

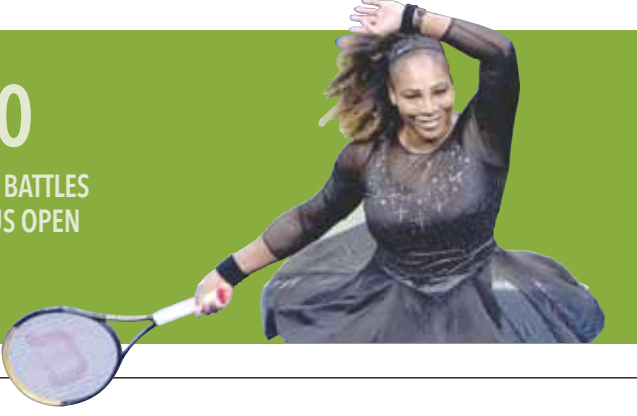
Guidelines for school bus drivers

With the government schools to open for the new school year on September 4, the Royal Oman Police has issued guidelines for bus drivers to ensure safe transportation of students. The instructions are significant because speeding, negligence, bad behaviour and not keeping a safe distance are among the main causes of road accidents in the country, according to the latest statistics. **DETAILS ON P2**



P10

SERENA BATTLES ON AS US OPEN BEGINS



P13

MARKET CAP OF OMAN'S BOURSE CLIMBS TO RO 23 BILLION



P20

FRENCH-INDIAN TEXTILE DESIGNER BRINGS BACK MUGHAL PATTERNS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO LEADERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Paula-Mae Weekes of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, on her country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Paula-Mae and the people of her country. His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President Sadyr Japarov of the Kyrgyz Republic, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan wished President Japarov good health and happiness and the people of Kyrgyzstan further progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO KING OF MALAYSIA

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, King of Malaysia, on the occasion of his country's National Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan wished the Malaysian monarch good health and happiness and the people of Malaysia further progress and growth. — ONA

BAGHDAD

30 SADR SUPPORTERS KILLED IN CLASHES

Iraqi supporters of Moqtada Sadr withdrew on Tuesday from Baghdad's Green Zone after he demanded an end to fighting between rival forces and the army that left 30 dead and hundreds wounded. The violence that erupted on Monday pitted Sadr loyalists against other factions, with the sides exchanging gunfire across barricades — violence the United Nations warned risked tipping the war-ravaged country deeper into chaos. **DETAILS ON P5**



INSIDE



UKRAINE SEEKS CULTURAL PROTECTION FOR ODESSA



RAYS OF HOPE IN THE CLIMATE STRUGGLE



RO 2.2 MILLION LIQUID FERTILISER PLANT IN SOHAR

Sohar Port and Free Zone on Tuesday signed an agreement with Integrated Solutions Plant and Land Services company to set up a liquid fertiliser plant in Sohar Free Zone as an investment venture to the tune of RO 2.2 million. The unit, which will cover an area of 15,000 sqm, will produce ammonium sulphate, to enhance Omani exports, notably to Pakistan and Tanzania. The agreement will bolster the port's capacity to better serve local, regional and international markets, supplying them with high quality products. **DETAILS ON P13**

UN appeals for \$160 million to help flood-hit Pakistan

GENEVA: The United Nations and the Pakistani government launched an emergency appeal for \$160 million on Tuesday to help those hit hardest by the floods devastating the country. The funds will provide 5.2 million of the worst-affected and most vulnerable people with food, clean water, sanitation, emergency education, protection and health support, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, calling the disaster a "colossal crisis". "Pakistan is awash in suffering. The Pakistani people are facing a monsoon on steroids — the relentless impact of epochal levels of rain and flooding," he said in a video statement. The aid, covering the initial six months of the crisis response, will help to avoid outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, and to provide nutrition aid to young



Officials and security personnel load relief material into a helicopter for flood affected people in Saidu Sharif, the capital of Swat valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. — AFP

children and their mothers. It will also provide assistance to refugees. "The people of Pakistan urgently need international solidarity and support," Jens Laerke, spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency OCHA, told a press briefing in Geneva. He said some 500,000 people displaced by the floods were in relief camps, with many more temporarily staying with host families. **SEE ALSO P6**

RO 4 million to provide supplies, daily nutrition



MUSCAT: In implementation of the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, a total sum of RO 4,073,070 has been endorsed to provide school supplies and daily nutrition, during the first semester, for government school students from Social Insurance and low-income families. The Minister of Social Development said in a statement that the Ministry of Finance has approved the sum in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development to enable the students to get the provisions right from the start of this school year (2022-2023). The Ministry of Social Development said that a one-time RO 25 will be disbursed for each eligible student to cover school supplies at the beginning of the school year starting in September 2022. Meanwhile, RO 11-worth vouchers will be given to each

student (from the above-mentioned segments) to purchase daily meals. Each coupon will carry a value of 500 baisas to cover a total of 22 school days each month, according to the statement.

EACH STUDENT TO GET RO 25 TO COVER SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The Ministry of Social Development pointed out that it will transfer the approved sums for the students to the bank accounts of the Social Insurance Families, while the Ministry of Education will do the same for low-income families. The daily meal vouchers will be distributed by the Ministry of Education. The number of beneficiaries

(students from the designated social segments) in all governorates of Oman stands at 59,030 (24,665 students from Social Insurance Families and 34,365 from low-income families). Dr Madeeha on Monday chaired a meeting of officials to discuss the Royal orders. She praised His Majesty the Sultan's initiative, which focuses on the importance of building capabilities and eases parents' burden on educational requirements. She said the ministry will cooperate with the Ministry of Social Development in determining the beneficiaries. In implementation of the Royal orders to provide schools provisions for students who belong to Social Insurance Families and low-income families, a joint committee from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development initiated a programme to provide the support. — ONA **SEE ALSO P2**

Muscat roads get a feel of visitors returning from Salalah

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With the khareef season inching towards an end in Salalah, the national capital Muscat got a feel of it on Tuesday with the flow of vehicles coming back from Salalah to Muscat and finally dispersing to other destinations. The reason behind the influx of cars is the opening of educational institutions, particularly schools, which are opening on September 4. "Salalah witnessed an excellent khareef season this year, and the

charm is still there, but we had to come back due to schools of our children. The academic season is starting from September 4 for which both children and their parents have to do preparations," said Suhail, who spent good 15 days in Salalah, and returned to Muscat on Tuesday. He admitted there were traffic jams in many parts of Muscat due to the arrival of vehicles from Salalah. "Since the deadline for school opening is nearing, most people have decided to come

back, putting pressure on roads," said Suhail. Officially, the khareef season begins on June 21 and ends on September 21. The visitors had an excellent time this season due to continuous rains, greenery and natural springs that kept them engaged all through their stay. "Most visitors coming back from Salalah choose to pass by Muscat to do school-related shopping or even a short stay before heading to their respective

wilayats. This is also a reason for sudden pressure on Muscat roads," said Bakhit al Sahri, who came from Salalah to attend his job-related workshop in Muscat. Since he is staying in Mawaleh in Muscat and his workshop is in Madinat al Sultan Qaboos, he could witness a long queue of cars in certain pockets while coming to work and going back home. Commenting on traffic on the Muscat-Salalah road route, Bakhit said, "Khareef makes road route very busy. People have to

be careful while driving. They should be careful while travelling and take enough rest before driving because in most cases, accidents happen due to over speed." Visitors have two options on this route. One is through Nizwa and the desert, which is straight, and another is the coastal road crossing Sur and Duqm. "It is up to the driver to decide the route, but careful driving is recommended on both the routes," said Bakhit.



AS PER ROYAL ORDERS, PANEL UNVEILS NUTRITION PROJECT

Programme to provide daily meals for eligible students

MUSCAT: In implementation of the orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide schools provisions for students who belong to Social Insurance Families and low-income families, a joint committee from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development initiated a programme to provide daily meals for eligible students.

The joint committee is acting in coordination with the representatives of government firms and the Ministry of



Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. This was unveiled during a meeting with Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, and Dr Saud bin

Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of chief executive officers of some Omani government firms.

The meeting looked into proposed mechanisms to put the Royal orders into action, bearing in mind standard health and safety procedures. The meeting named the suppliers and regulated their relationship with small and medium enterprises leasing the tuck shops.

— ONA

Need of Gulf-EU cooperation stressed

MUSCAT: Majlis Ash'shura participated on Tuesday in the sixth meeting of the Gulf-European Parliamentary Committee, which was held under the chairmanship of the Majlis Ash'shura in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and with the participation of the shura representatives from the Arab states.

The virtual meeting discussed activating the role of the Gulf Parliamentary Committee by holding a bilateral meeting with the European Parliament delegation for relations with the Arabian Peninsula, and discussing the importance of continuing mutual visits with the European Parliament.

The meeting also reviewed



the topics proposed by the Gulf legislative councils for discussion with members of the European Parliament, which were represented in food, water, energy and renewable security, and ways to enhance cooperation between the GCC countries with the European Union members in the

field of health, tourism and other topics of common interest.

In this regard, Majlis Ash'shura of the Sultanate of Oman presented a number of proposals, including joint coordination with the European Union countries to stimulate tourism in the GCC countries, and work to

benefit from the experiences of entrepreneurs in the EU countries.

The committee adopted a number of topics submitted by the Gulf legislatures — including the proposal of the Majlis Ash'shura — on revitalising tourism to be on the agenda of future joint meetings between the Gulf legislatures and members of the European Parliament.

Majlis Ash'shura was represented in the meeting by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of the Majlis Ash'shura, Dr Tahira bint Abdulkhaleq al Lawati, and Nasser bin Sultan al Habsi, representatives of the council in the Gulf-European Parliamentary Committee. — ONA

ROP issues guidelines for school bus drivers

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With the government schools likely to open for the new school year on September 4, Royal Oman Police (ROP) has issued guidelines for bus drivers to ensure the safe transportation of students.

The instructions are significant because speeding, negligence, bad behaviour and not keeping a safe distance are among the main causes of traffic accidents in the country, according to the latest statistics.

Subsequently, most accidents are due to vehicle collisions or hitting fixed objects. Colonel Khamis bin Ali al Batashi, Assistant Director General of Traffic, said, "ROP has taken many measures in coordination with the Ministry of Education and in

line with the Traffic Law and its executive regulations. The roads will witness traffic congestion, especially at peak times, and therefore traffic patrols will work to facilitate traffic and deal with all that obstructs traffic, especially in places with more congestion than others. Traffic patrols will facilitate the movement of buses, give them priority in traffic, and monitor the extent to which the bus driver adheres to traffic rules and regulations, and the number of allowed on a bus."

He said that all drivers of public and private school buses must be careful when approaching student gathering places and not move until after making sure that all students have crossed the streets. They should stop buses in their designated places, whether in front of schools or after work is completed."

Oman Air trains next generation professionals



MUSCAT: In line with Oman's Vision 2040 strategy, which aims to develop a diversified and sustainable economy, Oman Air continues to provide Omani nationals the opportunity to gain insights into the aviation and logistics world through specialised internship programmes at Oman Air headquarters.

In 2021, Oman Air provided internship opportunities to 250 students from various universities and colleges in the country and abroad. Furthermore, more than 160 additional students are expected to finish their internship programme by the end of August this year.

Oman Air, Senior Vice-President, Hilal al Siyabi, said: "Oman Air is pleased to lend its support to the youth of Oman and guide them through our internship programmes. We

remain committed to Oman's economic diversification and Omanisation objectives by training the next generation of Omanis in the aviation and logistic sectors. We want to encourage future aviation professionals to explore the full spectrum of positions available in the industry, whether for a flying or non-flying career."

Oman Air's Talent Department, in coordination with various units of the airline, accommodates undergraduate trainees by equipping them with the skills necessary to apply for and succeed in jobs within their chosen fields, such as Human Resources, Flight Operations, Airport Management, Marketing, Corporate Communications and Media, Logistics and Supply Chain, Engineering, Digital and Operations Management, among many others.

NEW BATCH OF SOLDIERS GRADUATES



The Royal Court Affairs celebrated the graduation of the 18th batch of the new soldiers on the parade ground at the Royal Court Affairs Security Unit camp in Al Khoud on Tuesday.

Exceptional khareef gives big boost to Dhofar hotels

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

A total number of 32,914 guests stayed in three and five-star hotels in Dhofar Governorate during June and July, said a recently released official data.

The increase in the number of visitors for the current season is due to the exceptional khareef season in the Dhofar Governorate this year.

The rise in the number of hotel guests this year was also due to the halt in movement of visitors for two years caused by Covid-19 pandemic.

The hotel sector is witnessing promising revenues, as the revenues of hotels rated from 3 to

5 stars in the Sultanate of Oman recorded a remarkable increase of 117.6 per cent until the end of July 2022, with very high turnover and occupancy rate reaching at 25.4 per cent.

During the khareef season, four new hotel facilities were opened in the governorate, including three in the Wilayat of Salalah and one in the Wilayat of Mirbat, adding 457 new rooms and providing 739 beds for the tourism activity in the governorate.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism works to establish resorts and projects that attract tourists; in order to meet the increasing demand for hotel units and tourist destinations, especially in locations that have unique natural features



in the governorate.

The ministry attaches great importance to attracting

investments that are concerned with tourism development and development to future prospects

that keep up with the tourism activity in the governorate.

HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki

al Said, Governor of Dhofar, said earlier: "What we see from the visitors of khareef Dhofar this year indicates that there is a renewal and new diversity for this year."

Khareef visitors can easily book hotels through electronic applications, which in turn facilitate the process of booking hotel accommodation for the tourist, as well as getting to know various tourist places in the wilayats of the Dhofar Governorate.

Moreover, large number of hotel reservations is not limited to individuals and families, but there are many tourism companies from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries that have begun to flock to the governorate.



Gulf countries able to diversify economy to achieve goals

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The Sultanate of Oman and other Gulf countries are able to restructure the economy in line with the desired aspirations towards establishing a solid base of economic diversification, opined experts attending the conference on ‘Economic Diversification in the Gulf Countries’ being held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The two-day conference, organised by Al Ro’ya in cooperation with the Smart Gateway for Investment and the Regional Programme for the Gulf States, began in Salalah on Tuesday.

The experts said it was time to recover from the excessive dependence on oil.

“The opportunity has come for us to get rid of that cocoon that surrounds our economies and impede their progress towards greater diversification and economic pluralism,” Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said.

“We are going through an important phase noted by a sharp decline and a significant rise in oil and gas prices, between a complete closure and openness in economic activities and global supply chains, between inflation and stagnation and between geopolitical changes in the region and the world, and



between wars and stability,” Dr Yusef bin Hamad al Balushi, founder and chairman of the Smart Investment Gateway, said in his opening statement of the conference.

Al Balushi said that it is no secret that the Arab Gulf states were directly affected by all these circumstances, and the ‘new old’ talk about the importance of economic diversification — which was not neglected by all development plans in the countries of the region — has become more renewed, glare and urgent, and all indications point at the fact that the space available to the Gulf states to achieve economic diversification are decreasing, but at the same time they are still sufficient to achieve the goals in achieving economic diversification, especially in light

of the readiness that the Gulf states enjoy at various levels.

He pointed at the advanced infrastructure, educated human resources, and the availability of financial and natural resources.

The forum includes 4 main themes, and they are, the progress made in the various diversification files, the role of Gulf governments and private sectors in achieving diversification, in addition to the mechanisms of readiness and improving the ability to benefit from the accelerating global changes, and the wave of integration and overlap in the global economy to accelerate diversification plans, by promoting trade and attracting more foreign investments. In addition to reviewing the Gulf experiences in the file of economic diversification, and the most prominent proposals to advance these efforts in the Gulf

countries.

Hamad al Taei, member of the State Council and editor-in-chief of Al Ro’ya, said that the great disruption in supply chains, the scarcity of the supply of products and goods around the world, and the high cost of shipping and insurance of goods, are among the many factors that caused an inflationary wave with the start of the first stages of recovery from the epidemic, which the companies in the Sultanate of Oman too are experiencing.

“Inflation is a nightmare that haunts financial policy makers in central banks, economists, and even the simple citizen, who no longer feels the purchasing power of his national currency, and saving has become a difficult process for many members of society,” he added.

Archives Authority inks MoU to operate TRA ‘Wusool’ system

MUSCAT: The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for operating and managing the electronic documents and records of ‘Wusool’ system at the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA).

