megavolt-ampere. The RO 2.6-million-project is developed as part of SEZAD's plan to keep pace with the ongoing economic growth witnessed in the Zone.

In this regard, Eng Ahmed bin Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, confirmed that the station is designed with high Omani standards and equipped with latest electrical equipment and systems.



It will feed a number of existing and under construction projects in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, the multi-purpose Fishing Port and the Artificial Intelligence Zone.

The distribution network consists of 11 kV and 415 V ground cables, which are

connected to distribution stations divided in the targeted zones. However, the main station contains a number of electrical transformers, control rooms, measurement and protection equipment and devices, and SCADA control and monitoring system.

The station feeders operate on 33 kV annular voltage to ensure continuous power supply to the projects in case of any feeder gets an emergency failure.

The station will feed the current and future electrical loads in these areas. "Electricity has already been supplied to different investors' projects while a number of other requests for electricity are being reviewed for the under construction projects in the Fisheries and Food Industries Zone, Artificial Intelligence Zone, and the multi-purpose Fishing Port project.

Compulsory health insurance has beneficial knock-on effects



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCL.

More and more countries around the world are seeking to adopt laws and regulations related to compulsory health

insurance, enabling their citizens to secure the required treatment in a timely manner.

Insurance-backed healthcare systems relieve the burden on governmental and official health institutions. Several Arab countries have begun to embrace insurance-backed healthcare and are working to achieve financial sustainability of their healthcare systems, as well as sustainable supplies medicines and treatments. It also ensures the provision of quality services through government and private institutions and hospitals.

However, with many governments around the world dealing with labour related challenges, such unemployment,

retrenchment and unpaid wages, there is added pressure on government institutions and hospitals that are obliged to provide free health services to their citizens.

In many Arab countries, energy companies, as well as banking, financial, logistical and insurance institutions, especially those managed by giant local and foreign companies, are providing their employees and families with health insurance services. This contributes to keeping their employees healthy and productivity.

Today, health insurance companies around the world are employing technological applications that rely on artificial

intelligence in making decisions to provide health services to its citizens efficiently.

Here in the Sultanate of Oman, the Capital Market Authority, which supervises insurance companies in the country, regulates health insurance services for workers in private sector institutions, and provides insurance claims filing, follow-up and treatment services in accordance with the necessary controls in this regard. This project helps to streamline the implementation of mandatory health insurance for workers in the private sector and visitors to the country.

As a result, health insurance activities in the local market are

witnessing an annual growth, and an increase in the number of health insurance policy holders. The system contributes to the safety and accuracy of transactions related to health insurance services with high quality. In addition it reduces the disputes that occur between insurance companies and private health institutions related to claims.

The spread of health insurance activities and services in any country expands the role of the insurance sector to accommodate the outputs of educational institutions as well, as it contributes to providing opportunities for job-seekers, whether in the medical,

insurance, administrative, technical, or accounting fields.

Today, insurance companies in Oman cover medical treatments provided to health insurance policyholders, while also showing interest in training and qualifying health workers in those institutions to be aware of how to use coding systems in the field of health insurance and to manage claims.

These steps will accelerate the achievement of the goals of Oman 2040, enable digital transformation, promote e-governance, provide electronic services to customers in the insurance sector, and ensure the provision of these services at the best quality and levels.

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When the first olive tree was planted about a decade ago, nobody expected that the olive oil produced from these trees would eventually become some of the world's best. To celebrate these important gifts of the mountain, the recently launched Olive Harvest Festival not only put the spotlight on its history but also its future... **P20**

Almodovar withdraws from English film project with Blanchett

OSCAR-WINNING SPANISH director Pedro Almodovar has withdrawn from directing his first English-language feature "A Manual for Cleaning Women" starring Cate Blanchett with production to continue without him, his brother confirmed on Wednesday.

"Pedro Almodovar is pulling out of the 'Manual for Cleaning Women' project which will continue with Cate Blanchett," tweeted Agustin Almodovar who jointly runs the brothers' film production company, El Deseo.

The news was first broken by enter-



tainment website Deadline Hollywood, which said Almodovar had everything in place but "he came to the decision that he's not ready to tackle such a monumental project in English".

It gave no further details but said the search for another director was "under way".

"It has been a very painful decision for me," Almodovar told Deadline.

"I have dreamt of working with Cate



for such a long time. Dirty Films has been so generous with me this whole time and I was blinded by excitement, but unfortunately, I no longer feel able to fully realise this film."

