

Russia ready to avert food crisis

Russia said on Wednesday it was ready to work with the United Nations to combat the risks of a global food crisis, and was willing to meet its obligations to export food and fertilisers. The commitments were made in a conversation between Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Lavrov's ministry said in a statement.



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OMAN SAIL'S TEAM
BEGIN STAR SAILORS
LEAGUE SEASON IN
SWITZERLAND



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DHOFAR TO
HOST MAJOR
ECONOMIC FORUM
NEXT MONTH



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KEEP YOUR CHILDREN
ENGAGED BY
ALLOWING THEM
TO DO CHORES



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO CONGO PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Tshisekedi and the people of his country further progress and prosperity. — ONA

Oman affirms commitment to environment protection

LISBON: The Sultanate of Oman focuses on the sustainability of the environment and natural resources, and that the State's Basic System stipulates commitment to protect the environment and combat pollution. These principles are translated into a number of legislations such as the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation, the Law on Environment Protection and Combating Pollution, the Law on Marine Fishing and Protection of Living Aquatic Resources, among others.

This was stated by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority (EA), who delivered the Sultanate of

Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, is taking part in conference.

Dr Al Amri said that recent studies indicated the stable condition of the Omani seas, good levels of temperature, acidity, oxygen and chlorophyll and safe

levels of heavy elements and micro plastics. These studies are supported by several evidence and indicators such as the numbers of young turtles, the stability of humpback whale numbers in the seas of the Sultanate of Oman as well as increased sightings of dolphins and improved fish stocks in natural fisheries. — ONA

TENDER BOARD AWARDS RO 49M PROJECTS

The Tender Board on Wednesday awarded projects worth RO 49.3 million. Among the most important projects were the Microsoft renewal agreement for government institutions for a period of three years from 2021 to 2024 at a cost of RO 16,546,415; provision of periodic maintenance and supply of spare parts for medical equipment (Drager Ventilators, Anesthesia Machines) at various health institutions of the Ministry of Health at a cost of RO 4,333,288; and others.

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FIRST DAY OF EID AL ADHA ON JULY 9



The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs on Wednesday announced that the first day of Dhul Hijjah 1443 AH will start from Thursday (June 30). Hence, the first day of Eid al Adha will be on Saturday, Dhul Hijjah 10, 1443 AH corresponding to July 9.

INSIDE



PALESTINIAN BRIDE CELEBRATES IN THE RUBBLE

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Media role vital in highlighting Oman Vision 2040 achievements

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 29

An amount of RO 159 million was saved after reviewing the budgets proposed by government institutions within the plan of the Digital Transformation Programme 2021-2025.

This was revealed by officials during the media briefing organised on Wednesday by Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. The unit reviewed its annual report for 2021 as the first report following the launch of the Vision in the beginning of 2021.

CLEAR TARGETS

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit asserted that work is currently under way to review all indicators of "Oman Vision 2040" and verify their effectiveness in terms of measuring and evaluating the path of achieving the Vision and coming up with clear targets for every five years.

Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Head of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, underscored the importance of the media's role in highlighting the efforts exerted to inform the community about the achievements made in the Oman Vision 2040. He said that the unit seeks, through its website, to increase the reception of community participation.

Oman-Egypt ties an example in Arab world

CAIRO: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, described Oman-Egypt relationship as 'an example of relations between two Arab countries'.

In an interview with *Al Ahram al Arabi*, Sayyid Badr said that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sees President Abdel Fattah el Sisi as a brother, a friend and a strong partner not only at the bilateral level but also on the wider Arab and international levels.

The foreign minister added: "There is no doubt about the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to joint Arab action, hoping that the visit of the US President Joe Biden to the region in the middle of next month will have a positive impact and will have fruitful effects on Arab-American relations."

Sayyid Badr stressed that the Palestinian cause lies in the exchange of land for peace, implementation of the Arab initiative and the establishment of the Palestinian state.

The foreign minister welcomed the Egyptian private sector to develop new projects, enhance trade between the two countries and open new horizons.

Asked about the Omani diplomacy's ability of communication



There is no doubt about Oman's commitment to joint Arab action, and the visit of the US President Joe Biden to the region will have a positive impact

SAYYID BADR BIN HAMAD AL BUSAIDY
Foreign Minister

with all parties whether in the region or beyond, the minister said: "Let's take two issues in this context, the first is the negotiations of the Joint... TURN TO P2

EU countries reach deal on climate laws after talks

LUXEMBOURG: EU countries clinched deals on proposed laws to combat climate change on Wednesday, backing a 2035 phase-out of new fossil fuel car sales and a multibillion-euro fund to shield poorer citizens from CO2 costs.

After more than 16 hours of negotiations, environment ministers from the European Union's 27 member states agreed their joint positions on five laws, part of a broader package of measures to slash planet-warming emissions this decade.

"The climate crisis and its consequences are clear, and so policy is unavoidable," EU climate policy chief Frans Timmermans said, adding that he thought the war on Ukraine by top gas



supplier Russia was spurring countries to quit fossil fuels faster.

Ministers supported core parts of the package that the European Commission first proposed last summer, including a law requiring new cars sold in the EU to emit zero CO2 from 2035. That would make it impossible to sell internal-combustion engine cars.

The deal makes it likely that the proposal will become EU law. The ministers' agreements will form their position in upcoming negotiations with the EU Parliament on the final laws. Parliament has already backed the 2035 car target.

Italy, Slovakia and other states had wanted the phase-out delayed to 2040. — Reuters



OMAN AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION

LISBON: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, is taking part in the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, being held in Lisbon, Portugal. Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of Environment Authority (EA), delivered the Sultanate of Oman's speech in which he affirmed commitment to carry on with the efforts aimed at protecting the environment and supporting international efforts to achieve



stability and ecological balance in the seas, oceans and other environments.



Oman participates in AGFUND meeting



RIYADH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, took part in the 25th meeting of the Arab Gulf Programme for Development (AGFUND), held in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting was chaired by Prince Abdulaziz Talal Abdulaziz, President of AGFUND.

The meeting approved the minutes of the 24th meeting of AGFUND and highlighted a summary of the achievements made during the first half of 2022. The meeting also discussed a spectrum of topics, including the projects that were proposed for funding and the AGFUND audit report, among other topics.