The TRA will be the first government department to run the electronic system (Wusool) after the NRAA, as part of the first phase of the system, to be installed in 20 government departments in partnership and cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

The MoU was signed by Dr Hamad bin Mohammed al Dhoyani, Chairman of NRAA, and Eng Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of TRA.

The project ‘Wusool’

constitutes a cornerstone initiative of digital transformation in the government sector. Besides enabling government departments to electronically manage their informational records — applying the latest global practices in the field — the new system will furnish a streamlined, secure environment for the data.

Dr Hamad al Dhoyani said that the next few months will see the propagation of the system in all target departments, once all operational requirements are finalised.

The operating MoU itself has been signed electronically via ‘Wusool’ system, using electronic authentication certificates issued by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

— ONA



Science programme winners honoured

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, represented by the Centre of Excellence for Advanced Communication Technologies and the Internet of Things at the Innovation Complex in Muscat, on Tuesday honoured the winning teams in the Academy of Sciences programme (first batch).

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashidiyah, Director-General of the Innovation Centre of the Ministry of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation, confirmed in a speech that the programme succeeded in achieving its goals of providing students with the necessary technical skills

and competencies, providing them with the opportunity to develop their research skills, and competing to find solutions to some virtual challenges in the field of the Internet of Things, mainly related to the development and construction of smart cities.

For his part, Dr Abdullah bin Darwish al Balushi, President of Ericsson Oman, said in his speech: “In cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, we were able to introduce 100 Omani youth to the world of new technologies and provide guidance and counselling for them to develop use cases for the Internet of Things based on the latest technologies and generation technologies. — ONA

Science and tech event evokes good response

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

The Science Technology and Innovation in Education (STAI) event has attracted school talents who showcased their scientific temperament with a range of innovative ideas and products.

The event was organised at Indian School Darsait under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman.

The event theme was ‘Ingenious creative mind’.

The chief guest, Dr Ali bin Saud al Bimani, Vice-Chancellor, National University of Science and Technology, inaugurated the event and said, “Out of the box thinking results in creativity.”

Mohammad al Adawi, Director of the Clubs and Sports Centre



Department, graced the occasion as the guest of honour and Dr Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman, BoD, presided over the function.

Subhra Priyadarshini, Chief Editor of Nature India, Springer

Nature, participated in the event virtually. In her keynote address, she expressed how remarkable things could be achieved with keen sense of observation and learning from numerous things in nature.

She also mentioned about students’ choice of opting careers as science journalists and communicators. The speech consisted of invaluable information that kept the audience engrossed and interested.

Book traces deep-rooted ties between Oman and Sri Lanka

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The book titled ‘Sri Lanka-Oman Relations: Past, Present and Future’ chronicles relations between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman.

The book is authored by Omar L Ameer Ajwad, the outgoing Ambassador of Sri Lanka.

“This book is a testament not only to the friendship strength of the Sultanate of Oman and Sri Lanka, but also to the Sri Lankan ambassador Ameer Ajwad’s strength of character, enthusiasm and diligence with which he

undertakes life’s pursuits,” Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy says in his foreword of the book.

Although Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman’s diplomatic journey spans just over four decades, the book narrates bonds that go back centuries into the mists of time. Ameer Ajwad presents a comprehensive review of collaborations between the countries — from hockey to fruit, International Tea Day to cricket tournaments, and fisheries to technology.

“His book demonstrates a deep-

The book sketches Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman’s relationship in five chapters that bring out its past, illustrate its present and forecast its future

rooted connection between our peoples. It has underpinned every step of our countries’ journey,” Sayyid Badr commented in the foreword.

“The objective behind this book is to reinvigorate the past, highlight the present and chart pathways for the future by providing relevant information to foster deeper economic engagement between

the two countries,” said Ajwad.

The book sketches Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman’s relationship in five chapters that bring out its past, illustrate its present and forecast its future.

The fifth chapter of the book looks at the future potential that needs to be tapped. It provides vital information extracted from official sources of different entities

in both countries.

It brings together expert opinions highlighting the opportunities in different sectors, providing readers and potential investors’ awareness. The chapter also highlights the achievements and initiatives of the Sri Lankan Embassy in the Sultanate of Oman.

If looking at the future is exciting, taking a glimpse at the historical links is intriguing. The ports of Sri Lanka have been strong links in the maritime trade in the past, the book illustrates.

“The importance of the ports can be seen in the silk route and

spice trade,” he pointed out while speaking to the Observer.

The book was released to mark the 40th anniversary (February 17, 2021) of diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and the Sultanate of Oman.

The 164-page book, published by Black and White Media and Services, was launched at the Diplomatic Institute of the Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman in the presence of senior officials of the Foreign Ministry, ambassadors, diplomats, representatives of the Sri Lankan community in the country and media representatives.



Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is a condition that starts around the age of 3 to 7 and is carried sometimes to adulthood. However, those adapting to the new situations overcome it

Understanding

ADHD

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Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is often diagnosed in children. Its prevalence, however, is there among adults also.

Research shows that ADHD can affect career and personal life. ADHD is a condition that starts around the age of 3 to 7 and is carried sometimes to adulthood.

However, those adapting to the new situations overcome it.

A typical child with ADHD will be all over the place unable to focus and sometimes has difficulty sitting in a classroom, completing tasks and having problems in social skills. But, according to Dr Hamed al Sinawi, usually, it is something the teacher might notice in school and alert the parents so they can take the child for an assessment.

“But in adulthood, ADHD symptoms are not easily recognised. If the symptoms have gone unnoticed, there are chances that they might develop other issues such as forgetfulness and difficulty in retaining information because they were not paying attention. So whatever you say may not stick with them,” said Dr Hamed.

There is also a tendency to become a procrastinator and prefer doing things at the last minute.

“For example, submitting an assignment or planning holidays. For them, everything is delayed. There’s also this idea that some of the

symptoms are related to being distractible. So, if they are working and there is noise, they may not be able to work, and it might be difficult for them to sustain their focus. That is why sometimes we have people who could be told that they could have done better in high school. They are smart, but because of this problem, they do not reach their full potential,” he explained.

So can we say it is unfortunate that the condition is not detected earlier?

“Yes,” said Dr Hamed. “Because there are skills they could have learned. That would have helped them to overcome. They reach good positions, but some of them have told me, ‘we do have good jobs, but we could have done better because we spend a lot of time.’”

“Because of the difficulty in sustaining attention, they feel they have to do extra work such as read the statement, again and again, consuming time.”

Asked about the solution, Dr Hamed said, “Lots of information available online, and one must take time to go through if they feel symptoms. It does not just work that gets affected. It can also be personal life.”

“Sometimes symptoms might manifest in a real relationship problem. Because a husband or wife who has ADHD tend to leave things till the last minute. It can be very difficult to live it, as there is procrastination also because they are not very good at expressing their feelings or organising their work.

I’m not saying that everyone procrastinating has ADHD, but it is one of the reasons. Studies also suggest

that people with ADHD have twice the risk of divorce,” Dr Hamed pointed out.

One problem that very few people recognise about ADHD is its presence among adults because it is usually connected to early childhood. As a result, many are told they were slow learners, and they accepted it and learnt to live with it.”

What is actually happening to people with ADHD?

“One of the theories is that there is a balance or lack of particular neurotransmitters. The brain uses chemicals for different areas to work with each other and communicate. In ADHD, there is usually a reduction in dopamine. Dopamine keeps us interested and motivated and is one of the happiness hormones. You get dopamine when you exercise. Sometimes eating certain food elevates one’s mood. The other important part is norepinephrine, which makes you aware of time and being mindful,” explained Dr Hamed.

People with ADHD also might lack certain social skills, so they might interrupt a lot during a conversation because of what the experts explain as impulsivity.

“They cannot wait for their turn or understand their social cues. Sometimes these incidents can affect a person’s chance of being promoted at work,” noted the senior psychiatrist.

He said that most people today read about the condition online and then seek therapy, or at times, it is because they have seen the way their children act in a certain way, and when children get an assessment and treatment, the child is improved. “This is when it hits them that they might have symptoms with similar conditions, and they realise. “What I have is not because I am not good enough, but it is because of the condition I have,” he said.

Getting the diagnosis is very reassuring for the person, pointed out Dr Hamed.





In brief

■ TEHRAN



16 DEAD IN IRAN ROAD COLLISION

At least 16 people were killed in a collision between a truck and minibus carrying seasonal farm workers in southwestern Iran on Tuesday, officials said.

The accident, which left another eight people injured, occurred on a major artery of the city of Shushtar, state television said.

“The tragedy occurred when a semi-trailer swerved and hit the minibus transporting the seasonal workers,” police said, quoted by the official news agency IRNA.

Authorities in Shushtar declared two days of mourning. Although its roads are generally in good condition, Iran has one of the world’s highest traffic death rates partly because of poor driving habits, as well as the impact of international sanctions on vehicle maintenance. — AFP

■ GENEVA



UN RAISES ALARM ON RED SEA OIL TANKER ‘TIME-BOMB’

The UN appealed for the last \$14 million needed to try and prevent a stricken oil tanker from triggering a disaster off Yemen that could cost \$20 billion to clean up. The decaying 45-year-old FSO Safer, long used as a floating storage platform and now abandoned off the Yemeni port of Hodeida, has not been serviced since Yemen was plunged into civil war more than seven years ago. If it breaks up, it could unleash a potentially catastrophic spill in the Red Sea.

David Gressly, the United Nations’ resident and humanitarian coordinator in Yemen, leads UN efforts on the Safer. — dpa

■ TEL AVIV



PALESTINIAN AID WORKER SENTENCED TO 12 YEARS IN PRISON

An Israeli court has sentenced a Palestinian employee of the World Vision aid organisation to 12 years in prison. Time already served should be deducted, the district court in Beersheva ruled on Tuesday.

Mohammed el Halabi has been in prison for six years. He was also sentenced to an additional 18 months of probation. The court found El Halabi guilty in June because he had sent aid money to Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. He was also found guilty of other charges, including membership in an organisation and illegal possession of weapons. Israel arrested El Halabi in June 2016. — dpa

30 Sadr supporters killed in Baghdad clashes

BAGHDAD: Thirty supporters of Moqtada Sadr have been shot dead in nearly 24 hours of fighting between rival Iraqi forces that has since died down, according to the latest toll from medics.

At least 570 others were injured in the violence that erupted in Baghdad’s Green Zone, pitting Sadr loyalists against factions. Fighting ended on Tuesday after Sadr ordered his supporters to withdraw.

The violence that erupted on Monday pitted Sadr loyalists against factions with the sides exchanging gunfire across barricades — violence the United Nations warned risked tipping the war-ravaged country deeper into chaos.

Moments after Sadr’s speech was broadcast live on television, his supporters were seen beginning to leave the Green Zone, and minutes after that, the army lifted a nation-wide curfew.

Sadr, a grey-bearded preacher with millions of devoted followers, gave followers “60 minutes” to withdraw after which he would threaten to “disavow” those who remained.

“I apologise to the Iraqi people, the only ones affected by the



Municipality workers clean up while Iraqi army soldiers deploy to guard the entrance of the high-security Green Zone in Baghdad after the withdrawal of supporters of Moqtada al Sadr from the area. — AFP

events,” Sadr said in a speech from his base in the central city of Najaf.

“Shame on this revolution... Regardless of who was the initiator, this revolution, as long as it is marred by violence, is not a revolution,” he said.

“I thank the security forces and members of Hashed al Shaabi,” he added.

Tensions have soared in Iraq

amid a political crisis that has left the country without a new government, prime minister or president for months.

They escalated sharply after Sadr’s supporters on Monday afternoon stormed the government palace inside the high-security Green Zone following their leader’s announcement that he was quitting politics.

Overnight, shelling targeted the Green Zone that houses government buildings and diplomatic missions, amid angry protests after Sadr surprised many by announcing his “definitive retirement”.

Violence continued on Tuesday morning — with the rattle of automatic gunfire and heavier explosions of rocket-propelled

Iraq protesters disperse after Sadr demands end to clashes

grenades — as Sadr’s supporters clashed with the army and men of the Hashed al Shaabi, former paramilitaries integrated into the Iraqi security forces.

The UN mission in Iraq warned of “an extremely dangerous escalation” and called on all sides to “refrain from acts that could lead to an unstoppable chain of events”.

“The very survival of the state is at stake,” it warned.

On Tuesday morning, medics said 23 Sadr supporters had been killed and some 380 others wounded — some with bullet wounds and others suffering tear gas inhalation.

A mass funeral was held on Tuesday in the holy city of Najaf for some of the protesters killed in Baghdad. Witnesses said earlier that Sadr loyalists and supporters of a bloc, the pro-Iran Coordination Framework, had exchanged fire. The Framework condemned an “attack on state institutions”, urging the Sadrist to engage in dialogue. — AFP

■ TURKEY MARKS ARMED FORCES DAY



Turkish soldiers parade during Turkish Armed Forces Day to mark the 100th anniversary of Turkey’s victory against the Greek army in the Dumlupinar Battle in 1922, at Anitkabir, at the mausoleum of Turkish Republic’s Founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, in Ankara, Turkey. — AFP

Israelis, Palestinians wounded in West Bank shootings

NABLUS: Palestinians opened fire at Israeli Jews who snuck into an occupied West Bank city to visit a shrine, wounding two of them, the Israeli army and medical sources said Tuesday.

The incident in Nablus was followed by an unrelated Israeli military raid nearby in which four Palestinians were shot.

The army said the earlier shooting happened when “a number of civilians entered Nablus”. The Israelis were headed to Joseph’s Tomb, believed to be the last resting place of the biblical patriarch Joseph, a flashpoint for violence in the West Bank, and revered as a holy site.

The Israeli army secures monthly pilgrimages to the tomb, but prohibits civilians entering on their own.

“While they were there, they were shot and wounded,” the army said, adding that soldiers “entered the city to rescue them.”

The vehicle of the Israelis was torched by Palestinians, a reporter said, with the situation in the city remaining tense hours after the event.

Two men were wounded and were being treated in hospitals in central Israel, a spokeswoman for the Rabin medical centre and a spokesman for Sheba hospital said.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967, when it seized the territory from Jordan. In an incident which the military said was unrelated to the shrine shooting, clashes erupted east of Nablus on Tuesday morning as Israeli security forces raided a house. — AFP

South Sudan’s former rebels join unified army

JUBA: Thousands of fighters including former rebels from rival camps in South Sudan’s civil war were integrated into the country’s army in a long-overdue graduation ceremony on Tuesday.

The unification of forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and his rival, Vice President Riek Machar, was a key condition of the 2018 peace deal that ended the brutal five-year conflict in which nearly 400,000 people died.

Since achieving independence in 2011 from Sudan, the world’s youngest nation has lurched from crisis to crisis, battling flooding, hunger, ethnic violence and political turmoil.

Earlier this month, South Sudan’s leaders — appointed to run a transitional government — announced that they would remain in power two years beyond an agreed deadline, sparking international concern.

The transition period was meant to conclude with elections in December this year, but the government has so far failed to meet core provisions of the agreement, including drafting a constitution.



Sudanese journalist Abdel Moneim Abu Idris (2nd-L) upon being elected as the head of the Journalists syndicate at the Dar Al Muhandis in Khartoum. — AFP

Nearly 22,000 men and women — drawn from Kiir and Machar’s parties as well as the South Sudan Opposition Alliance — participated in Tuesday’s proceedings, which were originally scheduled to take place in 2019 according to the peace deal.

The delays have fuelled frustration in the international

community as explosions of violence threaten to undo even fragile gains.

As thousands of former rebels stood to attention at Juba’s John Garang Mausoleum — built in honour of South Sudan’s independence hero who died in 2005 — Chief Justice Chan Reech Madut administered the oath of

loyalty.

Another 30,000 forces were also due to graduate in the coming days in training camps around the country.

In addition to joining the army and the police, the new graduates have also been integrated into the VIP protection force, the wildlife service, the civil defence and other

organisations responsible for national security.

“These forces will be deployed all over South Sudan... After their graduation, the second batch will go for training,” Information Minister Michael Makuei told AFP.

The ceremony was held under tight security, in the presence of representatives from the United Nations and neighbouring countries including Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Sudanese coup leader General Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

It followed years of deadlock between Machar and Kiir over the division of senior posts in the unified armed forces command, with the two men only inking an agreement in April this year.

The addition of tens of thousands of former rebels to the government’s payroll will add to already crushing economic challenges — civil servants have been unpaid for months.