The project is an adaptation of a book of 43 short stories by American author Lucia Berlin in which the 53-year-old Australian actress — a double Oscar winner who also holds three Golden Globes — also has a producer role through her

"Dirty Films" production company.

Almodovar's withdrawal from the project, which was to have been his first full-length venture in English, will not affect Blanchett's role in the production.

The 72-year-old director, who won Oscars for "All About My Mother" (1999) and "Talk To Her" (2002), made his first English language film in 2020, a 30-minute piece called "The Human Voice" starring British actress Tilda Swinton.

Earlier this month, Almodovar wrapped up filming of "Strange Way of Life", his first Western and second English-language short starring Hollywood's Ethan Hawke and Chilean actor Pedro Pascal.

Filmed in Spain's southern Tabernas desert on the set built for Sergio Leone's "Once Upon a Time in the West" (1968) which is currently up for sale, the 30-minute film focuses on the reunion of a rancher and a sheriff who had worked together 25 years earlier.

At the weekend, Blanchett, who is considered one of the greatest actresses of her generation, won best actress at Venice Film Festival for a second time for her role in "Tar", the story of a renowned orchestral conductor accused of inappropriate liaisons with female colleagues.

— AFP

READ

OTHER BIRDS

BY SARAH ADDISON ALLEN

When she takes over her deceased mother's apartment, Zoey has strange encounters with her new neighbours.



FASHION TREND

Kourtney Kardashian receives roses from her husband Travis Barker at the Boohoo by Kourtney Kardashian show during New York Fashion Week in New York city. — AFP



ART ATTACK

Displayed works by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller titled "Portrait of two women, 1831" ahead of the public opening of the exhibition "Taking Stock, Gurlitt in Review" showing some works of Cornelius Gurlitt's estate that included works looted from Jews by the Nazis, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Bern. The exhibition presents around 350 works of art from the bequest and reproductions of historical documents from Cornelius Gurlitt's written collection in the German Federal Archives and other archives in Germany, France and Switzerland. — AFP





A Long-Lost Branch of the Nile Helped in Building Egypt’s Pyramids



FOR 4,500 YEARS, the pyramids of Giza have loomed over the western bank of the Nile River as a geometric mountain chain. The Great Pyramid, built to commemorate the reign of Pharaoh Khufu, the second king of Egypt's fourth dynasty, covers 13 acres and stood more than 480 feet upon its completion around 2560 BC. Remarkably, ancient architects somehow transported 2.3 million limestone and granite blocks, each weighing an average of more than 2 tonnes, across miles of desert from the banks of the Nile to the pyramid site on the Giza Plateau.

Hauling these stones over land would have been gruelling. Scientists have long believed that utilising a river or channel made the process possible, but today the Nile is miles away from the pyramids. But a team of researchers recently reported evidence that a lost arm of the Nile once cut through this stretch of desert and would have greatly simplified transporting the giant slabs to the pyramid complex.

Using clues preserved in the desert soil, the scientists reconstructed the rise and fall of the Khufu Branch, a now defunct Nile tributary, over the past 8,000 years. Their findings, published in *The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, propose that the Khufu Branch, which dried up around 600 BC, played a critical role in the construction of the ancient wonders. "It was impossible to build the pyramids here without this branch of the Nile," said Hader Sheisha, an environmental geographer at the European Centre for Research and Teaching in Environmental Geoscience and an author of the new study.

The project was stirred by the unearthing of a trove of papyrus fragments at the site of an ancient harbour near the Red Sea in 2013.

Some of the scrolls date to Khufu's reign and recount the efforts of an official named Merer and his men to transport limestone up the Nile to Giza, where it was fashioned into the Great Pyramid's outer layer.

Merer and others had taken to reach Giza Harbour, the manufactured pyramid-building hub located more than 4 miles west of the Nile's banks. Seeking evidence of an ancient

like cattails and papyrus attested to an aquatic, marshlike environment, while pollen from drought-resistant plants like grasses helped to pinpoint "when the Nile was further away from the pyramids" during dry spells, Morhange said.

The researchers used the data gleaned from the pollen grains to estimate past river levels and re-create Giza's waterlogged past. About 8,000 years ago, during a damp era known as the African Humid Period, during which much of the Sahara was covered in lakes and grasslands, the region around Giza was underwater. Over the next few thousand years, as northern Africa dried out, the Khufu Branch retained around 40 per cent of its water. This made it a perfect asset for pyramid-building, Sheisha said: The waterway remained deep enough to easily navigate but not so high as to pose a major flooding risk.