— ONA

British delegation visits MSC



MUSCAT: A delegation from the United Kingdom (UK) headed by Commodore Adrian Fryer, Commander of the Maritime Component Command, on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The guest was accompanied during the visit by the Defence Attaché at the British Embassy in Muscat. The delegation was greeted upon their arrival at the centre by the Deputy Head of the MSC. — ONA

Oman-Egypt ties an example

FROM P1

Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany. Reaching a positive outcome on this file, through dialogue, will represent a great gain for regional and global peace, security and stability. Everyone will benefit, and there will be no losers. As for the second issue, Yemen the human suffering in this Arab and brotherly neighbour country is enormous, and the losses are heavy and every Yemeni will benefit if the current ceasefire leads to lasting peace.

“There is no doubt that building on the solid political relations between the Sultanate of Oman and Egypt requires all of us to push forward cooperation between the two countries in all vital economic, cultural and other sectors. In light of the visit of President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the Sultanate of Oman and the very positive and fruitful talks that took place with his brother His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the next phase will witness initiatives and projects aimed at developing more opportunities for trade and investment between the two countries and various fields of cooperation and partnership,” the minister said.

CARBON EMISSIONS

Asked about the agenda of the Sultanate of Oman at the Climate Summit in Sharm El Sheikh, the minister said: “We hope that the



Sultanate of Oman along with the international community will contribute in achieving zero-carbon emissions. We are optimistic about the promising future of the Sultanate of Oman and the Arab Republic of Egypt in the field of clean and green energy. Both Oman and Egypt have great potentials in terms of land, sunlight and wind as well as their proximity to major shipping lines. I believe that these huge potentials will be a very important factor in the economic future of both countries.”

“I believe that with Egypt's presidency of the Climate Summit in Sharm El Sheikh, the international community will announce more commitments to speed up the efforts of the scientific sectors to face the remaining technical challenges and this encourages more utilisation of the full potential of green hydrogen,” the minister added.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Asked about the successful experience of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and how to maximise the benefit from this

experience, the minister said: “We should continue working collectively and focus on international cooperation and developing the shared infrastructure such as the railways, roads and pipelines to enhance interdependence between all the Arab countries. This is in addition to promoting bilateral trade and investment. We share very deep relations at the cultural and social level. Above all, we are all Arabs, and this in itself represents an important basis for the security, cooperation and well-being of our peoples. There is no doubt that our commitment to joint Arab action will not be shaken.”

In response to a question about the compressive solution following the success of Yemen's truce, the minister said: “We believe that the approach proposed by the United Nations envoy for Yemen is a good one and we fully support it. Our vision for peace in Yemen lies in the formation of a comprehensive national government that interests the interests of all the stakeholders in Yemen. The bottom line is that peace in Yemen and its future is a strategic decision that is taken primarily by the Yemenis themselves and it cannot be imposed from outside.”

Asked about how to achieve a greater rapprochement between the Arab countries to confront the current challenges, the foreign minister said: “We should work to strengthen our collective cooperation on the basis of (no harm) and this mission must be consistent and sustainable. I think, in particular, it is very useful to enhance the virtue

of listening to each other's concerns, especially those with whom we may disagree on some issues and orientations.”

In response to a question about the changes facing the unified procurement of wheat, the foreign minister said: “We should cooperate, and help each other as far as possible, I personally think that the unified procurement of wheat may not necessarily be beneficial as it may lead to the emergence of new bureaucratic obstacles. It may do more harm than good. But, rest assured that we are constantly reaching out to friends and neighbours to enhance and share our sources of food security.”

Asked, there is no place for neutrality in today's world and whoever is not with us is against us. Do you agree with these approaches to describe the current international situation?

The foreign minister replied: “I disagree with this opinion. There is certainly a vital place for neutrality in today's world. The mentality of ‘he who is not with us is against us’ is an unhealthy and unhelpful notion that must be completely rejected. We believe in and practice positive neutrality and the building of the collective interest. It is our duty to keep the channels of communication open in order to be able to communicate with all parties. We also strongly support the United Nations and the rule of international law, respect the sovereignty of all its members, and respect their sovereign decisions, whether we agree with these decisions or not.”

Media role vital in highlighting achievements

FROM P1

Hamoud bin Hilal al Habsi, Director-General of Oman Vision 2040, reviewed during the visual presentation the creation of the Vision, its constituents, the role of the Unit and its methodologies in following up and backing the efforts to achieve the Vision and the executive position of the indicators of “Oman Vision 2040” as well as the efforts currently being made to achieve these indicators.

He added that since the launch of Oman Vision 2040 in early 2021, a set of national short- and medium-term programmes were launched. The programmes are designed based on the requirements of the stage and the five-year development goals to realise the national targets of the Vision with a clear governance that achieves integrity among the

departments concerned.

Khalid bin Said al Shuaibi, Head of the National Programme for Investment and Export Development “Nazdaher”, spoke about the programme's business environment represented in simplifying and digitising investor procedures, investment tools, legislation and the judiciary.

He added that the number of initiatives launched by the programme to ensure the readiness of the investment system reached 124, including 59 enabling initiatives, 46 in investment projects and 19 in investment opportunities. He affirmed that the programme functions to enhance and empower the role of the private sector in leading economic development by creating an attractive investment environment.

MAIN TRACKS

He pointed out that the programme's initiatives and projects are divided into two main tracks namely the business environment, and the investment sectors, which include energy, mining, converting industries, transportation, aviation, tourism and information and communication technology (ICT) and food security.

Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al Kharousi, Director of the Government Digital Transformation Programme, said that the programme aims to enhance the efficiency of government institutions, find innovative solutions and improve the work environment by simplifying business models and providing channels and tools that make optimal use of the rapid

technological changes.

Dr Badr bin Hamoud al Kharousi, Head of the Development Team for the National Employment Programme said that the programme seeks to generate sustainable employment solutions and job opportunities for Omanis by expanding the local market and increasing the quality of opportunities.

He added that the programme includes training and rehabilitation initiatives for Omani job-seekers and students who are about to graduate to ensure their readiness to join work in line with the requirements of various sectors of the labour market. The programme also focuses on identifying job opportunities in the supply chains in various economic sectors.