But the move was nevertheless met with optimism in some quarters, with one former rebel telling he was excited to join the police force. — AFP



UN appeals for \$160m for help in Pakistan floods



Government officials load relief food bags into a helicopter for flood affected people in Saidu Sharif, capital of Swat valley in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. – AFP



Displaced people sit on a tractor with their belongings as they make their way to reach safer place camp following heavy monsoon rains in Shikarpur of Sindh province. – AFP

SUKKUR: Aid efforts ramped up across flooded Pakistan on Tuesday to help tens of millions of people affected by relentless monsoon rains that have submerged a third of the country and claimed more than 1,100 lives.

The rains that began in June have unleashed the worst flooding in more than a decade, washing away swathes of vital crops and damaging or destroying more than a million homes.

Authorities and charities are struggling to accelerate aid delivery to more than 33 million people, a challenging task in areas cut off because roads and bridges have been washed away.

Displaced people have been wandering what remains of dry land seeking shelter, food and drinking water.

“For God’s sake help us out,” said Qadir, 35, who was camped out

with his extended family on a road near the southern city of Sukkur.

“We walked along the road for three days to reach here.

There’s nothing left back at home, we only managed to save our lives.”

In the country’s south and west, many Pakistanis have crammed onto elevated highways and railroad tracks to escape the flooded plains.

“We don’t even have space to cook food. We need help,” Rimsha Bibi, a schoolgirl in Dera Ghazi Khan in central Pakistan, said.

Pakistan receives heavy — often destructive — rains during its annual monsoon season, which are crucial for agriculture and water supplies.

But such intense downpours have not been seen for three decades.

Pakistani officials have blamed



To see the devastation is really mind-boggling. When we send in water pumps, they say, ‘Where do we pump the water?’ It’s all one big ocean, there’s no dry land to pump the water out

SHERRY REHMAN
Pakistan’s Climate Change Minister

climate change, which is increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather around the world.

“To see the devastation on the ground is really mind-boggling,” Pakistan’s Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman said.

“When we send in water pumps, they say, ‘Where do we pump the water?’ It’s all one big ocean, there’s no dry land to pump the water out.”

She said “literally a third” of the country was under water, comparing scenes from the disaster to a dystopian movie.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal said Pakistan needed more than \$10 billion to repair and rebuild damaged infrastructure.

“Massive damage has been caused... especially in the areas of telecommunications, roads, agriculture and livelihoods,” he said. The Indus River, which runs the length of the South Asian

nation, is threatening to burst its banks as torrents of water rush downstream from its tributaries in the north.

Pakistan as a whole has been deluged with twice the usual monsoon rainfall, the meteorological office said, but Balochistan and Sindh provinces have seen more than four times the average of the last three decades.

The disaster could not have come at a worse time for Pakistan, where the economy is in free fall.

Appealing for international help, the government has declared an emergency.

Aid flights have arrived in recent days from Turkey and the UAE, while other nations including Canada, Australia and Japan have also pledged assistance.

The United Nations has announced it will launch a formal \$160 million appeal on Tuesday to

fund emergency aid.

“Pakistan is awash in suffering. The Pakistani people are facing a monsoon on steroids — the relentless impact of epochal levels of rain and flooding,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a video statement, calling it a “colossal crisis.”

Pakistan was already desperate for international support and the floods have compounded the challenge.

Prices of basic goods — particularly onions, tomatoes and chickpeas — are soaring as vendors bemoan a lack of supplies from the flooded breadbasket provinces of Sindh and Punjab.

There was some relief on Monday when the International Monetary Fund approved the revival of a loan programme for Pakistan, releasing an initial \$1.1 billion. — AFP

Families demand probe into disappeared relatives

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s government is in “denial” about systematic abductions carried out by security forces, families of missing relatives said on Tuesday, during a protest demanding a United Nations probe into enforced disappearances.

Rights groups accuse security forces of unlawfully killing around 2,500 people since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina came to power in 2009, many of whom were prominent opposition figures.

Hundreds more have been declared missing, with Sweden-based news portal Netra News this month reporting that some have been secretly detained for years in a previously unknown

prison near a military base.

“We want immediate release of the detainees from secret detention cells,” said Sanijda Islam, a member of the local Maayer Daak civil society group which represents families of the missing. “The authorities should stop their denial,” Islam said.

Outgoing UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet visited Bangladesh this month and urged the government to create an independent agency to investigate claims of enforced disappearances.

But at a rally in the capital Dhaka, hundreds of people carrying photos of their missing relatives urged the UN to conduct its own inquiry. — AFP

Ganesh festival returns in jumbo style

MUMBAI: Workers caked in plaster are putting the finishing touches to storeys-high statues of the elephant God Ganesha in time for one of India’s biggest religious festivals, now jumbo-sized again after Covid.

The 11-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival, which draws tens of thousands of Hindu devotees onto streets across the seaside megacity of Mumbai, begins on Wednesday.

For two years authorities restricted the heights of the idols to cut crowd sizes but now they can be nine metres tall or more, requiring dozens of people to carry them. That has prompted orders to start streaming back, said four-decade idol-maker



Artist Kishore Mestri gives final touches to an idol of Ganesha ahead of the ‘Ganesh Chaturthi’ festival at a workshop in Mumbai. – AFP

Bharat Masurkar as he sat among dozens of unfinished red, green and gold-clothed statues made of clay or plaster. “This year, clay

and PoP (plaster of Paris) are back with full excitement,” the 59-year-old said at his busy workshop.

Around the corner at a tent where extra-large Ganesha idols are made, seasonal staff clamber up wooden scaffolding to work on the figures.

Workers toil for up to 15 hours a day, said Raju Patel, 46, who has travelled 2,000 kilometres from Bihar to Mumbai every year since 1996 to spend four months there earning money. “We don’t get time to talk to our family members at home,” Patel said.

The giant idols are made from plaster of Paris — a durable and lightweight material that allows them to be easily transported via road.— AFP

SHORT TAKES

MUMBAI

Adani becomes world’s third-richest person

Indian industrialist Gautam Adani became the world’s third-richest person on the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, the first time an Asian has ranked in the top three.

The self-made billionaire has seen his net worth more than double to \$137.4 billion in the last year, rising 20 spots on the index to now rank just behind Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, Bloomberg News reported.

Adani, 60, made his fortune in ports and commodities



trading and now operates India’s third-largest conglomerate with interests ranging from coal mining and edible oils to airports and news media. — AFP

ISLAMABAD

6 million Afghans at risk of famine, UN warns

A top UN official has warned that 6 million Afghans are at risk of famine as the country continues to face extreme hardship and uncertainty under Taliban leadership.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths made the remarks at a UN Security Council meeting on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

More than half of the country’s population needs humanitarian assistance, Griffiths said. With the Taliban’s return to



power on August 2021, the country’s situation has further deteriorated. Unemployment and extreme poverty have forced tens of thousands of Afghans to flee their country. — dpa

BEIJING

Communist Party Congress to open on Oct 16

China’s ruling Communist Party will begin its 20th Party Congress on October 16 in Beijing, state media reported, a landmark meeting at which Xi Jinping is expected to be reinstated as president for an unprecedented third term.

The momentous political event will also unveil a new top leadership line-up as Xi consolidates his grip on the party and his position as the most powerful Chinese leader. The congress will be an “extremely



important conference held at a critical moment when the whole Party and people of all ethnic groups are embarking on a new journey of building a modern socialist country.” — AFP



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In brief

■ BERLIN



GERMAN CABINET SEEKS TO LIFT POLITICAL PRESSURE AT MEETINGS

The leaders of Germany's three-way coalition come together for talks today aiming to settle tensions laid bare by fast-rising inflation and a gloomy economic outlook. Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats are increasingly playing off against each other as they try to decide on how to deal with a looming energy crisis and a higher cost of living. Four months after the last cabinet meeting at Meseberg Castle - and nearly nine months after they came to power - the cabinet will discuss further financial relief for citizens affected by high energy prices.

— dpa

■ MOSCOW



RUSSIA SEEKS JAIL FOR TREASON TRIAL JOURNALIST

Russian prosecutors requested a 24-year sentence for respected former reporter Ivan Safronov, who is accused of treason for allegedly sharing state secrets. The trial comes with independent media and NGOs facing increasing pressure in Russia, especially since the February start of Moscow's military intervention in Ukraine. "The prosecutor asked to sentence Ivan to 24 years in a strict regime penal colony," Safronov's lawyer Dmitry Katchev said following a closed-door hearing. Safronov's former lawyer Yevgeny Smirnov said that the ex-reporter turned down an offer of 12 years in jail in return for a plea. — AFP

■ NIAMEY



75 DEAD IN WORSENING NIGER FLOODS

Powerful rains that have swept the arid state of Niger since June have left 75 dead and affected 108,000 people, the government said. The previous toll issued by the Civil Protection Agency on August 14 was 32 dead and nearly 67,000 affected. The worst-hit regions are Maradi in the central south, Zinder in the central east, and Tillaberi and Tahoua in the west. The landlocked Sahel state's annual rainy season typically runs between June and August or September. But in recent years, rainfall has become more intensive, accelerating the risk of deadly flooding in shanty towns.

— AFP

Ukraine seeks cultural protection for Odessa

PARIS: Ukraine's government will ask the UN's cultural watchdog to add the historic port city of Odessa to its World Heritage List of protected sites as Moscow's forces approach the city, officials said Tuesday.

Russian forces are within several dozen kilometres of Odessa, which blossomed after empress Catherine the Great decreed in the late 18th century that it would be Russia's modern gateway to the Black Sea.

Czar Alexander soon named as governor France's Duc de Richelieu, who oversaw its stately construction and whose statue still stands atop the monumental Potemkin stairs.

"Odessa is in danger right now," Ukraine's Culture Minister Oleksandr Tkachenko said after meeting with Unesco director Audrey Azoulay in Paris.

Analysts say Russian President Vladimir Putin could soon target Odessa to completely block Ukraine's Black Sea access, potentially with heavy bombardments like those that razed the port of Mariupol.

Last month the city was struck by missiles just hours after Russia agreed to allow a shipment of Ukrainian grain exports from the port.

Meanwhile, in the ongoing war, much of the attention remained on the counter-offensive in the south.

In its morning update, the president's office in Kyiv said "heavy fighting is taking place in almost the entire territory of the Kherson region".

"Powerful explosions continued throughout the day and throughout the night" and "the Armed Forces of Ukraine launched offensive actions in various directions," it added.

In the town of Bereznehuve



Picture shows destruction following a missile strike in Mykolaiv, amid the Russian attack on Ukraine. — AFP

The Ukraine war has contributed to a global food and energy price crisis

— near the frontlines 70 kilometres north of Kherson city — reporters saw soldiers resting by the roadside and heard artillery fire.

"We forced them well back," said infantryman Victor, in his 60s, who declined to give a surname.

But his commander Oleksandr — a veteran of the war in Afghanistan — predicted the fight to retake Kherson will be "long and complicated".

In his nightly address on Monday, President Volodymyr Zelensky was coy about Ukraine's overarching strategy whilst striking a bullish tone. "You won't hear the specifics from any person in charge because this is war."

"But the occupiers should know that we will push them to our borderline," he added. "If they want to survive, it is time for the Russian military to flee. Go home."

Russia's defence ministry claimed Ukraine suffered "large-scale losses" of more than 1,200 soldiers and dozens of pieces of equipment during the "defeat" of its southern attack.

Britain's defence ministry warned that since the start of August, Russia has made "significant efforts" to reinforce troops on the western bank of the Dnipro River which splits Kherson city.

But the Ukrainian presidency claimed its forces had destroyed "almost all large bridges" and that "only pedestrian crossings remain" in Kherson region.

The British ministry said "most of the units around Kherson are likely under-manned and are reliant upon fragile supply lines by ferry and pontoon bridges across the Dnipro". — AFP

Biden to give prime-time warning on US democracy

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden will sound the alarm on threats to US democracy in a rare prime-time address to the nation in the key swing state of Pennsylvania on Thursday as his party fights to hold on to Congress in the midterm elections.

The Keystone State — which will host Biden three times in the coming days, including on Tuesday — is one of the most hotly contested battlegrounds on the midterm map.

But Republican strategists worry that controversial candidates backed by former president Donald Trump are muddying their path to victory.

The Democratic leader will echo his 2020 campaign theme about the battle for the "soul of nation" in historic Philadelphia, where the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution were written.

He will set out how an imperilled democracy threatens America's standing on the international stage, according to White House officials, highlighting action to protect voting rights but warning that access to the ballot is still at risk.

The outcome of the upcoming Senate election in Pennsylvania could decide whether the Democrats cede control of the evenly divided upper chamber of Congress to the Republicans for the next two years.

The Cook Political Report moved the race to "lean Democrat" this month, however, citing widespread Republican concerns with Trump-backed celebrity physician Mehmet Oz's campaign.

Initially preferring to present himself as a unifier in a deeply divided country, Biden has recently been concentrating his fire on Trumpist Republicans he has accused of embracing "semi-



US President Joe Biden salutes while disembarking Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. — AFP

fascism."

The 79-year-old Democrat, who narrowly beat Trump in Pennsylvania in 2020, will bookend Thursday's address with two other visits to the state.

Biden heads first to the city of Wilkes-Barre on Tuesday — near his hometown of Scranton — where he will promote community policing, curbing violent crime and getting guns off the streets.

Republicans have presented themselves as the party of law-and-order amid a nationwide spike in murders — with some success, according to multiple polls — while accusing Democrats of wanting to defund the police.

The president is expected to set out his party's action on gun violence on Tuesday, highlighting the bipartisan gun safety package he signed into law, as well as substantial new funding for policing.

"Every Republican lawmaker in Pennsylvania turned their backs on police and safer communities when they voted against President Biden's Rescue Plan, which provided hundreds of billions of dollars for states to help fund law enforcement and public safety programmes," Democratic National Committee DNC spokeswoman Brooke Goren said. — AFP

UK cost of living crisis sees surge in pet abandonments: animal charity

LONDON: The UK's leading animal charity on Tuesday blamed spiralling costs and the huge upsurge in pet ownership during the pandemic for a 24-per cent rise in pet abandonments this year.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) reported 22,908 abandonments in the first seven months of this year, compared with 18,375 in the same period of 2021.

"The idea of putting your cat in a cat carrier and taking them to a secluded spot in the woods before walking away, or chucking your dog out of the car... is absolutely unthinkable and heartbreaking to most pet owners," said Dermot Murphy, the RSPCA's chief inspectorate officer.

"But sadly we are seeing animals callously abandoned like this every single day. "We understand that sometimes the unexpected can happen — the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis proved that — but there is never an excuse to abandon an



animal."

The charity, which is running an anti-animal cruelty campaign, attributed the surge to the pandemic and cost of living crisis for stretching pet owners' finances.

Britain is in the grip of double-digit inflation, running at 40-year highs, as well as a spiralling

energy crisis that has left millions facing eye-watering gas and electricity bills this winter.

Around a fifth of pet owners are worried about how they will feed their animal, according to the charity's Animal Kindness Index survey.

The UK's leading cat welfare charity meanwhile issued an

urgent plea to potential adoptees after its waiting lists soared to a historic high.

Cats Protection said the number of cats waiting to enter its adoption centres rose by 46 per cent in July 2022 compared to July 2021. "This is the worst situation in organisational memory in terms of the pressure on our services to take in cats," said Peter Shergold, head of field operations for Cats Protection.

"The rise is directly linked to the cost-of-living crisis, such as not having the funds to afford the basics like cat food or cat litter."

Fellow animal charities Dogs Trust and Battersea have also warned of an increase in people wanting to give up their pets in recent months.

The RSPCA cited harrowing examples, including the case of terrier dog Freya, who was thrown out of a truck driving at around 80 kilometres per hour.

"Freya was incredibly lucky to survive after being hurled from the moving vehicle at such a high speed," said inspector Kirsten Ormerod. — AFP

Eldest son of Che Guevara dies in Venezuela

HAVANA: Camilo Guevara March, the eldest son of communist revolutionary icon Ernesto "Che" Guevara, died in Caracas aged 60, Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel said.

According to Prensa Latina, Guevara March was visiting Venezuela when he died on Monday due to a blood clot that led to a heart attack.

"It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Camilo, son of Che and promoter of his ideas," said Diaz-Canel on Twitter. He was the eldest of four children that Argentine Guevara had with Cuban Aleida March. Guevara also had a daughter, Hilda, from a previous marriage to Peruvian Hilda Gadea.

A graduate in labour law, Guevara March was the director of the Center for Che Guevara Studies in Havana, an institution dedicated to promoting the work and ideology of his father, who remains a hugely influential figure in Cuba. — AFP

Disrupting Dhofar and the innovation scenarios



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Innovative disruption is more significant today than ever. This is thanks to the increasing number of complex problems humanity needs to solve to save ourselves and our planet.