This shortcut to the pyramids was short-lived. As Egypt became even drier, the water level in the Khufu branch dropped beyond usability, and pyramid construction ended. When King Tutankhamen took the throne around 1350 BC, the river had experienced centuries of gradual decline. By the time Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BC, the area around the parched Khufu Branch had been converted to a cemetery.

Although the water is long gone, Sheisha believes that identifying how Giza's natural environment aided the pyramid builders could help to clear up some of the many mysteries that still surround the construction of the ancient geometric monuments. "Knowing more about the environment can solve part of the enigma of the pyramids' construction," she said. — **NYT**



"When I read about that," Sheisha said, "I was so interested because this confirms that the transport of the pyramid's building materials were moved over water."

Transporting goods on the Nile was nothing new, said Joseph Manning, a classicist at Yale University who has studied the effect of volcanic eruptions on the Nile during subsequent periods of Egyptian history and was not involved in the new research. "We know that water was up close to the Giza pyramids; that's how stone was transported," he said.

According to Manning, researchers have theorised that ancient engineers could have carved channels through the desert or used an offshoot of the Nile to transport the pyramid's materials, but evidence of these lost waterways remained scarce. This obscured the route

water route, the researchers drilled down into the desert near the Giza harbour site and along the Khufu Branch's hypothesised route, where they collected five sediment cores. Digging down more than 30 feet, they captured a sedimentary time lapse of Giza across thousands of years.

At a lab in France, Sheisha and her colleagues sifted through the cores for pollen grains, tiny yet durable environmental clues that help researchers identify past plant life. They discovered 61 species of plants, including ferns, palms and sedges that were concentrated in different parts of the core, providing a window into how the local ecosystem had changed over millennia, said Christophe Morhange, a geomorphologist at Aix-Marseille University in France and an author of the new study. Pollen from plants

CHANGING WORLD

Scientists discover how air pollution triggers lung cancer



SCIENTISTS SAID ON Saturday they had identified the mechanism through which air pollution triggers lung cancer in non-smokers, a discovery one expert hailed as "an important step for science — and for society".

The research illustrated the health risk posed by the tiny particles produced by burning fossil fuels, sparking fresh calls for more urgent action to combat climate change.

It could also pave the way for a new field of cancer prevention, according to Charles Swanton of the UK's Francis Crick Institute.

Swanton presented the research, which has not yet been published in a peer-reviewed journal, at the European Society for Medical Oncology's annual conference in Paris.

Air pollution has long been thought to be linked to a higher risk of lung cancer in people who have never smoked.

"But we didn't really know whether pollution was directly causing lung cancer — or how," Swanton said.

Traditionally it has been thought that exposure to carcinogens, such as those in cigarette smoke or pollution, causes DNA mutations that then become cancer.

But there was an "inconvenient truth" with this model, Swanton said: previous research has shown that the DNA mutations can be present without causing cancer — and that most environmental carcinogens do not cause the mutations.

His study proposes a different model.

A FUTURE CANCER PILL?

The research team from the Francis Crick Institute and University College London analysed the health data of more than 460,000 people in England, South Korea and Taiwan.

They found that exposure to tiny PM2.5 pollution particles — which are less than 2.5 microns across — led to an increased risk of mutations in the EGFR gene.

In laboratory studies on mice, the team showed that the particles caused changes in the EGFR gene as well as in the KRAS gene, both of which have been linked to lung cancer.

Finally, they analysed nearly 250 samples of human lung tissue never exposed to carcinogens from smoking or heavy pollution.

Even though the lungs were healthy, they found DNA mutations in 18 per cent of EGFR genes and 33 per cent of KRAS genes.

"They're just sitting there," Swanton said, adding that the mutations seem to increase with age.

"On their own, they probably are insufficient to drive cancer," he said.

But when a cell is exposed to pollution it can trigger a "wound-healing response" that causes inflammation, Swanton said.

And if that cell "harbours a mutation, it will then form a cancer", he added.

"We've provided a biological mechanism behind what was previously an enigma," he said.

In another experiment on mice, the researchers showed that an antibody could block the mediator — called interleukin 1 beta — which sparks the inflammation, stopping cancer from getting started in the first place.

Swanton said he hoped the finding would "provide fruitful grounds for a future of what might be molecular cancer prevention, where we can offer people a pill, perhaps everyday, to reduce the risk of cancer".