— ONA

Rehabilitation of substance abuse victims discussed



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 29

In connection with the observance of World Drug Day, the Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by Al Masarrah Hospital and in cooperation with the National Committee

for Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances, organised on Wednesday a scientific symposium on rehabilitation from addiction at Al Masarrah Hospital.

The event was held under the auspices of Maani bint Abdullah al Busaidy, Director-General



of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), with the participation of representatives from the MoH, Royal Oman Police and MOSD. It targeted workers in the addiction and rehabilitation field.

In addition, the symposium aimed to reduce the effects and

health damage resulting from abusing psychotropic substances, exchange experiences on the current drug rehabilitation situation, sharing the related research and studies. It also discussed the latest development in rehabilitation programmes, challenges and solutions and

identified the essential needs in this regard.

Furthermore, the symposium highlighted the addiction problem and drug offences in the Sultanate of Oman. It also explored the relationship between life experience and early relapse among imprisoned users of illegal

drugs in Oman, as well as factors leading to drug addiction relapse.

A number of other related issues, such as rehabilitation and the role of therapeutic communities in drug rehabilitation, post-rehabilitation and aftercare programmes, were addressed during the symposium.



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Farewell to Belgian Ambassador



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received here on Wednesday Dominique Mineur, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty.

Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts she exerted in enhancing the relations between the two countries. He also wished her success in her future endeavours. — ONA

Pact on digital system for kids' library



HH Sayyidah Dr Mona Fahd al Said, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Children's Public Library and Shaikh

Khalid Mohammed Al Fannah al Aرامي, OMIFCO's Director of Sustainability and Institutional Communication. — ONA

Efforts to remove detergent packets from beach continue

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Environment Authority of Oman has found ways to clear the detergent packets manually from the shore rather than from the sea, as cleaning continued on Al Seeb and Misfah beaches on Tuesday.

One of the challenges has been packets washing up on shore the next day after clean-up.

Abdulkhaleem bin Ahmed al Harthi, Environmental Emergency Technician at the Directorate of Environmental Emergency, said, "We have planned to remove the detergent packets in coordination with other agencies."

The incident took place on June 6, 2022, when a wooden dhow outside Omani waters caught fire and sank."

"We received the report, but we had no clue about the shipment on the dhow. The accident took place happened 33 nautical miles from Wilayat Qurayat. The ship caught fire and burned and sank completely. The detergent we think



was the main cargo being carried in the vessel", noted Al Harthi.

From then on, detergent packets have been floating. The authorities coordinated with Coastal Guard to monitor the situation from day one. But, according to the authorities, it seemed that the detergents were well packed in heavy plastic material. It initially submerged, but came out later and

began to drift towards the north side of the Sultanate of Oman. They appeared first on Qurayat beach, with some landing on Qurum and Athaiba beach. Still, most of the concentration has been on Damaniyat Island, an environmentally sensitive place. Here volunteers are also joining the authorities for the clean-up.

"We have been doing it

manually and coordinating with Oman Environmental Service Holding Company (be'ah) to manage the waste", said Al Harthi.

Until now, the quantity of detergent packets collected is unknown. The frequency and number of packets washing up have reduced, but authorities are not sure when it will end.

"We are collecting and counting, but they are still scattered. We were cleaning two days ago, and the packets kept floating the following day too. We are using this tactic because it is easy to manage the waste from the shore compared to collecting it from the sea", he explained.

When asked how long the efforts would have to continue, he replied, "The question is sensitive because we do not know the exact quantity of detergent packets loaded in the dhow.

Sometimes these dhows tend to carry more than their capacity. We have troops in Damaniyat Islands, Qurum and today we have had a cleaning in Sifah as well."



Oman wins Kuwaiti award for informatics

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 29

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health (MoH), has won the Shaikh Salem Al Ali Al Sabah Informatics Award at its 20th session for the Tarassud Plus project at Bayan Palace in Kuwait held under the auspices of Shaikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Emir of Kuwait.

The Tarassud+ won this award as one of the best projects that develops the human capacities in the field of information development.

Oman's delegation included Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiah, Under-Secretary of Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial and

Planning Affairs, along with Bader bin Sulaiman Awlad Thani, Director General of Information Technology.

Tarassud+ is the official Covid-19 application of the Sultanate of Oman for citizens/residents/travellers to Oman. The Ministry of Health, Oman, developed and maintained the app and provides features like digital vaccination certificates, RT PCR results and Covid-19-related statistics.

Furthermore, the application provides awareness materials, alerts, decisions and detection of isolated persons.

In addition, through Tarassud+, the user can access the lab test results, vaccination details, as well as immunisation certificate by using the QR code.

Onsor Technologies ranks 2nd in 2022 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Onsor Technologies, a subsidiary of Oman Information and Communication Technology Company, has won the second place (runner-up) in the modern device category in 2022 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award.

The company was honoured among a global field of top Microsoft partners for demonstrating excellence in innovation and implementation of customer solutions based on Microsoft technology.

This was revealed at a press conference on Wednesday at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat, in the presence of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and Information Technology and several officials from ITHCA group.

In his speech during the conference, Dr Al Shaithani expressed pride of young Omanis' achievements as they competed with global technology companies and still got second. "We celebrate today our youth's success in



marking their names on the world technology map. The trip wasn't easy, but the collective efforts with the concerned parties who believed in our youth's potential made it happen", he said.

Maadh al Hinaai, CEO of Onsor Technologies, said, "We are delighted to be recognised

as a runner-up in the Microsoft Partner of the Year Award in the modern devices category from among more than 3,900 partners around the world.

It is an occasion to celebrate our people, innovation, creative culture and our world-class products." He added, "We

would like to thank our strategic partners and clients who were an integral part of this success with their feedback, insight and their involvement in the Onsor design cycle."

Saeed bin Abdullah al Mantheri, CEO of ITHCA Group, stressed that this win is another achievement added to the balance of achievements made by the Sultanate of Oman in the field of technology, thanks to the efforts aimed at advancing this field.

While Nick Parker, Corporate Vice President of Global Partner Solutions at Microsoft, commented, "I am honoured to announce the winners and finalists of the 2022 Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards. These partners were outstanding among the exceptional pool of nominees and I'm continuously impressed by their innovative use of Microsoft Cloud technologies and the impact for their customers."