Disruptive innovation theory, promoted by the late Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School in his books, promote that there are three type of innovation scenarios: Sustaining innovation where we make better products for an established market, Low-end market innovation for over-served segments for low cost focused market, and new market innovation for early adopters' market.

One of the best examples of how disruptive innovation works is this year's khareef Dhofar, in the southern part of the Sultanate of Oman. I would argue that our job

To Be Done (JTBD) is to facilitate for diverse types of investors to play a part in reaching our socio-economic goals in the three different aforementioned disruptive innovation scenarios.

Low-end innovation scenario in Dhofar

This bottom-up approach is evident in the hundreds of new trendy cafés that opened up in this post-pandemic era. Dhofar has one of the highest demand rates in the food and beverage industry. This is excellent news for culinary enthusiasts, chefs, food hygiene specialists and the municipality that licenses food and beverage businesses. On the other hand, culinary service satisfy our need for food leaving in our other needs like the need for belonging and shelter and self-actualisation which

ALL INNOVATIONS ARE FOCUSED ON BOTTOM UP, LOW-COST INNOVATIONS WHICH MEANS THAT IMPORTS OF HIGH-END PRODUCTS WILL REMAIN HIGH, WITH HIGHER INCOME SEGMENT INFUSING MUCH NEEDED CASH ABROAD AS OPPOSED IN LOCAL MARKETS

is something to be desired.

It also creates excess of many food entrepreneurs which breeds more entrepreneurs in the same field which in turn harms the diversity of SMEs and startups ecosystem.

Sustaining innovation scenario

High end products attract higher

margins when facilitated properly. While low-end innovation has proven to be a point of strength for Dhofar for example there is little evidence that a better products ecosystem in developing in any areas other than food.

The fact that almost all innovations are focused on bottom up, low-cost innovations mean that imports of high-end products will remain high, with higher income segment in the society infusing much needed cash abroad as opposed in local markets.

New market innovation

Tesla, the electronic vehicle company democratised e-mobility, while SpaceX privatised space exploration.

New market disruptive innovations, such as these two examples, for markets that adopt

new ideas and products capitalise on its thriving innovation ecosystem. This scenario is the rarest because the founders need to stimulate their products' own demand.

Disrupting forward

'Disrupt or be disrupted' whether in beautiful Dhofar or any other endowed region in the Sultanate of Oman or the world, this is the general rule in Disruptive Innovation Theory.

Our markets have a unique opportunity with forward thinking leadership, financial resilience and an accumulative wealth of history in innovations by previous scholars in our diverse cultures.

This post-pandemic inflation crisis is a blessing in disguise for us to explore how we can disrupt what's not working in our markets, before we are disrupted.

Ukrainians flee war to find refuge in West Bank

GARETH BROWNE

After the Russian attack on Ukraine, Olena and Eduard German, a Jewish couple from Kharkiv, found refuge in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank.

Six months since the start of the war in their homeland, the Germans are rebuilding their lives in a new home decorated with Israeli flags in Maale Adumim, a settlement of over 42,000 between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, regarded as illegal under international law.

The February 24 Russian attack triggered the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, leaving over 6.8 million Ukrainians registered as refugees across the continent, according to the latest United Nations figures.

Israel itself has welcomed more than 30,000 Ukrainians, including 12,000 Jews who made "Aliyah", or immigrated under the Law of Return which offers automatic citizenship to people with Jewish roots.

The couple, who were university lecturers, recalled their terrifying exodus out of Kharkiv, a city near the Russian frontier in northeastern Ukraine, on a gruelling two-day drive for the relative safety of Lviv in Ukraine's west.

"Please don't look out the windows, you've got to have good memories" of Kharkiv, Olena told her three young children, as their convoy, organised by local Jewish organisations, set off.

From Lviv, local charities helped them reach Budapest, where they met with officials from Israeli organisations that helped organise their Aliyah.

Initially given accommodation in Nof Hagalil, a city in the north of Israel, the family was determined to settle in Judea and Samaria, the biblical Jewish term for the West Bank, and set about finding a place to live in a settlement.

Shortly after the Russian attack, the Yesha Council, the umbrella organisation representing the 475,000 Israelis in the West Bank, was one of the Israeli groups that sent teams to border countries and then Ukraine, where they provided counselling services and distributed aid.

Yet they had more to offer Ukrainian Jews -- a new homeland.

"Those who want to make Aliyah, we offer them an option to live here and we can put them in contact with the regional authorities and with Russian-speaking families who can accompany them in their integration process," Yesha Council director Yigal Dilmoni said.

"If you are living here, in the land of the Bible, it makes your Aliyah to Israel more meaningful," said Dilmoni in reference to the West Bank. — AFP

Nasa, and space fans, await decision on next chance to launch Artemis Moon rocket



Kenneth Chang

The writer is the science reporter at NYT



Christine Chung

The writer is a general assignment reporter covering breaking news at NYT

Thousands of people had packed the beaches, roadsides, rooftops and waterways. Some even camped overnight in hopes of seeing Nasa's giant new moon rocket launch for the first time, rising upward with a thunderous boom and jets of fire from its engines.

"We are going," proclaimed Nasa banners hung all around the space centre. Even Vice-President Kamala Harris was on hand to watch.

But on Monday, the rocket did not go, and Nasa officials said it was too early to guess whether it might be able to launch on Friday, the next potential opportunity, or later. Mission managers met on Tuesday to discuss their next steps.

Although no astronauts are to be on board, the rocket — what Nasa calls the Space Launch System — would usher in a new era of human exploration including sending the first woman and the first person of colour to the surface of the moon.

The first mission is scheduled to be a week-long flight around the moon to test both the rocket and the Orion crew capsule where astronauts will sit on future missions.

In particular, Nasa wants to make sure that the heat shield on Orion can survive a fiery entry through Earth's atmosphere at 25,000 mph, the speed of a spacecraft returning from the moon.

Monday's scrubbed launch added another delay to the moon programme, named Artemis, which has already cost more than \$40 billion and is years behind schedule. The programme, including the giant rocket, has nonetheless received steady support from Congress and Nasa officials.

The issue that halted the launch was a liquid hydrogen line that did not adequately chill one of the rocket's four core-stage engines, part of the preparations needed before ignition. Otherwise, sudden shrinkage from the temperature shock of supercold propellants crack the metal engine parts.

Troubleshooting efforts proved unsuccessful within the limited time, and at about 8:40 am Eastern, Charlie



Kennedy Space Center Press Secretary Jackie McGuinness, Nasa Administrator Bill Nelson, Artemis Mission Manager Mike Sarafin, Associate Administrator for Exploration Systems Development James Free at a press conference in Cape Canaveral, Florida. — AFP

THE ISSUE THAT HALTED THE LAUNCH WAS A LIQUID HYDROGEN LINE THAT DID NOT ADEQUATELY CHILL ONE OF THE ROCKET'S FOUR CORE-STAGE ENGINES, PART OF THE PREPARATIONS NEEDED BEFORE IGNITION

Blackwell-Thompson, the launch director, decided that it was time to call it off and try again another day. Even if they had resolved the technical issues, weather conditions would likely have prevented a launch.

"This is a brand-new rocket," Bill Nelson, the Nasa administrator, said during a news conference in the afternoon. "It's not going to fly until it's ready."

If the launch cannot occur during the Labor Day weekend, the rocket

will have to be rolled back to the giant Vehicle Assembly Building — essentially a garage for rockets. A trip there would most likely mean a delay of a month or more.

Nasa officials said it was important to prudently tackle each problem as it arose and not to rush decisions that might lead to catastrophic failures.

"We are going to give the team time to rest, first of all, and then come back fresh tomorrow and reassess what we learned today and then develop a series of options," said Mike Sarafin, the Artemis mission manager. "It's too early to say what the options are."

Had it lifted off, the flight would have capped a strong summer for Nasa, which inspired imaginations all over the world when it released the first views of the cosmos captured by the powerful James Webb Space Telescope at the start of July.

Instead, Nasa's engineers, VIP spectators and the public at large were disappointed, but many were sympathetic.

That included Harris, who had been scheduled to deliver a speech after an Artemis I launch. Instead, she spoke to reporters on Monday after Nasa scrubbed the flight.

— New York Times

Ensure safety of children in school buses



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

As government schools are set to reopen in a few days, the safety of students in buses is of paramount importance while commuting to and from their respective institutions. This is the time drivers, operators as well as other officials fully comply with all the requirements and regulations set for school transport buses to provide safe and secure transport

to students. Even though school buses experience relatively low accident rates as they are among the safest forms of road transportation, efforts to educate drivers of other vehicles may help reduce accidents, in any form.

Sadly, in the Sultanate of Oman, a string of road crashes led to the deaths of multiple students and teachers and injuries to many in recent years with the blame, in the majority of cases, attributed to driver error. Seven children have lost their lives in various road accidents in just over two years.

In this regard, what the Ministry of Education has unveiled in the form of a short film to raise awareness among students on safety in school buses is a welcome step as it would help this “vulnerable group of passengers” to be more vigilant on roads. Although the two-minute film directly communicates with students drawing their attention to important aspects when taking a bus or any other means of transport to school, the initiative has been designed to sensitise, motivate and train children and school bus staff, on issues related to school bus travel and safety. While one of the most dangerous aspects of riding the school bus is getting on and off the bus, and crossing the street, the film asks students to wait in a safe place, and make sure the bus has stopped completely.

WE ARE ALL WITNESS TO WHAT IS VERY COMMON DURING SCHOOL DAYS: THE CONGESTION THAT HARRIED PARENTS AND SOME HASTY DRIVERS BRING WHILE DROPPING AND PICKING UP CHILDREN, SEVERAL OF THEM, ON THE OTHER HAND, RUN RECKLESSLY TO THEIR CLASSES WITHOUT CARING FOR PASSER-BY VEHICLES

We are all witness to what is very common during school days: the congestion that harried parents and some hasty drivers bring while dropping and picking up children, several of them, on the other hand, run recklessly to their classes.

Keeping our children safe, especially as they enter or exit the bus is a priority. While a school bus accident can happen anytime, the biggest threat to student safety is when students are getting on and off a school bus.

While school buses are designed for safety, riding a school bus is the safest way for children to get to and from school. Many school bus drivers have been accused of speeding and careless driving.

But there have been instances when school bus drivers place their student passengers at risk by making careless safety errors, such as texting or talking on the cell phone while driving. The fact is that using cell phones during driving degrades driver performance, decreases reaction time, and increases instances of attention lapses. In addition, drivers must carry out daily maintenance checks on the vehicles, obey speed limits and ensure they keep to the designated routes as part of the two new initiatives.

At the same time, bus service reliability and comfort, driver's driving habits, norms, and compliance with laws are underlying factors that ensure safe transport. Strict enforcement related to the use of cell phones and exceeding the speed limits and proper compliance of drivers with traffic rules would help in improving the safety of bus service. School authorities should develop a clear safety policy regarding the hiring of drivers for buses and monitoring their behaviour during driving. There is also a need to initiate special training and awareness programmes for the bus drivers of educational institutions.

Finally, the teachers, drivers, assistants, parents, and the public at large should be watchful and vigilant at all times. The authorities must regularly advise children on the importance of adhering to safety measures during the bus journey. On the other hand, there should be regular sanitisation of the buses as part of the general measures contributing to maintaining students' health and safety. There should not be room for any complacency whatsoever!



A LAKE WITH NO WATER

Picture taken with a drone shows an aerial view of boat jetties at the dried up Edersee lake near Waldeck, western Germany on Tuesday. Due to the drought that has prevailed in Germany for weeks, there is rarely so little water in the reservoir. In Hesse's largest lake, ruins and bridges are currently appearing that usually lay metres deep under the surface of the water. – AFP

Rays of hope in the climate struggle

MAY BOEVE AND
CHRISTIANA FIGUERES

We have grown accustomed to grim climate news. Despite scientists' warnings and communities' protests, catastrophic floods, record-breaking heatwaves, devastating wildfires, and famine-inducing droughts are becoming increasingly frequent.

But, occasionally, a pleasant political surprise encourages policymakers and activists to press on in the fight against global warming.

The recent passage of the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will accelerate America's clean-energy transition, is a case in point.

We have experienced similar uplifting moments before. In the months leading up to the adoption of the 2015 Paris climate agreement, the United States and China announced a joint plan to slash emissions that helped pave the geopolitical path to that historic deal.

In 2014, hundreds of thousands of Americans participated in the People's Climate March in New York City, confounding all turnout estimates and prompting then-United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to speak out and emphasise how important protests are.

Like the IRA, these victories seemed to come out of the blue. But social movements help to bring about such progress, and can grow stronger when the political winds shift in their favour.

Moreover, the new US law could not be better timed, because the pace picks up for the climate movement at this time of year.

A few weeks from now, heads of state will gather in New York for the UN General Assembly, which will be followed by a mayoral summit in Buenos Aires, the G20 summit in Bali, Indonesia, and the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Climate negotiators are used to entering such gatherings determined to declare progress at any cost and use sheer force of will to keep the focus on climate justice.

In recent years, youth activists have called our bluff: One cannot say that efforts to tackle the climate emergency are sufficient when politicians do little more than talk.

But the IRA's passage means that — at this late hour in the fight against global warming — we can prepare for forthcoming meetings with something new and tangible in hand.

The US is the largest historical emitter of planet-warming gases and in recent years has been one of the main laggards in international fora aimed at addressing the problem.

But the IRA keeps the Americans in the game in the run-up to this year's international climate talks.

OCCASIONALLY, A PLEASANT POLITICAL SURPRISE ENCOURAGES POLICYMAKERS AND ACTIVISTS TO PRESS ON IN THE FIGHT AGAINST GLOBAL WARMING. THE RECENT PASSAGE OF THE US INFLATION REDUCTION ACT, WHICH WILL ACCELERATE AMERICA'S CLEAN-ENERGY TRANSITION, IS A CASE IN POINT

The new law not only puts the US on course to reduce its own pollution sharply, but also will likely drive down the prices of renewable energy.

That will make it easier for many emerging economies and low-income countries to adopt renewables rather than build more coal-fired power plants.

Notwithstanding political obstacles to progress, there are signs around the world that things are moving in the right direction.

The European Union wants the share of renewables in its energy mix to reach at least 40 per cent by 2030.

India's transport sector, which accounts for 14 per cent of the country's overall emissions, has leapfrogged ahead by joining the First Movers Coalition, which aims to decarbonise heavy industry and long-distance transport sectors responsible for 30 per cent of global emissions.

Colombia's recently elected government has laid out a hugely ambitious climate and environmental justice agenda that promises to end the country's destructive model of resource extraction.

Significantly, China's solar industrial boom has enabled the price of renewable energy to fall to new lows.

In Brazil, wind and solar energy generation increased in 2021 and now account for over 13 per cent of the country's energy mix, exceeding the OECD's clean-energy indicator for that year.

Political breakthroughs on climate issues can happen overnight, unforeseen. For years, the fossil-fuel industry has been determined to convince us that we can't live without coal, oil, and natural gas.

But the spike in energy prices following Russia's war on Ukraine has shown that we simply cannot continue to feed our addiction.

While fossil-fuel companies reap unprecedented windfall profits, soaring energy prices are causing misery for the world's most vulnerable people and have driven millions more into poverty for the first time.

Even in developed countries, lower-income families may have to choose between food and heat this winter.

Just as the IRA seeks to protect the US population from volatile fossil-fuel prices and their knock-on effects, every other government must fulfil its responsibility to safeguard its citizens.

If they do, historians will regard this moment as the time when the US unleashed a massive anti-poverty programme and people everywhere forever connected climate policy with their well-being.

We are still far from where we need to be in addressing climate change, but we are a big step further along from where we were at the beginning of 2022.

The IRA is not perfect — a glaring flaw is the absence of funding to help poorer countries adapt to climate change — but it demonstrates that enormous domestic obstacles can be overcome. COP27 is around the corner, and leaders must come to the table with a sense of responsibility and tangible evidence of their commitment to act.

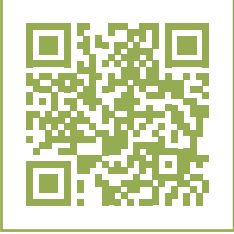
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The recent passage of the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which will accelerate America's clean-energy transition, is a case in point.