REVOLUTIONARY

Suzette Delaloge, who heads the cancer prevention programme at France's Gustave Roussy institute, said the research was "quite revolutionary, because we had practically no prior demonstration of this alternative way of cancer forming."

"The study is quite an important step for science — and for society too, I hope," she said.

"This opens a huge door, both for knowledge but also for new ways to prevent" cancer from developing, said Delaloge, who was not involved in the research but discussed it at the conference on Saturday.

"This level of demonstration must force authorities to act on an international scale."

Tony Mok, an oncologist at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, called the research "exciting".

"It means that we can ask whether, in the future, it will be possible to use lung scans to look for pre-cancerous lesions in the lungs and try to reverse them with medicines such as interleukin 1 beta inhibitors," he said.

Swanton called air pollution a "hidden killer", pointing to research estimating it is linked to the deaths of more than eight million people a year — around the same number as tobacco.

Other research has linked PM2.5 to 250,000 deaths annually from lung cancer alone.

"You and I have a choice about whether we smoke or not, but we do not have a choice about the air we breathe," said Swanton, who is also the chief clinician at Cancer Research UK, which was the main funder of the research.

"Given that probably five times as many people are exposed to unhealthy levels of pollution than tobacco, you can see this is quite a major global problem," he added.

"We can only tackle it if we recognise the really intimate links between climate health and human health." — **AFP**



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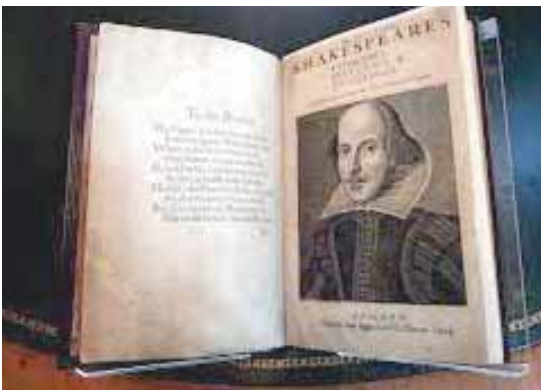
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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Up to a third of Shakespeare's plays 'may have been co-authored'



UP TO A THIRD of William Shakespeare's plays may have been co-written by another author, analysis of the writing suggests.

Experts have long suspected the playwright collaborated on a number of projects, and new methods are shedding light on how much this might have been the case.

The data reveals that plays like "Titus Andronicus" and "Pericles" may have been co-written by George Peele and George Wilkins respectively. Others may have been started by other authors and finished by Shakespeare.

For example, according to the analysis some of the earlier scenes of "Henry VI, Part 2" were probably kicked off by Christopher Marlowe.

"Measure For Measure" was adapted by Thomas Middleton after Shakespeare's death, as was "Macbeth," but there is no original unadapted version for the latter.

Speaking at the British Science Festival in Leicester, Professor Gabriel Egan, from De Montfort University, said his analysis suggests Shakespeare may have written a lot more than previously thought, but added that some of what was thought to have been written by him was not.

He suggested that Shakespeare had a hand in 43 plays, and 14 were co-authored.

Prof Egan said: "He is a much more sociable writer than we ever thought.

"He's not off on his own thinking hard with that big dome head full of ideas.

"He is that, but he's also engaged with other writers.

"That's the key point, he must have actually, working in the theatre, read other people's work, and in many cases, sat with them and said 'let's do a play.'

"That isn't a model of a sociability that I grew up with and I learned as a student, it's something we've discovered about his engagement in the theatre industry."

Using computer models, the researchers looked at the use of function words like "and," "of" and "the" in classic texts to attribute specific writing styles and patterns to specific authors.

Egan found that the distinct fingerprint of many other authors exists in Shakespeare's work.

He was most surprised to discover how much of the three "Henry VI" plays were not written by Shakespeare.

Egan said: "This is a fairly new discovery, that they are co-authored, there's no external reason to think so.

"There's no sense. With other plays like "Two Noble Kinsmen," it says on the title page 'by John Fletcher.'

"It is quite a surprise that those ('Henry VI') are co-authored.

"Something like a third of plays by Shakespeare are in fact collaborative plays.

"Attempts to refute that conclusion collapse upon close investigation by experts."

He added that some people are "very fond" of their image of Shakespeare as a "lone genius" and do not like to think of his famous lines as having been written by someone else. — PA Media/dpa

FASHION

Activism and '90s glamour on display at New York Fashion Week



GLAMOUR ON the one hand, activism on the other: designers Tory Burch and Gabriela Hearst showcased two different approaches to New York Fashion Week on Tuesday.