Microsoft Partner of the Year Awards are announced annually prior to the company's global partner conference, Microsoft Inspire, which will take place on July 19-20 this year.

Omran develops zip line facility

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Developed by Omran, the Sultanate of Oman's new zip line is an exciting new attraction that promises fun for guests around the year.

"The zip line facility is an exciting attraction that is appealing to both adults and children. At Barceló Mussanah Resort, we strive to create memorable experiences for guests. The zip line is yet another addition towards this aim", said Dermot Birchall, General Manager, Barceló Mussanah Resort.

Measuring 175 metres, the dual zip line facilities promise to enthrall those who are seeking some adventure.

The one-of-its-kind zip line is managed by the resort's team who are trained and fully certified to the highest International Standards by Arrampica — a UK-based and internationally renowned artificial adventure



support service provider.

Currently, the zip line facility is open on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 5 to 7 pm.

Set against the majestic Hajar mountains backdrop with uninterrupted views of the Sea of Oman, Barceló Mussanah Resort is a unique destination resort that boasts luxurious and well-designed rooms, suites and hotel apartments. The resort offers a variety of activities for guests during summer that including jet skiing, kayaking, sailing, snorkelling and more.



GLOBALLY, MORE THAN ONE MILLION SEABIRDS AND
100,000 MARINE ANIMALS DIE FROM
PLASTIC POLLUTION EVERY YEAR

SAVE BEACHES!

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttyp](#)

Beach destinations are among the most popular for summer vacations, and the Sultanate of Oman is known for its wealth of clean and attractive beaches, which are ranked as national and international favourites in the world of tourism.

Alas! The beaches — one of our greatest natural resources — are steadily becoming victims of unscrupulous activities, including litter such as throwing cigarette butts, food wrappers, and plastic bottles by beachgoers.

The trash ends up in our oceans each year, doing more than just ruining and destroying marine life and making people seriously sick!

Environmental efforts have been accorded priority as part of Oman Vision 2040, which outlines the need to sustain Oman's natural resources in support of the national economy. As such, a number of government entities offer services for citizens who practise any activities related to the environment directly or indirectly.

The Sultanate of Oman considers littering on the beaches a very serious matter as this is one of the major causes of damage to the marine environment. Despite regulations and warnings, many of the beaches continue to be victims of the callous human approach!

Just days after the Environment Authority carried out a cleaning campaign for the beaches of Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve following spotting tens of thousands of detergent bags on the coastline, photographs of litter in Muscat's popular Al Hail beach appeared in social medial platforms.

While the detergent packets were spread from Barka in the north to Qurayat in the south and all the way up to the Daymaniyat Islands, piles of garbage were seen on Al Hail beach in the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

"This reflects a lack of sense for preserving nature. Many people who visit the beaches throw the waste without giving thought to the impacts the litter makes. It is sad that they leave them for the municipal cleaning staff to remove them," said a tweet by Saud al Fahdi.

BLUE ECONOMY

The Sultanate of Oman has a coastal line extending over 3,165 km, therefore, the country is interested in the so-called "Blue Economy", which includes developing specific plans to conserve fish abundance, the sustainability of marine resources and cleanliness of sea water.

The Fourteenth goal of Oman's Sustainable Development 2030 targets the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Globally, more than one million seabirds and 100,000 marine animals die from plastic pollution every year, and it is vital that the environment is protected to preserve all ocean life.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), every year, an estimated 11 million tonnes of plastic enter the world's oceans. Approximately 300 million tonnes of plastic waste — an amount equivalent to the weight of the human population — are produced every year.

However, only nine per cent is recycled; the vast majority of the rest accumulates in landfills or the natural environment. Over time, these materials break down into microplastics that ease additional pollutants into the human food chain, freshwater systems and air.

In order to achieve the objectives of protecting



the marine environment and the conservation of marine biological resources, the Oman government, as part of the 2030 Sustainable Goals, gives special importance to the implementation of studies, the establishment of marine conservation zones, the promulgation of legislation, the implementation of coastal zone management plans, the rehabilitation of degraded areas and the cultivation of mangroves in its various governorates.

In addition, entities like the Environment Authority and Environment Society of Oman, in cooperation with other voluntary bodies, conduct campaigns to clean the environment and control turtles and marine mammals, as they are important for the sustainability and balance of the marine environment.

The Oman government also realises the importance of environmental permits and their regulatory role. Waste disposal regulations have been issued in the marine environment, and dumping and discharge permits in the marine environment, in accordance with regulations, as used as a control mechanism for activities and projects on the coastal environment, as well as the dumping of solids into the marine environment.

The licensing process requires companies to submit periodic monitoring reports on the quality of discharged liquid waste and laboratory reports, including chemical analyses of solid materials that are dumped to ensure that they are free of contaminants and in compliance with the conditions set forth in the regulations governing these licences.

The Sultanate of Oman considers littering on the beaches as a very serious matter as this is one of the major causes of damage to the marine environment. Despite regulations and warnings, many of the beaches continue to be victims of the callous human approach



Curtains come down on Al Dakhiliyah film festival

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 29

Al Dakhiliyah International Film Festival, organised by the Omani Association for Cinema and Theatre in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, has concluded. The closing ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, the Governor of Al Dakhiliyah and honorary president of the festival, at Nizwa Cultural Centre.

The winners in the competition section of festival, which had 40 films including fiction, documentary and animation, were honoured on the occasion.

The feature film ‘Station 49’ by Jordanian director Amro Bayoumi won the best film award while the second prize went to ‘The Key Café’ by Syrian director Ali al Aqbani. Belgian director Rand Abu Fakher’s ‘So We Live’ won the third prize. The feature film ‘Somewhere in Time’ by Emirati director Nawaf al Janahi got the special jury award.

The Best Omani Narrative Film award went to the film ‘A Child’s Scream’ directed by Salih al Muqaimi.



There were three awards for documentary films, in addition to the jury’s appreciation. The Best International Documentary award went to ‘Hymns on the Bridge’ by Sudanese director Sadam Siddig while the Best Omani Documentary Film award was bagged by ‘Pottery’, directed by Mohammad al Muqbali. The Jury Prize for Documentary Films went to the film ‘Al Gari’ by Saudi director Ahmed al

Hasawi. The certificate of appreciation was won by Algerian director Souad Douaibi’s ‘Maqouda’.