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SERENA

BATTLES ON AS US OPEN BEGINS

QUALIFIER GALAN STUNS TSITSIPAS, HALEP OUT



Coco Gauff of the US smiles at match point against Leolia Jeanjean of France during their 2022 US Open women's singles first round match at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York. — AFP



Andy Murray of Great Britain reacts as he plays against Francisco Cerndolo of Argentina during their 2022 US Open men's singles first round match at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center.



Daria Snigur of Ukraine celebrates after defeating Simona Halep of Romania during their 2022 US Open women's singles first round match at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York.

NEW YORK: Serena Williams delayed her farewell to tennis on an electrifying opening night at the US Open on Monday as the sporting icon battled to victory in front of a star-studded crowd.

The 23-time Grand Slam winner — who earlier this month signalled she plans to retire from tennis after the tournament — drew on all of her experience to down lowly ranked Montenegrin opponent Danka Kovinic 6-3, 6-3.

A galaxy of celebrities ranging from Hollywood stars, fashion icons and former presidents were out in force at Flushing Meadows' Arthur Ashe Stadium to watch could have been Williams final appearance in a Grand Slam singles match.

But the 40-year-old ensured that her legions of fans will have at least one more chance to savour her talents as she dug out victory despite an error-strewn display.

"I feel so comfortable on this court and in front of everyone here," a jubilant Williams said after her victory.

"The crowd was crazy - they really helped pull me through. I was really pumped," added Williams, who won the first of her Grand Slam titles in the same arena in 1999 as a 17-year-old prodigy.

Williams admitted that deciding to walk away from the sport after 27 years as a professional was "such a hard decision."

"I think when you are passionate about something it is always hard to walk away," she said. "I have been trying to decide what to do. I love this game."

"But I was just like 'Alright, I think now's the time'. I have a family, there's other chapters in life. I call it evolution."

Williams later refused to be definitive about her retirement however when asked if the US Open would be her last tournament, teasing the possibility that she may yet play on.

"I've been pretty vague about it, right?" she said. "I'm going to stay vague because you never know."

A sell-out crowd of 23,500 had

roared its appreciation for Williams as she strode into the arena wearing a striking sparkling bodice and black skirt comprised of six layers -- one for every US Open title she has won.

The roll-call of A-listers on hand for the occasion included former US President Bill Clinton, Vogue editor Anna Wintour, former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson, tennis legend and Hollywood stars such as Hugh Jackman and Queen Latifah.

Williams acknowledged that leaving the spotlight — whenever that is — would be a wrench. "The more tournaments I play, I feel like the more I can belong out there," she said. "That's a tough feeling to have, to leave knowing the more you do it, the more you can shine."

TSITSIPAS STUNNED

In other women's draw action on Monday, former world number one Simona Halep, seeded seventh, was the biggest casualty in the first round, crashing out 6-2, 0-6, 6-4 to Ukrainian qualifier Daria Snigur.

But there were no such problems

for US teenager and 12th seed Coco Gauff, who cruised past France's Leolia Jeanjean 6-2, 6-3.

Meanwhile the men's draw got under way with a stunning upset for Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who was bundled out by Colombian qualifier Daniel Elahi Galan 6-0, 6-1, 3-6, 7-5 on a dramatic ninth matchpoint.

Tsitsipas's miserable record in New York continued with the Greek having never got past the third round.

Galan, making his main draw debut at the tournament, will face Australia's Jordan Thompson for a place in the last 32.

"I am super happy," said the 26-year-old Galan.

"When he started to play better, I became more nervous."

"But I managed to regain my composure and, even though I lost the third set, I felt that I was playing better and better."

Earlier, Russia's defending champion Daniil Medvedev routed Stefan Koslov of the United States in the top half of the draw.

The Russian comfortably dispatched world No 111 Kozlov 6-2, 6-4, 6-0 in 2hrs 1min.

Medvedev, bidding to become the first man to defend the US crown since Roger Federer retained the title in 2008, faces France's Arthur Rinderknech in the second round.

Britain's Andy Murray, another veteran well into the twilight of his career, marked the 10th anniversary of his maiden Grand Slam win with a straight sets defeat of Argentinian 24th seed Francisco Cerundolo.

The 35-year-old Scot showed no signs of recent cramping problems in a 7-5, 6-3, 6-3 win, but admitted afterwards: "It felt like five sets."

It was Murray's first straight sets win at a Grand Slam event since 2017.

Elsewhere on Monday, Wu Yibing claimed a piece of history in the men's draw, becoming the first man from China to win a Grand Slam singles match since 1959.

The qualifier upset Georgia's 31st seed Nikoloz Basilashvili 6-3, 6-4, 6-0. — AFP



Oman all set for AFC U-19 Asian Cup qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Oman U-19 football team is all set to begin their campaign at AFC U-19 Asian Cup qualifiers which will take place in Salalah during September 12 to 18. Oman are placed in Group G besides Philippines, Afghanistan and Thailand.

Oman's junior boys will meet Philippines in the opener on September 16 and then will play against Afghanistan in the following encounter.

In the concluding game, Oman will face off Thailand on September 18. All the matches will be held at Al Saada Sports Complex venue. Among 10 groups, the topper in each group besides five best runners-up will join hosts Uzbekistan in the 2023 Finals.

On Tuesday, the team ended the preparatory abroad camp in Turkey after playing several



preparatory games. Oman team, coached by Spanish coach David Grodo, managed to win the

opening warm-up game against Turkey's Sakaryaspor 3-2. Oman's goals were scored by Mohammed

Abdulhakeem (2) and Abdulaalem al Rawahi.

Mamoon al Orami was the star of the second friendly match as he netted both goals and helped the team beat Kojali Spur club 2-1. The third victory of the national team was over Saudi's Al Raid club 1-0 after the defender of opponent team scored an own goal. In the concluding game, Oman boys thrashed Turkish Eyupspor club 4-0. Oman's goals were struck by Khalid al Sulaimi, Mamoon al Orami, Abdulmajeed al Balushi and Salim al Abri.

The team will have a final domestic preparatory camp in Salalah ahead of the qualifiers. The coaching staff will focus on the final camp to finalise the starting line-up and implementing various technical and tactical sessions. The national junior team will aim in the qualifiers to ensure presence of Oman in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan, which will be held from March 1 to 18, 2023.

Australia's Marsh out of Zimbabwe, NZ series with injury

SYDNEY: Mitchell Marsh will miss the rest of the ODI series against Zimbabwe and matches versus New Zealand after suffering a minor ankle injury, with Australia taking no chances ahead of the T20 World Cup.

The all-rounder was experiencing "ankle soreness" following the five-wicket defeat of Zimbabwe on Sunday in Townsville, according to cricket.com.au on Tuesday.

Marsh is expected to be fit for Australia's T20 tour of India next month, which comes prior to the World Cup on home soil.

Wicketkeeper Josh Inglis will return from England to step in for the 30-year-old, but he will not arrive in time for Wednesday's second ODI against Zimbabwe, again in Townsville.

"It's disappointing for Mitch, but there's some pretty important stuff coming up," team-mate Steve Smith told reporters.



Mitchell Marsh

"He was a big part of our T20 World Cup campaign last year and I'm sure there's big plans for him this year."

"The priority is to get him right for that," Smith added of Marsh, Australia's hero when they hammered New Zealand in the T20 World Cup final last year.

The series against Zimbabwe will be followed by three one-dayers against New Zealand starting on September 6, all in Cairns. — AFP

Mexico considering Oman to host World Cup fans



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Mexico will consider Sultanate of Oman as a base for its football fans arriving to support Mexico in the 2022 Fifa World Cup in Qatar from November 20 to December 18.

Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, met Alfonso Zigbe Camarena, Executive Director of Strategy and Public Diplomacy at the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and his accompanying delegation, within an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman, to

discuss the possibility of Oman to host the Mexican fans.

Oman Air, official carrier of Oman, had earlier announced the special programme for the Qatar 2022 World Cup, in partnership with the Omran Group, Oman Airports, and official authorities. A fan zone for the World Cup fans will be set up at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. Accommodation will be provided through hotel facilities and the football fans will be shuttled from Muscat to the World Cup stadiums in Qatar and return. Oman Air has scheduled 48 daily flights to transport fans between Muscat and Doha.

Kingsize comeback for all-round match-winner Pandya

DUBAI: With his appetite for wickets and hard-hitting batting, Hardik Pandya has come back from controversies and injuries to become India's go-to all-rounder ahead of this year's Twenty20 World Cup in Australia.

Pandya stood calm with an unbeaten 33 and hit the winning six in the final over of a tense pursuit of 148 to beat arch-rivals Pakistan and begin the Asia Cup T20 tournament on a high on Sunday.

With the ball in hand earlier, he took 3-25 as he and fellow pace bowler Bhuvneshwar Kumar shared seven wickets to set up the victory chase at a packed Dubai International Stadium.

The Indian Express newspaper called him the "New cool king in town" and veteran commentator Harsha Bhogle tweeted there are "few better than him in this format".

Pandya's performance comes as no surprise after he returned from a back injury to lead Indian Premier League debutants Gujarat Titans to a fairytale title in May.



India's Hardik Pandya (C) celebrates with teammate Virat Kohli after dismissing Pakistan's Mohammad Rizwan during the Asia Cup Twenty20 international Group A match at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium in Dubai. — AFP

The 28-year-old flamboyant cricketer who loves his tattoos and expensive watches, had once said he likes to live life "kingsize".

From the western state of Gujarat, Pandya was in 2019

suspended for sexist comments on a TV show and written off as a brash cricketer.

But he has defied critics with his on-field performances to reward the faith shown in him by the India

team management.

"Grateful that we are getting this opportunity and we are able to do this because our process is just not for this but for the upcoming World Cup," Pandya told India's

cricket board website after the five-wicket win.

"If we get another such situation, definitely we will remember this match."

He added he had felt "no pressure" when India needed seven off the last over, even though when Pandya hit the winning six off left-arm spinner Mohammad Nawaz there were just two balls to spare.

BEAUTIFUL JOURNEY

"The way he has batted and bowled in the last few series, I will pray that he performs like this in the World Cup and it will be good for us," said Kumar, who took four wickets.

Pandya put on a key fifth-wicket stand with Ravindra Jadeja as life came full circle for the player who was stretchered off the field at the same venue in a 2018 Asia Cup group match against Pakistan.

It was the start of Pandya's struggle with a back injury, which forced him to play mainly as a batsman in last year's T20 World Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

"I remembered it all. I was going out on a stretcher and it was

the same dressing room," Pandya said. "I feel a sense of achievement because of how things unfolded and the way I got this opportunity."

"The journey has been beautiful and we get the fruits but I think credit should be given to behind-the-scenes guys (physiotherapist) Nitin Patel and (strength and training coach) Soham Desai."

India's cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar tweeted: "It came down to fitness of the fast bowlers while put under pressure, though both teams' pacers bowled well up front."

"Crucial knock by Hardik to stay till the end & get us over the line & ably supported by @imjadeja & Virat. Congrats on a nail-biting win."

Pandya proved his fitness in this year's IPL with 487 runs and eight wickets in 15 matches which earned him a recall for June's Twenty20 series against South Africa.

After 66 one-day internationals and 68 Twenty20 matches, a fit and firing Pandya seems to have ended India's long-time hunt for a world-class all-rounder. — AFP

Man Utd to sign
Brazil’s Antony for
100m euros



MANCHESTER: Manchester United have reached an agreement to sign Brazil forward Antony from Ajax, the English Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

Ajax have agreed a transfer fee of 95 million euros (£81 million), according to the Dutch club. Including add-ons, the fee could rise until 100 million euros (£86 million).

Dutch national news agency ANP said that if the deal goes through, it will be a record transfer for an Eredivisie player, surpassing the maximum 86 million euros involved in the move of Ajax’s Frenkie de Jong to Barcelona three years ago.

Antony has scored 31 goals in 134 club appearances for Ajax and Sao Paulo, and two goals in nine senior appearances for Brazil.

By moving to Old Trafford, the 22-year-old will be reunited with former Ajax manager Erik ten Hag, who has already brought defender Lisandro Martinez to United from the Dutch giants.

“I’m not asking (for Ajax) to release me, I am asking Ajax to sell me for the highest bid received for a player who plays in the Eredivisie.” — AFP

Valencia confirm
Cavani capture on
two-year deal



MADRID: Valencia have confirmed the capture of Uruguay international Edinson Cavani, with the former Paris Saint-Germain and Manchester United forward joining on a two-year deal.

Cavani had been a free agent after his contract expired at Old Trafford earlier this year, and the 35-year-old has since been courted by numerous European clubs.

But it is the La Liga side the veteran attacker has opted to join, linking up with Gennaro Gattuso’s team on a free transfer, with his contract set to run until June 2024.

It is a transfer that means Cavani will have played in four of Europe’s five major leagues. He left Danubio in his home country to join Palermo in Serie A, before subsequent spells with Napoli, Paris Saint-Germain and United.

A six-time Ligue 1 winner at the Parc des Princes, he departed as the club’s all-time top scorer, with 200 goals to his name, when he switched to the Premier League in 2020.

Struggles with injuries and fluctuating form saw him net just 12 times in 41 top-flight appearances for United. — dpa



Hockenheim GT challenge
awaits Al Faisal

HOCKENHEIM: Oman’s Al Faisal al Zubair again joins forces with Germany’s Fabian Schiller and Zimbabwe’s Axcil Jeffries to take part in the three-hour round of the 2022 Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe Powered by AWS – Endurance Cup at Germany’s Hockenheim circuit this weekend (September 2-4).

The trio will compete in their usual Mercedes-AMG GT3 running under the Al Manar Racing by HRT banner and entered in the Silver Cup category. They will be hoping to bounce back from a premature retirement at the recent TotalEnergies 24 Hours of Spa that saw them slip to third place in the Silver Endurance Cup’s Drivers’ Championship.

Al Zubair said: “I am

2022 FANATEC GT WORLD CHALLENGE EUROPE – ENDURANCE CUP SILVER CUP – CURRENT POSITIONS (DRIVERS)	
1. Benjamin Goethe/Thomas Neubauer/Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer	84pts
2. Nicolas Scholl/Alex Aka/Marius Zug	50pts
3. Al Faisal al Zubair/Axcil Jeffries/Fabian Schiller	44pts
4. Tuomas Tujula/Stuart White/Konsta Lappalainen	33pts
5. Jordan Love/Alain Valente/Jannes Fittje/Juuso Puhakka	31pts
6. Thomas Drouet/Tommaso Mosca/Casper Stevenson	24pts
6. Louis Proctor/Finlay Hutchinson/Diego Menchaca	24pts

looking forward to the race, three hours at Hockenheim. Unfortunately, I did not test there personally, as I had schooling commitments. My two team-mates did test there. It was quite positive. I’m excited to getting back in the car after the Spa incident. Hopefully, we get a good bunch of results and keep up

the momentum before the last round in Barcelona.” Benjamin Goethe, Thomas Neubauer and Jean-Baptiste Simmenauer currently top the standings with 84 points and a top finish could see the Audi R8 LMS GT3 trio clinch the title before the final round in Spain. Al Zubair and the Al Manar Racing by HRT

team trail the second-placed Nicolas Scholl, Alex Aka and Marius Zug by just six points. The 4.574km German circuit hosted a round of the FIA Formula One World Championship until 2019 and also hosts German DTM races. It will be open to GT World Challenge Europe competitors for a paid test

session from 14.00hrs on Thursday (September 1), before all administration and technical checks are carried out on Friday.

A free practice session runs for 90 minutes from 09.45hrs on Saturday morning and precedes another 90-minute pre-qualifying stint from 14.05hrs.

After sharing the weekend’s timetable with the GT4 European Series, Clio Cup and MitJet2L Trophy Italy, the first of three 15-minute qualifying sessions gets underway from 09.45hrs on Sunday, with each driver taking part in one stint apiece.

The three-hour Fanatec GT World Challenge Europe race is scheduled to fire into life from 15.00hrs.

Bank Muscat opens green sports field in Nizwa



MUSCAT: In line with the bank’s commitment to community development and promoting Oman as a sporting nation, Bank Muscat continues to complete new green sports fields for youth sports teams across the Sultanate of Oman.

Recently, the bank handed over a newly-developed green sports field to the Al Etihad Al Gharbi team from the Wilayat of Nizwa. The event was held in the presence of Shaikh Rashid bin Said al Kalbani, the Wali of Nizwa, a number of shaikhs and team members. The event underscored the importance of strengthening sports infrastructure across Oman, and also saw an exhibition match between two local teams.