- 'RICHNESS AND MINIMALISM' -

American designer Burch offered New York a vintage-inspired collection that veered away from her well-known prints and bright colours.

"The collections have been for me much more personal now that I'm not running the business," she said.

Since 2019, Burch has entrusted her husband, Pierre-Yves Roussel, with managing the company, while moving into the roles of chief creative officer and executive chair.

For the Spring/Summer 2023 edit, Burch said she thought back to when she moved to New York in the 1990s and wanted to highlight "the concept of richness and minimalism" at the same time.

With sheer cotton tops, lace bras and silver shoes, Burch evoked the sleek sophistication and eroticism in vogue in the early '90s.

"I do think it's a bit sexier than what we have done in the past," she said. "And I think that women are feeling that right now. I see that that's how women want to dress, but I also love a certain elegance to it."

She said she also experimented with layering, using a jersey bandeau skirt as a recurring motif, sometimes

worn over pants.

"I wanted to challenge us to push it a little further and also to have a more focused point of view," she explained.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Uruguayan designer Gabriela Hearst's show was imbued with ambience. In an enormous warehouse with opaque windows, her models paraded down a runway lined with a gospel choir.

Gold dominated, shimmering across a cape, on a breastplate and popping against white and black accompaniments.

Long yellow and orange ponchos handsewn in Uruguay and red pantsuits also brought to mind the colours of fire.

Some pieces appeared to have been directly molded onto the models with the collection notes describing how leather had been soaked in water and then draped over a form to create unique pieces.

The theme of women's empowerment was also woven

into the show.

Hearst, who is also the creative director at Chloe, said her 2023 Ready-to-Wear Collection was inspired by the ancient Greek poet Sappho and how she had shed light on the hardships women had to endure.

"This Joy," a gospel song written by Grammy winner Shirley Caesar, was performed by the Resistance Revival Chorus, which was billed as a collective of women and non-binary singers that addresses how "historically marginalised women have been in the music industry."

The catwalk cast included women's rights activist Cecile Richards, Mexican Chilean climate activist Xiye Ba and anti-toxic shock syndrome campaigner Lauren Wasser.

Hearst also said she had aimed to offset the climate footprint of her show by working with Swiss company Climeworks, which uses technology to capture carbon dioxide directly from the air. — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Feel the pain of others!

TO UNDERSTAND other people, citizens of today look at things from an empathetic or sympathetic point of view. Without a doubt, feeling sorry for someone in physical or emotional pain and mentally putting yourself in the shoes of the injured person to feel their pain is a virtue that has a positive effect on us as individuals and as a society.

We are all aware of how empathy can lighten the burdens of others. Especially to greatly reduce physical pain when hearing someone else express sympathy, but not when hearing unsympathetic comments. Similarly, patients deal better with bad medical news if their doctors are sympathetic, showing that they personally understand what the patient is going through.

However, I believed the fact that for that virtue to become complete requires the addition of some complementary behaviour that turns it into empathy. Recognising and understanding suffering, feeling sympathy for the sufferer, even enduring the uncomfortable feelings he and the sufferer are going through and perhaps most importantly, working to alleviate the suffering, is emphatically the beautiful and proper meaning of this virtue.

So that sympathetic person who has raised himself - if you can say - on empathy and whose goal is to reduce the negative feelings of those individuals and increase the positive ones after witnessing the pain of others, has to be more strict in the

face of the pain of others. Exactly, here I do not mean that the pain of those around him should be less. Instead, you must learn to feel the pain without being affected by the action. Empathic people are just as likely to feel pain as anyone else, but in some way, they can tolerate it and work.

On the other hand and often, when people are in pain, they resist effective treatment because it will be temporarily more painful. You see that person walking around for years with knee pain because they can't stand the idea of surgery and recovery.

Thus empathics cannot help others to make difficult decisions, because their help depends on the feelings of the victim. Hence you may realistically agree with me that empathetic, behaving stressed people can do difficult things that the suffering person might not want - but for their own good. What I mean is that empathy can also be tough love, giving honest advice that is hard to hear or saying goodbye to an employee who does not suit you!

In the end, like anything else of great human merit, the key to turning empathy into mercy is to use your conscious abilities to transcend your feelings. Learn the true meaning of sympathy - if I'm not exaggerating. Not only receiving someone else's pain, but also giving your joy and happiness to someone who is suffering.