Addressing audience, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, director of the festival, said: “This festival played an important role in introducing the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah and its wilayats through the Omani media, external media and social media sites. This brought the governorate and the festival good reputation at the local, regional and international levels.”

Meanwhile, Ammar al Ibrahim, Omani Association for Cinema and Theatre’s board of directors deputy chairman, announced the details of the 11th Muscat International Film Festival. He said: “I am honoured to announce that

the Muscat International Film Festival’s 11th edition will be held in March 2023.”

The event is one of the most significant film festivals organised by the Omani Society for Cinema and Theatre in the Sultanate of Oman.

Earlier in the day, the participants of the festival visited Misfat Al Abriyeen -- one of the most important villages in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate -- where old houses have been restored, transforming them into tourist attractions. The village has been acclaimed as one of the most beautiful heritage tourism sites in the world.

The delegation also visited the Creativity Centre for Culture and Innovation in the Wilayat of Nizwa, which was opened recently. It houses a large library and a museum.

Deal to study link between triglycerides and CVD



MUSCAT: An agreement was signed between the Medical Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University and Abbott Laboratories Company to conduct a research study at the level of the Arabian Gulf on the relationship of triglycerides in the blood with cardiovascular disease (CVD). This study will be held in five Gulf countries (Oman, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar). The study aims to collect and analyse clinical data on the association of high triglycerides in the blood with the risk of cardiovascular disease and the most important means of treatment and continuous follow-up.

The research team in this study will be led by Dr Khalid al Rasadi, Director of the Medical Research Centre at Sultan Qaboos University, where Dr Al Rasadi explained that this study comes as a continuation of the previous Gulf population studies, in order to shed light on the most important risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease, which is considered as the most prevalent and the main cause of mortality in the Arabian Gulf region.



Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)
P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE SECOND QUARTER ENDED ON MAY 31, 2022

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit the unaudited Financial Statements of the company for the second quarter ended on May 31, 2022 along with related reports.

Revenue was RO 6,237,085 as against RO 5,367,016 in the corresponding period in the previous year whereas net Profit after taxes for the period was RO 1,250,242 as against RO 1,067,048 in the previous year.

The total shareholders fund increased from RO 24,661,930 at the end of May 2021 to RO 25,837,258 at the end of May 2022 and as a result of this growth, the net assets per share has recorded R.O.3.261.

On behalf of the Board of directors, I express our most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Furthermore, I would extend our gratitude to his government for their co-operation and assistance with special mention of Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Muscat Security Market and Capital Market Authority.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited Consolidated Statement of Financial Position as at 31 May, 2022		
	2022 RO. '000	2021 RO. '000
Fixed assets	15,221	16,256
Current assets		
Inventories	28	30
Trade receivables	6,048	5,222
Receivable from related party	15	1
Bank and cash	6,679	5,723
	12,770	10,976
Total assets	27,991	27,232
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	542	710
Payables to related parties	1,164	1,037
Bank loans and over drafts	--	393
Lease liability	21	20
Tax liability	220	180
	1,947	2,340
Long term liabilities		
Lease liability	56	76
Deferred Tax liability	136	142
Employees' end of service benefits	15	12
	207	230
Total liabilities	2,154	2,570
Net Assets	25,837	24,662
Shareholders' funds		
Share capital	7,923	7,546
Legal reserve	2,583	2,353
Retained earnings	15,331	14,763
Total shareholders' equity	25,837	24,662

Unaudited Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income for 6 months ended 31 May, 2022		
	2022 RO. '000	2021 RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	6,237	5,367
Gross Profit	1,672	1,419
Other Income	108	94
Administration & general expenses	(305)	(235)
Operating profit	1,475	1,278
Finance charges	(4)	(22)
Profit before taxation	1,471	1,256
Taxation	(221)	(189)
Net profit attributable to ordinary Shareholders	1,250	1,067
Net profit margin	20%	20%

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such requests may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), PO Box 311, Postal Code 100, Muscat.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF TENDERS

The Rural Areas Electricity Company (S.A.O.C) (invites following tenders:

Tender No	Description	Tender Price (R.O)	Grade	Last Date of Buying	Site Visit Date	Last Date of Submission
Tanweer - 10/2022	Replacement of Tower Light For 132 KV Transmission Line Between Khasab Grid Station and Dibba Grid Station in Musandam Governorate	1500/=	Specialist Companies	07/07/2022	13/07/2022	21/07/2022
Tanweer - 11/2022	Investigation and Rectification Works for the Civil Defects at Tibat Grid Substation in Musandam Governorate	500/=	Specialist Companies	07/07/2022	14/07/2022	21/07/2022

The Conditions:

- Collection of Tender:** Interested and Specialized Companies and Establishments registered with Tender Board (valid certificate) and Tanweer may obtain the Tender documents from Procurement & Contracts Department, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. The fees for the tenders shall be deposited on Tanweer account 0423010783090041 – Bank Muscat and for more information please contact via email address i.e. tender.purchase@tanweer.nama.om, or call us on phone number: 24250824.
- Bank Guarantee:** The Tenderer should enclose original bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for an amount equivalent to (1%) of the tender value with a validity of (90) Days from the last date of submission and addressed to Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC (Tanweer).
- Offers Submission:**
 - Original bids along Cover letter shall be placed by bidders inside the red waxed Tender's envelopes as communicated to bidders by Tanweer. Such documents must be serialized according to the numbers of the tender items.
 - Tender bids shall be provided separately on a CD Rooms, along with original cover letters in each envelop. Bids and cover letters shall bear the bidder's official seal and must be signed in either blue or red ink, but not black. A true soft copy of the bids shall be provided on a CD in an inner envelope marked "Copy". Bids who do not comply with these requirements will be overlooked.
 - Bidders shall write the following details on the cover of CD:
 - Tender name and number.
 - Tenders to be Addressed to the **Chairman of Minor Tender Committee**, Tanweer.
 - Prequalification / Technical Proposal / Commercial Proposal / Bid Bond.
- Submission Location:** The Completed bids in CD should be deposited in the Tender Box at Tanweer Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 12:00 PM on the last date of submission.
- Tender Price (R.O):** 5% VAT is inclusive.
- Tanweer without mentioning the reason is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender and not bond to refund tender purchase fees if you are not qualified to participate the tender.