Juma bin Khamis al Yaqoubi, Regional Manager, Al Dakhiliyah, Bank Muscat,

congratulated Al Etihad Al Gharbi team in Nizwa for the successful completion of the project. This is a major achievement that will contribute in enhancing the facilities and infrastructure for the team. He hoped that the new facility would help Al Etihad team to rise to greater heights, improve community bonding and harness the talent of Omani youth. He also asked the team management to maintain the project and ensure that they developed it further in the future.

Speaking on the occasion, Sulieman bin Said Ambusaidi, Al Etihad Al Gharbi team, Nizwa, said: “We thank Bank Muscat for having selected the Al Etihad team as a winner of this excellent programme that is helping develop Omani talent. There is absolutely no doubt in our minds that



with the implementation of the new lighting system, the team is all set to significantly improve its sporting prowess and capabilities. We look forward to a time when more of our young talent are playing at the highest level of sports thanks to the high-quality facilities which are available to them now.”

The scope of support

under the Green Sports programme includes installation of artificial turf or natural grass on sports fields, floodlighting and water-desalination systems. Bank Muscat’s longest running CSR programme has been greatly contributing to further build Omani sporting talent by creating a pipeline of talented players who can represent

the country at all levels in the future.

In 2021, the bank increased the number of annual beneficiaries on the occasion of the flagship CSR programme’s 10th anniversary. Continuing the optimistic trend, the bank recently announced the 20 winners for this year. It is a matter of great encouragement that the Green Sports programme has benefited 163 teams and over 50,000 team members across the Sultanate of Oman so far.

Through the 2022 edition of this flagship CSR programme, Bank Muscat has further strengthened its pioneering role in the field of social responsibility and sustainability, and its continuous drive to develop modern sports infrastructure across the Sultanate of Oman in the spirit of the public-private partnership model.

business

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Market cap of Oman’s bourse climbs to RO 23 billion

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) already reached RO 23 billion (\$59.74 billion) so far this year, up from \$57.458 billion at the end of 2021, this according to Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Stock Exchange and Chairman of Muscat Clearing & Depository was quoted as saying by CNBC Arabia.

According to the CEO, the United Arab Emirates is the most invested country in the Sultanate of Oman, followed by Qatar and The Netherlands. In fact, at the end of last week, trading in MSX increased amounting to RO 700 million.

There is also an oil pipelines company affiliated with Energy Development Oman (EDO) which intends to present its data in preparation for listing in the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The CEO also highlights the move to attract more international investors and foreign capital



The roadshow is a unique opportunity to attract the attention of the global investment community towards the listed companies in the Sultanate of Oman and introducing the global funds of their latest developments and growth prospects of the listed companies in the MSX.

HAITHAM BIN
SALIM AL SALMI

CEO, Muscat Stock Exchange
Chairman, Muscat Clearing & Depository



inflows in the country by increasing the percentage of foreign ownership in joint stock companies to 100 per cent — a first step towards promoting the Muscat Stock Exchange into an emerging market.

Al Salmi also said the financial sector constitutes 51 per cent of

the total market value of the stock exchange, or the equivalent of RO 5.3 billion at present time, but with the entry of the oil sector, there will be a balance in the market.

Al Salmi noted in particular the Investors Roadshow — the biggest meeting of the new Oman’s rebranded stock exchange, which

will happen on September 5-6 at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah — will include companies currently listed and soon-to-be-listed as well as IPO companies, highlighting Oman’s 2040 Vision and the adjustments that have taken place in terms of credit rating.

The roadshow is a unique

opportunity to attract the attention of the global investment community towards the listed companies in the Sultanate of Oman and introducing the global funds of their latest developments and growth prospects of the listed companies in the MSX.

The 2-day investor roadshow will include keynote topics such as strategies of the Muscat Stock Exchange; Investing in Oman – Finding opportunities and realising potential to be delivered by Ominvest; Oman’s economic reforms by Oman’s Ministry of Finance; Main highlights of Oman’s Vision 2040; Oman Investment Authorities’ privatisation plans; and Capital Market in Oman by CMA , among others.

The CEO said that 4 companies will be listed on the MSX and they will be allocated from the portfolio of the Oman Investment Authority. He also expressed his aspiration to list the first oil and gas company on the MSX, stressing there is an oil and gas company and a real estate fund to be listed on the stock exchange.

Agreement signed for RO 2.2m fertiliser project in Sohar Freezone



BUSINESS REPORTER
SUHAR, AUGUST 30

SOHAR Freezone has signed a land lease agreement with Integrated Solutions Plant and Land Services (FZC) LLC for 15,000 sqm within the freezone to establish a liquid fertiliser plant.

The project represents an investment of RO 2.2 million and it includes the potential for future expansion which would see the plant produce ammonium sulphate to strengthen Oman’s export sector, especially in Pakistan and Tanzania.

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone, Deputy CEO SOHAR Port, said, “The addition of a new liquid fertiliser plant, in partnership with Integrated Solutions Plant and Land Services (FZC) LLC, enhances SOHAR ability to serve the local, regional, and global markets with high-quality agents for

industrial production. SOHAR can offer companies in all sectors a world class integrated logistics and industrial hub with direct shipping to key markets and broadening our tenant profile to Egypt for the first time is a key step in our ongoing expansion.”

Hussein Amin, Partner at Integrated Solutions Plant and Land Services (FZC) LLC, added, “We are delighted to establish a presence at SOHAR with the 15,000 sqm space within SOHAR Freezone, which will help us expand operations and reach new clients in developing markets. Integrated Solutions Plant and Land Services is at the forefront of producing high grade, organic liquid fertiliser in support of growing populations and increasing needs in this sector.

SOHAR represents an opportunity to connect with customers worldwide using established shipping lines and trade agreements.”

Oman and South Africa to explore key sectors

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Sultanate of Oman and South Africa are keen to explore newer business and trade vistas while enhancing the existing ties in the bilateral relations, according to a spokesperson from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

A high level trade delegation from Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria and Bloemfontein are visiting the Sultanate of Oman on September 1 and will hold key-level meetings with their counterparts and hold B2B meetings as part of the Oman-South Africa Business Forum

A lineup of experts and businessmen specialised in food and beverages, chrome

and mining and exporting and importing will attend the B2B meetings at the OCCI head office on Wednesday.

“We are expecting a number of experts and businesspeople in a wide range of areas to be present on Wednesday and hold talks with Omani counterparts and ministerial representatives,” OCCI spokesperson said.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Agriculture and fisheries sectors together account for 2.5% of GDP

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

The aggregate volume of agricultural, livestock and fisheries production increased rapidly from 2015 to 2021 at an average growth rate of 8.1 per cent. Total output aggregated 4.6 million tonnes in 2021.

According to the annual report of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the agriculture and fisheries sectors contributed 2.5 per cent to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) last year.

The data also indicated an increase in the value of exports and imports from the end of the eighth Five-Year Plan (2015) until the end of last year. Total agricultural and fishery exports last year amounted to RO 305



million, compared to RO 270 million in 2015, while imports amounted to RO 991 million, compared to RO 847 million in 2015.

Agricultural production reached 3.2 million tonnes last year, with an average growth rate of 5.5 per cent between 2015 and 2021.

The average growth rate of livestock production for the same period was 10.6 per cent annually, while the average growth rate of fish production was 22.7 per cent per year.

Significantly, the GDP contribution of the agriculture and fishery sectors amounted to

RO 759 million in value last year, representing a growth rate of 6.4 per cent over the previous year. The agricultural sector recorded a value of RO 467 million with a growth rate of 4.6 per cent, while the fisheries sector recorded RO 292 million with a growth rate of 9.6 per cent.

The data also showed that the contribution of the value of local agricultural, livestock and fish products represented 66 per cent of total domestic demand in 2021, up from 44 per cent in 2015.

Self-sufficiency in fish reached 151 per cent last year, 66 per cent locally produced vegetables, and 101 per cent with regard to dates. Locally produced fruits recorded self-sufficiency of 49 per cent, fresh milk 84 per cent, red meat 52 per cent, poultry meat 58 per cent, and table eggs 59 per cent.

LuLu Financial Holdings opens milestone 250th branch

MUSCAT: The numbers speak volumes about the ambitious rise of Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings (LFH) – a global leader in the financial services industry, which today opened its 250th global branch in Dubai’s Silicon Central Mall.

The milestone branch, which adds to the company’s growing network across the UAE and nine other nations, was inaugurated by Dr Aman Puri, Consul General of India, in the presence of the holding company’s Managing Director, Adeeb Ahamed, and other senior management.

Congratulating the team on their achievement, Adeeb Ahamed said, “Today’s opening is a celebration of the amazing journey we have had as a team, and the many opportunities we have converted to emerge as a trusted brand.

As one of the leading players in the financial services sector, not just in the UAE but also in our other markets, we have been credited for being attuned to the sector’s needs. Our efforts



to bridge the gap between our consumers and our various physical & digital touchpoints are a key part of our growth story, and the 250th branch is a mark of our determination and perseverance to disrupt the global payments ecosystem.”

The opening of the milestone

branch was followed by two more branch openings on the same day, at Al Majaz and Maaza regions of Sharjah in the UAE.

About LuLu Financial Holdings

An ISO:9001 certified conglomerate, Abu Dhabi based LuLu Financial Holdings has

various investments in financial services, including remittances, foreign currency exchange, structured finance for MSMEs and micro finance for retail consumers in India. Cumulatively, it processes annual transactions of over \$11 billion, serving over 15 million customers across various regions.

Oman and South Africa to explore key sectors

FROM PAGE 13

According to statistics release by the South African Embassy in Muscat, the total trade between South Africa and the Sultanate of Oman shows an upward trajectory, till this year, that is, an average growth of approximately 7.08 per cent, since the establishment of the diplomatic ties between the two countries.

The trade figures of 2016 and 2017 indicate that South Africa’s exports to the Sultanate of Oman increased by a whopping RO 248 million. Also, there is a renewed interest in cross border investment and tourism between the two countries.

On the other hand, Oman imports from South Africa was \$58.03m during 2021, according to the United Nations Comtrade database on international trade. The diplomatic relations between the two were established in October 1995 and South Africa opened its Embassy in Muscat in 2002, while the Sultanate of Oman opened its Embassy in Pretoria in 2003.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties, relations between the two have expanded into various fields, aided by the exchange of high-level visits, the negotiation of bilateral agreements and greater people-to-people contact.

Bushra Savings Account: Your first choice for returns on your savings

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank continues to enhance the lives of the bank’s customers by providing them with the ability to save their money and receive expected cash profits on their savings with the Shari’a-compliant ‘Bushra’ savings account.

Currently, Alizz Islamic Bank offers Bushra Savings Account based on the Shari’a principle of unrestricted ‘Mudarabah’, where the customer is the owner of the money, and the bank manages the ‘Mudarabah’ by investing the pool of customer funds in joint ‘Mudarabah’ transactions.

All profits are divided between the customer and the bank, based on a profit-sharing ratio determined by the bank. Profit rates based on each category will be applied to the deposit balances kept in the Bushra Account with profits of up to 3.5 per cent according to the amount deposited in the Bushra savings account.

Based on each customer’s account



balance, the bank will deposit their profit shares on a monthly basis.

Customers can get more details on profit rates by visiting the bank’s official website at (<https://alizzislamic.com>) or walking into their nearest bank branch across Oman.

Bushra customers, whether

Omanis or expats, will enjoy many advantages and benefits including monthly profit payment, same-day debit card issuance and collection, and free online and mobile banking, and SMS alerts, to name a few.

Mohammed al Ghassani, Chief Consumer Banking Officer at Alizz Islamic Bank, said: “We are always keen on paying attention to what customers want in terms of products and services, and at the forefront of our priorities is to provide them with all credibility and transparency.

They can be achieved through the deposits they keep in their Bushra account. Bushra has witnessed high demand because it is in accordance with the provisions and principles of Islamic Sharia and is a tier based saving account with the goal of encouraging the habit of saving in a way that achieves the customers’ needs with the maximum amount of satisfaction.”

OETC takes part in CIGRE Paris 2022

MUSCAT: Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) is participating in CIGRE Session 2022, taking place in Paris from August 28 to September 2 with participation of 400 papers from all over the globe. The conference witnesses the presence of a large number of senior officials from companies operating in the energy sector around the world in addition to a group of experts, engineers and those interested in the electrical energy field.

A delegation from OETC is taking part in CIGRE, which is held to discuss the latest trends in the energy sector, where the company participated with two technical papers. Eng Ayman al Numani, Planning Engineer, presented the first research paper entitled “Long-Term Demand Forecast for Oman Electricity



Transmission System Master Plan (2020-2040)”, which explains the forecasts of demand for electricity in the Sultanate of Oman, taking into account the factors affecting the demand.

It also explains the company’s methodology in analysing the challenges facing the electric power sector in terms of tariff

reform, demand price flexibility, energy efficiency programmes, renewable energy sources and electric vehicles.

The second research paper is about “Transmission Regulation: The Economic Regulation Applied for Oman Electricity Transmission Network” presented by Eng Zahra al Rawahi, Regulatory

ahlibank’s launches iGeneration programme to enhance youth’s technical skills



MUSCAT: Continuing its long-term commitment to empower Omani youth with professional skills, and enhance their career development opportunities in the banking sector, ahlibank has launched iGeneration programme that aims to create a favourable environment for the Sultanate of Oman’s workforce and equip them with emerging critical skills required for today’s job market.

The programme targets graduates and entry-level employees with two-to-three years of experience to provide them a hands-on technical experience in the banking sector. It will also allow them to demonstrate their knowledge, providing a platform to enhance their technical skills and develop viable solutions to tackle day-to-day business challenges.

In addition, those selected for the programme will also develop capabilities such as effective communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and presentation skills that will enable them to grow and lead in the chosen areas.

Mohammed al Mufargi, Assistant General Manager – Head of Human Resources, ahlibank said, “At ahlibank, our investment in people continues to be paramount. We believe in the importance of developing young minds and nurturing their skills.

Through programmes such as these, we not only hope to attract talent but also provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge, tools and training required for them to achieve their full potential. We opt to enhance the professional competencies of our entry-level employees and open new avenues for young Omani graduates stepping into the workforce through our organisation.”

THE PROGRAMME TARGETS GRADUATES AND ENTRY-LEVEL EMPLOYEES WITH TWO-TO-THREE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE TO PROVIDE THEM A HANDS-ON TECHNICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE BANKING SECTOR.

As part of the bank’s digital transformation strategy, iGeneration programme also reinforces ahlibank’s focus to attract and retain high calibre future employees to support its digital transformation journey. It is one of several key programmes, along with the immensely successful ‘Himam’ annual graduate development programme, which aims to enhance the bank’s contribution to the national objective as outlined in Oman Vision 2040 to create a sustainable workforce for the growing needs of the labour market by equipping young national talent with the required set of skills.

Tahir al Balushi, Deputy General Manager – Strategy and Transformation, ahlibank, said, “We are extremely proud of ahlibank’s digital transformation strategy that has contributed to us becoming one of Oman’s leading banks. Our strategy is customer-centric and leverages the capability of technology to power our digital transformation. Our transformation has also focused on effectively changing our mindset and best practices to create value for our end-users.

However, none of this would be possible without employees with strong technology expertise; and that is why at ahlibank we create programmes and initiatives that drive the organisation’s digital transformation and provide employees with the capabilities required to harness the opportunities of digital banking.”

Affairs Section Head, with the participation of Eng Alaa al Kiyumi, Head of Revenue Assurance Department at Muscat Electricity Distribution Company.

The paper highlights the electricity sector regulations and the role of the Authority of Public Services Regulation to observe, monitor and evaluate the electricity market to ensure fair competition and provide services at reasonable prices and high quality, which contributes to attracting new investors in the energy sector.

On the sidelines of the congress, Eng Omar al Wahaibi, Nama Group CEO, Eng Saleh al Rumhi, CEO of Oman Electricity Transmission Company, and Dr Rashid al Badwawi, Senior Manager Corporate Affairs in Oman Electricity Transmission

Company participated in the CEOs Forum held under the theme “Business Development in the Electric Power Industry”.

The forum took place on August 29 to discuss various topics related to the electric power industry and provide an opportunity for industry representatives to raise the challenges they face while introducing a range of solutions and innovations to address issues affecting the industry.

It is worth noting that the International Council on Large Electric Systems (CIGRE), which was established in 1921 in Paris, is a global non-profit organisation concerned with the generation and transmission of electrical energy and aims to enhance cooperation and exchange of knowledge and expertise to develop electrical systems around the world.