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla is a physician, medical innovator and writer.



art & life

Local Scene

f t i y l v @omanobserver

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 15 | 2022

An interactive affair with Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's olive trees

By Yeru Ebuén
Instagram: @yru_here

When the King of Spain visited Oman about a decade ago, he gifted Oman with olives which a local olive guru claims the king believed will be a fitting crop that will thrive in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Fast forward to this year, not only did the Royal Gardens and Farms of Royal Court Affairs win four prizes in an international olive competition, farmers had begun producing more than 60 tonnes of fruits annually.

To build up more interest in this growing industry, Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdhar recently launched the first ever Olive Harvest Festival which includes a series of activities that guests of the mountain can take part in including the eye-opening harvest and meet and greet with local farmers and olive guru, a visit to the olive oil factory, a chance to purchase locally produced olive oil and other Al Jabal Al Akhdhar products via a local souq located within the resort property and an interactive food tasting courtesy of specially invited chefs who created culinary magic infused with olives.

BEST IN QUALITY

Saleh Awlad Thani, the olive guru who imparts knowledge to guests, said that there are more than 25 varieties of olives grown in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

"Al Jabal Al Akhdhar today has over 10,000 olive trees planted across different villages in the mountain. There are currently about 25 types of olives. These originated from many different places like Spain, Greece and Tunisia. All of these started when the King of Spain visited Oman and found that the mountain's fertile soil would be ideal for planting olive trees," he said.

"Many farmers in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar already have a good understanding of the trees planted on their farms. They can differentiate each tree and can tell the expected quantity they can get from them. The



amount of olive oil produced per tree depends on the quality and variety of the tree," he added.

"Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is about 2,300 metres above sea level so the olive trees of the mountain have adapted to its temperature. Some specialists from Tunisia actually came to visit and they saw the quality of the olives that Al Jabal Al Akhdhar produces and they compared it with other olives grown in different parts of the world. They said, because of the climate and the place that is convenient for olive to grow, they determined that the ones grown in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar are of high quality," he explained.

As proof of this, Saleh said that the Royal Court Farm has entered an international competition and the olive oil produced in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar scored high in these competitions. Oman bagged two gold and two silver medals in the prestigious EVO International Olive Oil Contest, held in Italy on May 21, 2022, for its high-quality extra virgin olive oil and compliance with international specifications and standards in the seventh edition of the award.

Saleh explained that the olive produced in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar currently supplies souqs and some local supermarkets.

"As of today, we are not producing

morning when guests are handed hand-woven baskets that they can use to store their harvest. With dozens of olive trees spread across the hotel's property, guests can select the tree they wanted to focus on and harvest the olive fruits of the said tree. These baskets are then weighed in and placed in an area where a small souq is created for the local farmers to display their products. By lunchtime, Chef Gabriele Kurz, a celebrated chef from Bavaria who authored several wellness cookbooks, then takes over and has a demonstration of a three-course meal that is healthy and olive-infused.

Tablafina is the name of NH's gastronomic initiative that seeks to connect with the world of traditional bars and local cuisine, something that is quintessentially Spanish. Maren Kuehl, the general manager of the resort, shared that she was happy with the response to the first olive harvest festival. She teased that they have more wellness programmes as well as other community-empowering projects coming soon and that they would continue to work to showcase the unique culture of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to guests from around the world. The olive harvest festival will run until September 17.

a massive quantity of oil so the current harvest and the oil we produce from these are distributed locally within Oman," he said.

"We are not just focusing on the money we are getting from them, but we are also working towards producing the best quality of olive oil. We are still working towards growing the quantity of oil we also produce year on year," he added.

"We are fortunate that we currently have the latest technology and big machines to handle the processing of these harvests. As the season progresses, the harvest and the olive oil production will be higher to the point that the factory will be able to produce around three tonnes worth of oil per day," he shared.

A FUN, INTERACTIVE FESTIVAL

The harvest festival begins in the

By late afternoon, the olive guru, like Saleh, then takes guests on a guided tour to talk about different interesting facts about the olive trees in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and how these are harvested and later on brought to the factories for olive oil processing.

This is followed by a trip to a nearby olive factory where participants are shown how the harvested dates are made into olive oil.

Evenings are dedicated to feasting, with olive-inspired tasting menus by sister brand NH Hotels' leading executive chefs, Jesualdo Bermejo and Martin Aristondo. Chef Jesualdo is the Executive Chef at NH Nacional Hotel in Madrid and all the award-winning Tablafina restaurants in Spain, while Chef Martin works as Executive Chef of the NH Collection Aranzazu hotel in San Sebastian.