For more information please call: 80077787



Tanweer
PO Box 1166, P.C. 133, A'seeb, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800, Fax: +968 24250892
info@tanweer.nama.om | www.tanweer.om



Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Tenders committee of Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
437/2021/MAFWR/HQ-64-Recall - 1	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Dhabi falaj in Samid Alshan village at Wilayat Mudhaibi at North AL-Sharqiyah Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Thursday 7/7/2022	Tuesday 19/7/2022
348/2022/MAFWR/HQ-43	Supply of Attractive materials and pesticides for the red palm weevil control project	25/-	Specialized	Monday 18/7/2022	Monday 8/8/2022
349/2022/MAFWR/HQ-44	Provide agricultural services to control the red palm weevil at Al Buraimi Governorate	25/-	Specialized	Monday 18/7/2022	Monday 8/8/2022
350/2022/MAFWR/HQ-45	Supply of field needs for the integrated management program of red palm weevil for the year 2022	25/-	Specialized	Monday 18/7/2022	Monday 8/8/2022
351/2022/MAFWR/HQ-46	Providing Fish loading, off-loading and its services for fish inspection locations for one year	25/-	Specialized	Monday 18/7/2022	Monday 8/8/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



In brief

Lebanon to host Arab League meet

BEIRUT: A delegation from Arab League countries will travel to Lebanon for a two-day gathering that includes meetings with the crisis-ridden country's top officials, Beirut's caretaker government said on Tuesday. Foreign Minister Abdallah Bou Habib said leaders including Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit would arrive in Lebanon on Friday. Bou Habib said the final list of attendees had yet to be confirmed but included ministers from

several Arab countries who would meet with Lebanon's president, caretaker prime minister and the speaker of parliament. A government source confirmed Aboul Gheit would meet with President Michel Aoun on Saturday. In his last visit to Lebanon in March, the Arab League chief had announced the body's next consultative ministerial meeting would take place in Beirut ahead of the full summit in Algeria in November.

Iraq announces first cholera death

BAGHDAD: A cholera outbreak in Iraq claimed its first victim on Tuesday, with 17 new cases recorded in the country within 24 hours, a health ministry spokesperson said. The death was recorded in the northern province of Kirkuk, the ministry's Seif al Badr was quoted as saying by state media. "Over the past 24 hours, 17 new cases were detected, bringing the total to 76 cases registered in Iraq since the start of the year," he said. The outbreak was first officially reported earlier this month, with

Kirkuk accounting for one of the 13 cases confirmed at that time. The other infections were mostly concentrated in neighbouring Sulaimaniyah province, in the autonomous Kurdistan region. The country's last broad cholera outbreak dates back to 2015, Badr had said previously, with the central provinces of Baghdad and Babil to its south the worst affected. Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal disease that is treatable with antibiotics and hydration but can kill within hours without medical attention.

Car bomb kills at least 6 in Aden

ADEN: A car bomb attack on the convoy of a Yemeni military official in the southern port city of Aden killed at least six people and wounded several others on Wednesday, military officials said. The head of security forces of Lahaj province Saleh al Sayed survived the assassination attempt, three military officials said. Two of them said at least five civilians and one military officer were killed and six others were

seriously wounded in the attack. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack but Al Qaeda fighters have stepped up their operations in south Yemen recently. At least 10 Yemeni soldiers were killed there in two separate attacks last week. Instability in the south, where the Saudi-backed government is based, complicates international efforts to end the seven-year-old conflict. — AFP/Reuters

Iran, US indirect talks going on in 'serious' atmosphere



EU's envoy Enrique Mora



Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Naser Kanani

DUBAI: Iran's foreign ministry said indirect, EU-mediated talks between Tehran and Washington in the Qatari capital were proceeding in a "serious" atmosphere, denying an earlier report that they had ended. The talks are aimed at overcoming differences over how to salvage a 2015 nuclear pact between Iran and world powers. Earlier, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency had reported that the negotiations in Doha had ended without result. "The two-day talks are not over yet and later today Iran's top nuclear negotiator and the EU's envoy Enrique Mora will meet again," ministry spokesman Naser Kanani said, according to Iranian state media. "Talks continue in a serious and business-like atmosphere." The talks started on Tuesday with Mora as the coordinator, shuttling between Iran's Ali Bagheri Kani and Washington's special Iran envoy Rob Malley. They are trying to break a months-long impasse that has stalled negotiations in Vienna to reinstate the 2015 pact. "What prevented these negotiations from coming to fruition is the US insistence on its proposed draft text in Vienna that excludes any guarantee for Iran's economic benefits," Tasnim said, citing informed sources at the talks. Then-US president Donald

Trump ditched the pact in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran's economy. A year later, Tehran reacted by gradually breaching nuclear limits of the deal. Over 11 months of talks between Tehran and major powers to revive their nuclear deal stalled in March, chiefly over Tehran's insistence that Washington remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), its elite security force, from the US Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list. Earlier, it was reported that indirect talks between Iran and the US in Doha to narrow remaining gaps for revival of a 2015 nuclear agreement have ended without result, Iran's Tasnim news agency said on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Iran warned the US to abandon the "Trump

method" on Wednesday after the two sides opened indirect talks to revive a nuclear deal that was torpedoed by the former American president. But Iranian officials said they were hoping for progress in the talks in Qatar, which come after international meetings to return to the deal hit

a roadblock. Iran agreed to curb its nuclear programme in return for sanctions relief in 2015, before then US president Donald Trump pulled out of the deal three years later. "We hope that, God willing, we can reach a positive and acceptable agreement if the United States abandons the Trump method," Iranian government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi said. He described the "Trump method" as "non-compliance with international law and past agreements and disregard for the legal rights of the Iranian people". The indirect talks -- with the rival delegations sending each other messages from different parts of the same hotel -- come just two weeks before US President Joe Biden makes his first official visit to the region, with Iran high on his agenda. — Reuters

The talks are meant to break a months-long impasse that has stalled negotiations in Vienna to reinstate the 2015 pact