Fitch upgrades OETC to 'BB+'; Outlook Stable

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 30

Fitch Ratings has upgraded Oman Electricity Transmission Company SAOC (OETC) Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to 'BB+' from 'BB'. The Outlook is Stable.

The rating action follows the upgrade of Oman's Long-Term Foreign-Currency IDR to 'BB' from 'BB-'. "We view OETC as the 'stronger subsidiary', based on its Standalone Credit Profile (SCP) of 'bb+', which

is higher than Oman's sovereign rating (BB/Stable). We assess the legal ring-fencing around OETC as 'open'; and access and control as 'porous', leading to a consolidated plus one approach (ie sovereign rating plus one)," said Fitch.

The ratings agency also applied its Government-Related Entities (GRE) Rating Criteria to OETC's rating, as the Omani government continues to have sufficient control over OETC through involvement in and influence over its strategic, operational and financial activities, while it controls 51 per cent of



OETC through Nama Holding. "Under our GRE Rating Criteria we assess the track record of support, socio-political and financial implications of a default as 'Moderate' and ownership and control as 'Strong,'" it noted.

OETC's 'bb+' SCP, the agency said, reflects the company's stable profitability, with a significant share of EBITDA from regulated electricity transmission over the fifth price-control (PC5) period.

"We expect the same under the new price control (PC6), which starts in 2023. Fitch estimates

average funds from operations (FFO) net leverage between 2022 and 2025 at about 6.3x, implying low headroom under its negative rating sensitivity of 6.5x for the SCP. OETC's business profile as the natural monopoly national transmission system operator within a supportive regulatory framework underpins the SCP."

OETC is a monopoly provider of electricity transmission services to the main interconnected system in the north of Oman and to the transmission network in Dhofar Governorate.

Weather woes and energy crisis lift commodities

OLE S HANSEN

The commodity sector continues to recover as the Bloomberg Commodity Index claws back more than half of what it lost during the June to July 20 per cent correction. Gains were seen across most sectors, led by agriculture as weather woes lifted the cost of coffee and the three major crops – especially corn. Industrial metals received a boost from China's continued efforts to support its weakening economy by announcing more stimulus policies that would pump billions into infrastructure projects.

The energy sector was supported by surging gas prices driving up demand for diesel and Saudi Arabia flagging the risk that OPEC+ may cut production to stabilise volatile markets. In financial markets, the dollar reached a fresh 20-year high against the euro as Europe's energy crisis continued to pressure the economic outlook



for the region. US stocks tumbled and bond yields rose ahead of Friday's eagerly awaited speech by Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

In which, he was expected to reiterate his determination to bring down inflation by continuing to hike interest rates. Inflation-fighting measures, such as hiking interest rates and removing stimulus into a post-pandemic economic slowdown, was the main driver behind the recent correction in

commodities.

Overall, however, we maintain the view that commodities can weather headwinds from an economic slowdown with supply of key commodities being equally challenged.

In the long-term, support for commodities will be driven by underinvestment, urbanisation, the green transformation and deglobalisation. In the short-term, prices are likely to be supported by the unfolding energy crisis in Europe, Russia-

sanctions related supply disruptions, adverse weather raising fresh concerns about food supplies, and China's efforts to support its economy.

Crude oil sellers having second thoughts

While the macro-economic outlook remains challenging due to the lower growth outlook and recent dollar strength, crude oil and the product markets have nevertheless managed a strong rebound this past week.

The energy crisis in Europe continues to strengthen, with gas and power prices surging to levels that measured in dollars per barrel of crude oil equivalent equates to \$530 and \$1,400 per barrel, respectively.

The latest surge was driven by recent low-water level disruptions on the river Rhine and Gazprom announcing a three-day closure of the Nord Stream 1 pipeline due to maintenance, starting on August 31. *(The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy, Saxo Bank)*

Prof Michael Jansen: Visionary academic



In memory of Prof Dr Michael Jansen, inaugural Rector of the German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), passed away in Germany recently

DR MANUELA GUTBERLET
MUSCAT / AACHEN, AUGUST 30

I remember Prof Michael Jansen as an ambitious, sharp and visionary academic who was full of ideas and with a Nordic charm. The last time I remember speaking to him in the RIO offices at GUtech, he told me about an upcoming UNESCO conference and he was preparing his speech.

As an archaeologist and urban historian, he had a deep rooted interest and attachment to the Sultanate of Oman and the Indian Ocean region.

He was an agile person - always 'on the move' - even at the time of his retirement, staying very well-connected with the different stakeholders in government and in business and involved in numerous conservation and heritage projects such as Al Baleed Archaeological site in Dhofar, Mohenjo Daro in Pakistan, and Banyan in Afghanistan.

He was part of many exciting projects in Europe, Middle East and Central Asia for more than 50 years and a role-model for successful international academic cooperation in the field of conservation and heritage management. He received the German Pakistani Honor Elal El Imtiaz twice and the German Federal Cross of Merit, Bundesverdienstkreuz.

I first met and interviewed Prof Jansen when I worked as a journalist for Oman Tribune. At the time, one of the editors told me about the university project. Being German myself, I was very curious and keen to learn more about the ambitious project to establish the first German University of Technology on the Arabian Peninsula, in the Omani capital Muscat.

I remember we were sitting in the lobby of the InterContinental hotel in Qurum and Prof Jansen shared his many ideas and plans to establish the first German university affiliated

with RWTH Aachen University and according to German quality standards.

He told me about student exchange programmes that could be funded and promoted to enhance cooperation and understanding between Germany and Oman. The university project had already developed from 2002 onwards and was now just in the final stages of its realisation.

In December 2006 the founding agreement was signed in a ceremony at the Grand Hyatt Muscat. I was covering the event for the newspaper.

The contract was signed between Oman Educational Services, RWTH Aachen University and the then Omani Ministry of Higher Education.

Looking back on his momentous development, and having been involved with the University as a PR Manager, I believe that this signing of the contract meant not only the formal establishment of an institution of technology but also the start of a new era of long-term collaboration and bonding between Oman and Germany and a place for exchange of knowledge, ideas, people and cultures.

GUtech has been a highlight of successful bilateral cooperation between both countries and the spirit of the founding members including Prof Jansen highly contributed to that.

The highlight of the university was that it grew steadily from a beach-front villa campus to a beautiful campus in Halban. The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos made a private visit to the new campus on December 24, 2012. For that very special occasion, Prof Jansen and his wife Michaela flew from Germany into Oman.

Prof Jansen, who was involved in projects in Oman for several decades, was RWTH Aachen Professor for urban history and conservation at the Urban Planning and Architecture Department at GUtech. He was one of the main members of the founding team of GUtech, along with Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, who had long-wished to establish a German University for the youth in Oman, and Oman Educational Services. A

Iso part of this effort were Prof Dr Burkhard Rauhut, who at that time was the Rector of RWTH Aachen University; Michaela Jansen-Liehnner and Prof Dr Karsten Ley.

Prof Jansen will be missed greatly by his family and by all he has met throughout his lifetime. His legacy will continue to flourish within GUtech and Oman and well beyond the borders. May his soul rest in peace!

[The author was PR Manager at GUtech from 2007 to 2020]

BoE recession warning hits UK consumer confidence



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

committee said consumers will cut spending in response to the biggest cumulative two-year drop in spending power on record.

Those forecasts prompted investment bank, Goldman Sachs, earlier in August to brand the Bank as the gloomiest of all monetary authorities. Figures released 10 days ago showed inflation climbed to a new 40-year high of 10.1 per cent in July.

But some economists have warned prices will climb over 15 per cent in January, caused by energy bills rising again after October's large hike.

"Consumer inflation expectations had been falling for three months but rose in the first half of this month, shortly after the BoE's fresh forecasts for inflation were published," Bank of America said.

Some "62 per cent of people who said they stopped working due to long-term illness reported no plans to return to work."

Interest rates may peak at 3.75 per cent by next May, the highest since October 2008, as the BoE steps up its fight against rising inflation, money

markets are betting.

Core inflation, a measure of underlying domestic price pressures, rose to 6.2 per cent. That upside surprise suggests "that the global drivers of inflation are being replaced by domestic ones," Ruth Gregory, senior UK economist at Capital Economics said. UK economist at Bank of America, Robert Wood said:

"The Bank seems to be sensitive now to any signs of increasing persistence," adding rates will jump 50 basis points in October and November. In its policy announcement earlier in August, BoE said it would act "forcefully" if inflation keeps rising.

It has already lifted borrowing costs six times in a row to 1.75 per cent. Economists agreed rates will rise, but not as high as markets are pricing in.

Yael Selfin, chief economist at KPMG UK and Gregory, think they will hit three per cent. Andrew Sentance, former Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) member and now senior advisor to Cambridge Econometrics, said they will hit four-five per cent.

Fears of a protracted recession as long as the one caused by the financial crisis in 2008 is weighing heavily on peoples' optimism, according to a survey released last week. Consumer confidence dipped four points at the beginning of this month, according to Bank of America.

The drop was driven by the Bank of England (BoE) earlier in August publishing a new set of forecasts that warned the UK is heading for a 15-month low recession, starting by the end of this year. Governor of the Bank, Andrew Bailey and the rest of the monetary policy

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Al Maghboor: The perfect face of a community united

By Arwa Al Hashimi
Photos by Adnan Dahish & Esam al Shanfari

Omanis, all throughout the history of the country, had demonstrated that they can unite towards a common cause. Unity, solidarity and collaboration are the reasons why Oman is a growing and thriving country today. Oman has specific traditions where people show their love and help each other in times of need. In order to help newly married couples start their own family life, people in Dhofar gather to give them Al Maghboor as a wedding gift which is an amount of money that is provided in cash by the community including relatives and friends to the groom. The tradition of Al Maghboor is one of the most important forms of social solidarity among the members of the local community in Dhofar, and

it has been passed down to successive generations. Back in the day, people used to contribute according to their financial capabilities. There were people who offered cash, and there were those who offered livestock. Those who do not have the financial capacity to help, offer moral support by helping prepare the feast and welcoming the guests. Today, contributions are made by financial aid and the amount varies from person to person and largely depends on relationships and communications. To facilitate this philanthropic event, usually, the groom sets aside a table and a clerk in a particular place of the wedding tent to welcome well-wishers and participants and to write their names and the amount of their participation. Such a record will be the basis for the groom and his family on how they will return the favour on future occasions. This tradition is not only confined to wedding occasions, but people also



do it in funerals where money is given to the deceased's family. To reduce the costs of the funeral and to help families in their times of need, especially if the deceased is the only breadwinner for the family or their financial circumstances do not cover their living needs, such a heartwarming event highlights the community's compassion. Al Maghboor may also be given in cases of incurable diseases, to pay off debts or build mosques and many other different cases. Although there are many diverse social events today, there is still a large number of people who attend them and do their duties diligently. The children are also shown the

event in order to pass the critical custom and traditions to the future generation. In addition to the material side of this inherited tradition, significant positive and important social aspects have a positive impact on society. Such practice helps spread love and compassion among people, increasing the strength of unity and

interdependence between them, and enhancing the values of solidarity, collaboration and compassion among members of society. This, in turn, reflects positively on the culture of society, brings people closer to each other, consolidates social relations between them and makes them more compassionate and united generations, and helps build a harmonious and symbiotic society. Despite the material and social obligations, which have become burdensome on individuals and families today, Al Maghboor is still present in many social events in Dhofar. Al Maghboor remains a positive social tradition, which people of Dhofar strive to preserve, adhere to and strengthen, due to its positive moral and social dimensions to the society.

READ

OVERKILL BY SANDRA BROWN

A former football star falls for a state prosecutor at the same time he must decide whether to kill his ex-wife, who is on life support, to ensnare her attacker.



A BILLIONAIRE AT AN ART SHOW

Argentinian billionaire, art collector and chairman of the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires (MALBA), Eduardo Costantini (L), and his wife Elina tour the exhibition "Tercer Ojo Coleccion Costantini en Malba", where Frida Kahlo's final "Bust" Self-Portrait "Diego y yo" (Diego and I) is displayed during the pre-opening for the press at the MALBA Museum in Buenos Aires. Kahlo's 1949 self-portrait is the most expensive Latin American artwork sold at an auction. — AFP



SLICE OF LIFE

A woman looks at goods for sale as she walks up a set of stairs leading from an underground metro train station up to street level in Seoul. — AFP





Thousands throng to Iran museum with Western art masterpieces

MORE THAN 20,000 people have flocked to an Iranian museum showcasing renowned Western artists' works, some for the first time — part of a treasure trove amassed before the Islamic Revolution.

The museum's collection is reputed to be the greatest line-up of modern masterpieces outside Europe and the United States, and includes multi-million-dollar pieces, much of which has been kept under wraps since the 1979 revolution.

The Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art "surprises me every time," said visitor Shahin Rajabi, 35. "The current show is no exception."

The current "Minimalism and Conceptual Art" exhibition features 132 works by 34 world-famous contemporary artists, museum director Ebadreza Eslami said, including Marcel Duchamp, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and the duo Christo and Jeanne-Claude.

"The reception has been marvellous," Eslami said, particularly after long closures in recent years due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said one of the main factors for the footfall of this exhibit was that "38 masterpieces" were being displayed "for the first time".

AFP saw visitors at the museum this week, some stopping to study details while others were busy taking photos as they made their way intently through the museum.

"I loved the last room of the exhibit in particular, where the artist had worked with the fluorescent light," said visitor Rajabi, referring to American artist Dan Flavin's "Untitled" work.

VERY VALUABLE

The museum was inaugurated in 1977 during the reign of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who was deposed by Islamic revolutionaries two years later.

Its design was inspired by Iran's desert wind towers — an architectural element used to catch and circulate cool air in hot environments.

Most of the collection was built up by the shah's wife, former queen Farah Pahlavi, who deployed a team of experts to tour Western auctions and snap up prestigious paintings and sculptures to boost the country's cultural profile.

The museum also holds an important collection of Iranian modern and con-

temporary art.

But the international works went underground after the Islamic republic's founder Ruhollah Khomeini railed against "Westoxification", deploring Western moral and sexual depravity which he said had infected the Islamic world.

The themes of many of the Western works have been considered too risqué to be publicly shown, and have spent much

VISITORS DOUBLE

The current show, which runs until mid-September, includes a collage by Italian artist Michelangelo Pistoletto titled "Green Curtains", and an untitled work made from hemp by Canadian-American sculptor Jacqueline Winsor.

Curator Behrang Samadzadegan said "some 20,000 people" have visited since the show opened in late June — about

centre of controversy this month when an amateur video surfaced showing two silverfish insects underneath the frame of a rare image by the late German photographic duo of Bernd and Hilla Becher.

The video, whose authenticity could not be independently verified by AFP, went viral.

The museum later made a formal apology, assuring concerned art lovers



of the past decades languishing in storage.

The museum counts some 3,500 works, hundreds of which are "very valuable", head of public relations Hassan Noferesti said.

They include masterpieces by Western artists from Paul Gauguin to Pablo Picasso, Rene Magritte, Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol and Alberto Giacometti, according to Iran's culture ministry.

twice the normal turnout.

Describing the theme of the show, he added "when we are talking about minimalism, we are primarily talking about the environment not the work".

Standing in front of the "Rock Salt & Mirror" by American artist Robert Smithson, 28-year-old painter Solmaz Daneshvar said she "greatly enjoyed" the display.

The exhibition, however, was at the

that the work by the Bechers, who are known for their photos of industrial structures, was not damaged.

It also closed its doors for two days for fumigation.

In 2015, the museum held an exhibition of 42 works by Western artists including Pollock's masterpiece "Mural on Indian Red Ground", valued by Christie's auction house experts in 2010 at \$250 million. — **AFP**

ENTERTAINMENT

Bad Bunny, Taylor Swift lead MTV Video Music Awards



BAD BUNNY, the Puerto Rican Latin trap and reggaeton artist who's among the world's biggest stars, scored MTV's artist of the year award Sunday at the annual Video Music Awards.

But the performer was conspicuously absent from the show: he was busy with his own blockbuster tour, playing the second night of a sold out concert at Yankee Stadium that over the weekend drew some 100,000 fans.

Bad Bunny, wearing a satin pink suit and white sunglasses, accepted the award via video and also delivered a seismic performance of his smash "Titi Me Pregunto" from the baseball stadium in New York, where the song has soundtracked the streets for months.

"Thank you so much, New York," the 28-year-old said in Spanish to resounding applause.

"From the beginning I always believed that I could be great, that I could be one of the biggest stars in the world, without changing my culture, my language," he said. "I'm Benito Antonio Martinez from Puerto Rico — for the whole world."

In a sure sign that pandemic-stymied touring was back in full swing, another of the year's biggest stars, Harry Styles, also couldn't make it to the VMAs — which aired from New Jersey's Prudential Center — due to his own show at Madison Square Garden.

The artist who dropped "Harry's House" this year also accepted his award for the year's best album via video, before heading back to his own global concert run.

SWIFT ALBUM ON THE WAY

Taylor Swift was also among the night's big winners, turning heads on the red carpet in a dress dripping with crystals before winning the night's top prize of music video of the year for her 10-minute-long film "All Too Well."

"I'm so proud of what we made," said the 32-year-old, who has been making good on her vow to re-record her first six albums so she can control the rights to them.

"We wouldn't have been able to make this short film if it weren't for you, the fans," Swift said onstage. "Because I wouldn't be able to re-record my albums if it weren't for you. You emboldened me to do that."

She then gave fans a gift in return, announcing that her new album will come out October 21.

Shortly after the broadcast's end, the megastar revealed the new project's name.

"Midnights, the stories of 13 sleepless nights scattered throughout my life, will be out October 21. Meet me at midnight," she wrote on social media.

Hip hop superstar Nicki Minaj reignited over the evening as the 2022 recipient of the prestigious Video Vanguard Award.

Wearing her signature pink wig, the hip-hop icon from Queens delivered a medley of her hits including "Super Bass" and her most recent single "Super Freaky Girl."

Brazil's Anitta also turned heads with a booty-popping performance before winning the award for best Latin video for "Envolver."

"I was born and raised in the ghetto of Brazil, and for whoever was born there, we would never think this was possible," she said when accepting the trophy.

JOHNNY DEPP APPEARS

Iconic stoner comedy duo Cheech and Chong awarded the Red Hot Chili Peppers with the Global Icon Award, before the California rockers performed and also paid tribute to Taylor Hawkins, the late Foo Fighters drummer.

Eminem and Snoop Dogg opened their performance sitting on a couch as Snoop smoked a giant — albeit fake — blunt, before the pair headed to the metaverse for a trippy, animated performance of their latest collaboration "From the D 2 the LBC."

Marshmello and Khalid performed "Numb" with neon, disorienting visuals that created a brief but heady rave effect, while South Korea's Blackpink gave their first show at a US awards night ever.

Lizzo also performed before scoring the Video For Good award — which honours videos with social or political messages — for her song "About Damn Time."

Wearing a cone-bra corseted dress that recalled Madonna, the superstar thanked fans for voting for her to receive the award before nodding to US politics.

"Vote to change some of these laws that are oppressing us," the star urged.

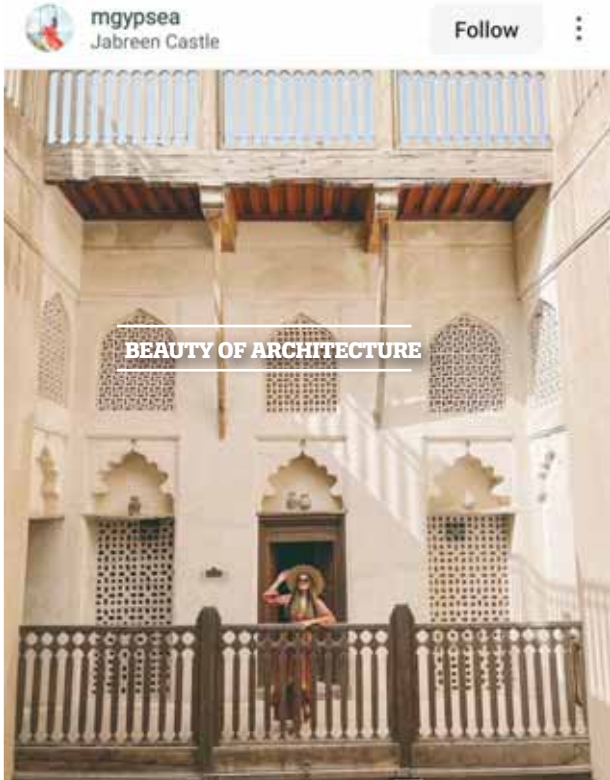
And at the awards show that's historically far better known for its antics than actual prizes, Johnny Depp — fresh off his controversial defamation trial against his ex-partner Amber Heard — appeared as the MTV Moonman, his head digitally superimposed on the flying astronaut.

"You know what? I needed the work," said the 59-year-old actor. — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

MOVIES

Charles Dickens' unseen letters to be published for the first time



A BATCH OF Charles Dickens' letters that have remained unseen and unpublished will go on display for the first time on Wednesday.

The 11 letters include assorted invitation notes and insights into the author's reading habits and writing projects as well as details about a trip to Switzerland written to a friend.

In a letter dated on February 10, 1866, Dickens also complains about the loss of a Sunday postal service and threatens to move away from his neighbourhood.

He writes: "I beg to say that I most decidedly and strongly object to the infliction of any such inconvenience upon myself."

"There are many people in this village of Higham, probably, who do not receive or dispatch in a year, as many letters as I usually receive and dispatch in a day... I am on the best terms with my neighbours, poor and rich, and I believe they would be sorry to lose me."

"But I should be so hampered by the proposed



restriction that I think it would force me to sell my property here, and leave this part of the country."

The letters are among more than 300 items acquired by the Charles Dickens Museum from a US collector in 2020, including personal objects, portraits, sketches, playbills and books.

The entire collection, worth £1.8 million (\$2.1 million), was acquired by the museum with the help of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Art Fund, Friends of the National Libraries and the Dickens Fellowship.

Emily Dunbar, curator at the Charles Dickens Museum, said: "One of the best things about this collection of letters is that it shows Dickens writing in his 30s, 40s and 50s and the variety of topics that were occupying his mind."

"The letter complaining about the loss of Sunday postal delivery is a great example of Dickens showing self-importance, his awareness his great fame and position in society coming to the fore."

"He also mentions the huge volume of letters leaving and arriving at his address, of which this new set is a tiny but entertaining fraction."

Dickens wrote many classics including "Oliver Twist," "A Christmas Carol" and "David Copperfield."

The exhibit will go on display at the Charles Dickens Museum and online from Wednesday.

— PA Media/dpa

TRAVEL TALES

Japanese bath houses find new ways to stay afloat



JUST BEFORE it opens each afternoon, elderly residents gather outside one of Tokyo's last remaining old-style bath houses carrying flannels, soap and shampoo for their regular soak.

With its communal naked tubs, bright mural of Mount Fuji and sliding wooden entrance under a pointed roof, Inariyu is a classic example of a Japanese public bath, or sento.

Once ubiquitous in crowded urban areas, sentos are now closing quickly as more people take baths at home and owners struggle with faltering machinery, high gas prices and a lack of successors, tempting them to sell their valuable land.

Nationwide, the number of bath houses has plunged to around 1,800 from a peak of nearly 18,000 in the late 1960s.

But some such as Inariyu have been given a new lease on life through renovations, while others are reinventing themselves as trendy hangouts or using data analysis to boost business.

One person pushing to save neighbourhood baths is Yasuko Okuno, who discovered them as a way to unwind after working late.

"Day after day, my mind was tired. Even when I went home, I couldn't forget about work," said the 36-year-old writer for the Tokyo Sento Association.

"Then I went to a sento for the first time in a while, and it felt like a weight had lifted. There was a large bath, and the regulars greeted me kindly," she said.

Over time, "it began to feel like a home from home."

Japan has never imposed a strict Covid-19 lockdown, and places such as gyms and sentos remained open even when many offices switched to home working and restaurants shortened opening hours.

Masks are commonly worn on trains and in other public places, but there is no requirement to wear them in sentos, although social distancing and quiet bathing are encouraged.

For many elderly people, it is a "daily routine" that they did not want to stop during the pandemic, and some feel safer taking a bath with others around in case they fall, Yasuko said.



sentos is usually heated with gas.

Shunji Tsuchimoto, who runs Inariyu with his wife, said that the bath house is paying 50 per cent more for energy than it did last year.

But he hopes that holding events in the renovated buildings will raise revenue by drawing younger customers.

"I want them to know this sento culture," he said.

- 'TRENDY AND MODERN' -

One sento that has managed to draw a youthful clientele is Koganeyu in eastern Tokyo, which reopened in 2020 after a full makeover.

On a recent Saturday, the bath house was packed with young customers drinking craft beer and listening to vinyl records.

Tech worker Kohei Ueda, 25, travelled an hour to use Koganeyu's sauna with a friend.

"I do have the image of sentos being where grandpas and grandmas gather," he said.

"But a sento like this that's more trendy and modern is not like that... I feel more comfortable coming here."

Kom-pal, another sento, may not have hipster appeal, but 36-year-old owner Fumitaka Kadoya has managed to increase footfall using data-crunching skills he acquired in his previous job as a technician for optical equipment maker Olympus.

Kadoya's family has run the sento since the 1950s and when he took over three years ago, he set up a database to track information about customers and the timing of their visits.

The data has allowed him to make targeted business decisions, such as hiring female staff to encourage more women to visit and opening on Sunday mornings to ease crowds.

"Sentos have always been a part of Japanese culture," Kadoya said. "That's exactly what I think young people need these days."

— AFP

- 'SENSE OF URGENCY' -

Bath house closures can erode community ties, said Sam Holden, whose organisation Sento & Neighbourhood used a grant of around \$200,000 from the World Monuments Fund to renovate Inariyu.

The group strived to keep the cosy, welcoming atmosphere of the bath house — built in 1930 in a low-rise area of northern Tokyo where narrow walkways snake between homes.

Inariyu has customers of all ages, including "a lot of elderly people, many of whom might live alone and be prone to isolation", said Holden, a 32-year-old American who has lived in the capital for nearly a decade.

"My colleagues and I had a sense of urgency in wanting to preserve some of these historic structures before they were redeveloped into apartment complexes and other things."

Bathers pay 500 yen (\$3.70) to enter the men's or women's bath, a fee set by the Tokyo government.

Leaving their shoes in a small locker, they strip off in the changing room and take a shower before climbing into the tubs for a relaxing soak.

Unlike Japan's hot springs, known as onsen, the water in

CHANGING WORLD

Greenland already locked in to major sea level rise: Study



EVEN WITHOUT any future global warming, Greenland's melting ice sheet will cause major sea level rise, with potentially "ominous" implications over this century as temperatures continue to rise, according to a study published on Monday.

Rising sea levels — pushed up mainly by melting ice sheets on Greenland and Antarctica — are set to redraw the map over centuries and could eventually swamp land currently home to hundreds of millions of people, depending on humanity's efforts to halt warming.

The Greenland ice sheet is currently the main factor in swelling the Earth's oceans, according to Nasa, with the Arctic region heating at a faster rate than the rest of the planet.

In the new study, published in Nature Climate Change, glaciologists found that regardless of any future fossil fuel pollution, warming to date will cause the Greenland ice sheet to shed 3.3 per cent of its volume, committing 27.4 centimetres to sea level rise.

While the researchers were not able to give an exact timeframe, they said most of it could happen by 2100 — meaning that current modelled projections of sea level rise could be understating the risks this century.

The "shocking" results are also a lowest estimate because they do not take future warming into account, said lead author Jason Box, of the National Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland.

"It's a conservative lower bound. The climate has only to continue warming around Greenland for more commitment," he said.

If the high levels of melting seen in 2012 became an annual occurrence, the study estimated sea-level rise could be around 78 cm, enough to swamp vast swathes of low-lying coastlines and supercharge floods and storm surges.

This should serve "as an ominous prognosis for Greenland's trajectory through a 21st century of warming", the authors said.

In a landmark report on climate science last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said

the Greenland ice sheet would contribute up to 18 cm to sea level rise by 2100 under the highest emissions scenario.

Box, who was an author on that report, said his team's latest research suggests those estimates could be "too low".

Instead of using computer models, Box and colleagues used two decades of measurements and observational data to predict how the Greenland ice sheet will adjust to the warming already experienced.

Upper areas of the ice sheet adds mass through snowfall every year, but since the 1980s the territory has been running an ice "budget deficit", which sees it lose more ice than it gains through surface melting and other processes.

- 'RADICAL' METHOD -

The theory that researchers used was initially developed to explain changes in Alpine glaciers, said Box.

This holds that if more snow piles up on top of a glacier, lower areas to expand. In this case the reduced snow is driving shrinking in lower parts of the glacier as it rebalances, he said.

Box said the methods his team used were "radically different" from computer modelling, but could complement this work.

Gerhard Krinner, another IPCC author specialising in ice sheet climate modelling and who was not involved in the study, said the findings broadly tallied with total levels of sea level rise seen in more complicated models, but questioned the arguments that this would largely happen this century.

"The work really provides an estimate of the committed long-term (multi-century or even multi-millennial) response of the Greenland Ice Sheet, not an estimate of minimum loss over this century," said Krinner, a senior scientist at the French research agency CNRS.

The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times, unleashing a catalogue of impacts from heatwaves to more intense storms.

Under the Paris climate deal, countries have agreed to limit warming to 2C. — AFP

art & life

Local Scene

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WEDNESDAY | AUGUST 3

French-Indian textile designer brings back Mughal patterns

TEXTILES DESIGNER

Brigitte Singh lovingly lays out a piece of cloth embossed with a red poppy plant she says was probably designed for emperor Shah Jahan, builder of the Taj Mahal, four centuries ago.

For Singh — who moved from France to India 42 years ago and married into a maharaja's family — this exquisite piece remains the ever-inspiring heart of her studio's mission.

The 67-year-old is striving to keep alive the art of block printing, which flourished in the 16th and 17th centuries under the conquering but sophisticated Mughal dynasty that then ruled India.

"I was the first to give a renaissance to this kind of Mughal design," Singh said in her traditional printing workshop in Rajasthan.

Having studied decorative arts in Paris, Singh arrived aged 25 in 1980 in western India's Jaipur, the "last bastion" of the technique of using carved blocks of wood to print patterns on material.

"I dreamed of practising (miniature art) in Isfahan. But the Ayatollahs had just arrived in Iran (in the Islamic revolution of 1979). Or Herat, but the Soviets had just arrived in Afghanistan," she remembers.

"So by default, I ended up in Jaipur," she said.

MAGIC POTION

A few months after arriving, Singh was introduced to a member of the local nobility who was related to the maharaja of Rajasthan. They married in 1982.

At first, Singh still hoped to try her hand at miniature painting.

But after scouring the city for traditional paper to work on, she came

across workshops using block printing.

"I fell into the magic potion and could never go back," she said.

She started by making just a few scarves, and when she passed through London two years later, gave them as presents to friends who were connoisseurs of Indian textiles.

Bowled over, they persuaded her to show them to Colefax and Fowler, the storied British interior decorations firm.

"The next thing I knew, I was on my way back to India with an order for printed textiles," she said.

Since then, she has never looked back.

SOUL COMFORT

For the next two decades, she worked with a "family of printers" in the city before building her own studio in nearby Amber — a stone's throw from Jaipur's famous fort.

It was her father-in-law, a major collector of Rajasthan miniatures, who gave her the Mughal-era poppy cloth connected to Shah Jahan.

Her reproduction of that print was a huge success the world over, proving especially popular with Indian, British and Japanese clients.

In 2014, she made a Mughal poppy print quilted coat, called an Atamsukh — meaning "comfort of the soul" — that was later acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Another piece of her work is in the collection of the Metropolitan Art Museum in New York.

- 'Sophistication of simplicity' -

Singh starts her creative process by handing precise paintings to her sculptor, Rajesh Kumar, who then painstakingly chisels the designs onto blocks of wood.

"We need a remarkable

sculptor, with a very serious eye," she said.

"The carving of the wood blocks is the key. This tool has the sophisti-



cation of simplicity."

Kumar makes several identical blocks for each colour used in each printed fabric.

"The poppy motif, for example, has five colours. I had to make five blocks," he said. "It took me 20 days."

At Singh's workshop, six employees work on pieces of cloth laid out on tables five metres (16 feet) long.

They dip the blocks in dye, place them carefully on the cloth, push down and tap.

The work is slow and intricate, producing no more 40 metres of material every day.

Her workshop makes everything from quilts to curtains and rag dolls to shoes.

Singh just finished another Atamsukh for a prince in Kuwait.

"The important thing is to keep the know-how alive," she said.

"More precious than the product, the real treasure is the savoir faire." — AFP