A Palestinian bride celebrates in the rubble of her demolished home

TEL AVIV: Palestinian Rabeha Rajabi did not think she would be holding her wedding celebrations in the rubble of her own home in occupied East Jerusalem, until Israeli authorities destroyed it. "Before any blow hit the house, it hit our hearts," said Rajabi, speaking among the debris and donning a traditional Palestinian thobe and henna-inked hands. "This was our home, our dream, our memories." The 22-year-old bride said she moved to the Ein al Lawza neighbourhood from another part of Jerusalem as a young child and that over the years her family were served several demolition orders on the house they had built, putting them on edge. In Arab tradition, on wedding day the groom's family arrive to greet the bride in the home she grew up in, an emotional ceremony symbolising the new life she is about to embark on. "We had other plans but because of the demolitions and our challenging living situation, everything changed," she said. Since 2009, when the United Nations began documenting the practice, more than 3,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem have been displaced because Israeli authorities have demolished, or forced owners to demolish, structures. Thousands more live at risk of displacement due to outstanding demolition orders.



Feras, brother of a Palestinian bride Rabeha Al Rajabi, stands together with girls during a pre-wedding ceremony at the family's house, that was partly demolished by Israel authority, in East Jerusalem. — Reuters

The issue is one of the most sensitive areas of contention in the decades-long dispute over East Jerusalem, which was seized by Israeli forces in 1967 and later formally annexed by Israel in a move not recognised internationally. "Their goal is to drain the Palestinian residents, financially and morally," said Fares Rajabi, the bride's brother. "It is a policy of displacement." Israel says the demolition orders in Jerusalem are issued for illegal constructions, although Palestinians object that it is nearly impossible to get building

permits and see the policy as part of an effort to force them out of the city. Deputy Jerusalem Mayor Ariele King denied the demolitions were aimed at driving Palestinians away. "Just as illegal construction is demolished across the country, it is the same in East Jerusalem," King said, adding that authorities have been approving building permits. "You can't say we demolish (buildings) to force them out and not mention that we are authorising so many construction plans," he said. — Reuters

عمانية للاستثمارات التعليمية والتدريبية oman education & training investments			
Directors Report			
On behalf of the Directors of Oman Education Training and Investment S.A.O.G. it is my pleasure to present the Third Quarterly Report of the company for the period from 1/3/2022 to 31/5/2022.			
On 26/6/2022 Sohar University, held the official operational opening ceremony of "Intaj Sohar Production" project and inaugurated the manufacturing incubator under the patronage of His Excellency / Qais bin Mohammed al-Yousef, - Minister of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion. Which was established in partnership with the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion. On 9/6/ 2022, Sohar University celebrated the graduation ceremony of 19th and 20th under the patronage s of His Excellency Sheikh / Siba bin Hamdan al-Saadi- Secretary General of the High Committee for National Day Celebrations, at the Al-Irfan Theatre at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center. The total number of graduates of the two regiments was 3,126.			
Consolidated Financial Statements:			
The consolidated financial statements for the period ended 31/05/2021, note the following:			
1. Net profit 821,750 OMR for the period ended 31/05/2022 was achieved compared to 1,480,984 OMR for the period ended 31/05/2021 due to the decrease in student fees and high expenses. 2. The government grant was registered to calculate deferred government grants, reflecting the value of its extinguishment on the company's profits equivalent to the consumption of property and equipment financed by that grant, which during the current fiscal year was valued at 354,249 OMR. 3. Purchase of fixed assets and assets of the group (computers, laboratory devices, furniture, equipment and projects under completion) during the period for 153,350 OMR.			
Finally, I would extend my sincere congratulations to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may Allah protect him, as well as Ministry of Higher Education Research & Enovation. I would like also to extend my profound thanks to the Board of Directors, as well as the University Board of Governors and the company Executives, Academic and Administrative staff for their great effort, looking forward for a successful future in the next years.			
Hassan bin Ihsan bin Nasseb Al-Nasseb Chairman			
Consolidated Statement of financial position (Un Audited) At 31 May 2022			
	Group 31-May-22 RO	Group 31-May-21 RO	Group 31-Aug-21 RO
ASSETS			
Non-current assets			
Property and equipment	31,851,088	32,962,878	32,447,024
Right-of-use assets	142,853	156,122	152,805
Investment in subsidiaries	-	-	-
Total non-current assets	31,993,941	33,119,000	32,599,829
Current assets			
Inventories	23,475	18,540	18,682
Due from related parties	-	-	-
Trade and other receivables	5,168,508	5,862,122	1,637,498
Bank balances and cash	4,369,673	4,189,086	6,455,860
Total current assets	9,561,656	10,069,748	8,112,040
Total assets	41,555,597	43,188,748	40,711,869
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	7,000,000	7,000,000	7,000,000
Legal reserve	3,911,530	3,429,713	3,829,355
Property revaluation reserve	5,301,623	5,301,623	5,301,623
Retained earnings	1,423,808	1,856,896	2,434,233
Total equity	17,636,961	17,588,232	18,565,211
Non-current liabilities			
Deferred grants related to assets	14,130,076	14,602,408	14,484,325
Deferred tax liability	1,177,904	1,141,083	1,177,904
Banks borrowings	-	-	-
End of service benefits	1,219,289	1,366,019	1,118,985
Lease liabilities	132,525	142,378	144,570
Students' deposits	274,688	339,515	206,035
Total non-current liabilities	16,934,482	17,591,403	17,131,819
Current liabilities			
Deferred grants related to assets	472,332	472,332	472,332
Banks borrowings	-	115,841	-
Lease liabilities	9,884	9,889	9,889
Due to related parties	-	-	-
Trade and other payables	6,064,797	6,742,578	3,607,425
Provision for income tax	437,141	668,473	925,193
Total current liabilities	6,984,154	8,009,113	5,014,839
Total liabilities	23,918,636	25,600,516	22,146,658
Total equity and liabilities	41,555,597	43,188,748	40,711,869
Net assets per share	0.25	0.25	0.27

			Consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income (Un Audited) Period ended 31 May 2022			
	Group 31-May-22 RO	Group 31-May-21 RO	Group 31-Aug-21 RO			
Income						
Tuition fees	8,873,167	9,960,708	14,134,039			
Training fees	78,000	-	-			
Other income	417,733	100,368	115,046			
Total income	9,368,900	10,061,076	14,249,085			
Expenses						
Salaries and related costs	(6,859,197)	(6,705,035)	(8,563,907)			
Administrative and other operating expenses	(1,205,802)	(947,488)	(1,594,031)			
Written off of property and equipment	-	-	(239,302)			
Depreciation of property and equipment	(810,850)	(878,929)	(1,160,531)			
Release of deferred government grant	354,249	354,249	472,332			
Reversal of bad and doubtful debts	-	-	-			
Provision	-	-	-			
Amortisation of right-of-use assets	(9,952)	(9,952)	(13,269)			
Total expenses	(8,331,552)	(8,187,155)	(11,098,708)			
Profit for the year from operations	1,037,348	1,873,921	3,150,377			
Finance costs	(53,105)	(90,321)	(96,837)			
Finance income	19,897	15,313	23,395			
Profit for the year before tax	1,004,140	1,798,913	3,076,935			
Income tax	(182,390)	(317,929)	(618,970)			
Profit for the year after tax	821,750	1,480,984	2,457,965			
Earnings per share	0.012	0.021	0.035			
			The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests them. The request to be made at P.O. Box 44, P.C. 311, Tel: 26850120, Fax: 26721258			



In brief

■ LONDON



QUEEN MEETS SCOTLAND'S LEADER AFTER REFERENDUM

Queen Elizabeth II met Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, the day after the politician put her government on collision course with London by announcing plans to hold another independence referendum. The monarch, 96, met Sturgeon at the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, but no details of their conversation were released. She is in Scotland for the annual 'Holyrood week', when she and other members of the royal family traditionally carry out a number of engagements in the country. The queen has massively scaled back public engagements since a bout of ill health in October. — AFP

■ QUITO



ECUADOR'S PRESIDENT SURVIVES IMPEACHMENT VOTE

Ecuador's president survived an impeachment vote on Tuesday, as negotiations to end more than two weeks of cost-of-living protests by Indigenous groups were suspended following the death of a soldier. The opposition-led congress had sought to remove right-wing President Guillermo Lasso over "the serious political crisis and internal commotion" caused. But the motion garnered only 80 of the 92 votes needed, according to results read aloud by the parliament's secretary, Alvaro Salazar, in a virtual session broadcast. "In spite of the coup attempts, today the country's institutions prevailed," Lasso said after the vote. — AFP

■ CAIRO



OWNERS DISTRAUGHT AS HISTORIC NILE HOUSEBOATS REMOVED

Owners of the Nile's famous houseboats in the heart of Egypt's capital are having their homes demolished and towed away as authorities impound what they say are unlicensed dwellings. The boats, many of them elegant two-story structures with verandas, have been moored for decades along the tree-lined banks of the Nile between the island of Zamalek and Giza. They have featured in films and literature, such as Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz's novel Adrift on the Nile. Last week, owners of about 30 houseboats were served notices saying their boats would be impounded. — Reuters

Nato vows to modernise Ukraine's military

MADRID/KYIV: Nato on Wednesday branded Russia the most "direct threat" to allied security after Moscow's attack on Ukraine and vowed to modernise the beleaguered Ukrainian military, saying it stood four-square with Kyiv in "the heroic defence of their country".

Completing a summit dominated by the geopolitical upheaval caused by the attack, Nato formally invited Sweden and Finland to join the alliance and pledged to reinforce combat-ready and rapid-reaction forces on its eastern flank, closest to Russia.

President Joe Biden announced additional US land, air and sea deployments across Europe, including a permanent army headquarters with accompanying battalion in Poland, the first full-time US deployment on Nato's eastern fringes.

As the 30 national Nato leaders were meeting in Madrid, Russian forces intensified attacks in Ukraine, including missile strikes on the southern Mykolaiv region close to front lines.

The mayor of Mykolaiv city said a Russian missile had killed at least three people in a residential building there, while Moscow said its forces had hit what it called a training base for foreign mercenaries in the region.

The governor of eastern Luhansk province reported "fighting everywhere" in the battle around the hilltop city of Lysychansk, which Russian



Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and US President Joe Biden speak ahead of a second part of the North Atlantic Council Session during The Nato summit at the Ifema congress centre in Madrid. — AFP

troops are trying to encircle as they pursue a bid to seize all of Ukraine's heavily industrialised east.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky reiterated to Nato leaders that Kyiv needed more weapons and money, and faster, to start countering Russia's huge edge in firepower,

Russian missile attacks intensify across Ukraine as battle for eastern city Lysychansk grinds on

and warned that the Kremlin's ambitions did not stop at Ukraine.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba later praised Nato's "clear-eyed stance" on Russia, adding: "An equally strong and active position on Ukraine will help to protect the Euro-Atlantic security and stability."

A Nato communique called

Russia the "most significant and direct threat to the allies' security and stability", a nod to the precipitous deterioration in relations with Russia - earlier classified as a "strategic partner" - since the attack.

Nato agreed a package of support aimed at modernising Ukraine's military.

"We stand in full solidarity with the government and the people of Ukraine in the heroic defence of their country," the communique said.

"We are sending a strong message to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin: 'You will not win'," said Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, the summit's host.

The US-led alliance said it would also deploy more "robust in-place combat-ready forces" on its eastern flank, scaled up from existing battlegroups to brigade-size units.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg had announced ahead of the summit that the alliance planned to increase the number of troops on high alert by seven-fold to more than 700,000.

Zelensky, in a video link-up with Nato, said Ukraine needed \$5 billion per month for its defence and protection.

"This not a war being waged by Russia against only Ukraine.

This is a war for the right to dictate conditions in Europe - for what the future world order will be like," he said.

— Reuters

Trump tried to join Capitol riot: Aide

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump tried to grab the steering wheel of his presidential limousine on January 6, 2021, when his security detail declined to take him to the US Capitol where his supporters were rioting, a former aide testified on Tuesday.

The then-president dismissed concerns that some supporters gathered for his fiery speech outside the White House that day carried AR-15-style rifles, instead asking security to stop screening attendees with metal-detecting magnetometers so the crowd would look larger, the aide testified.

"Take the effing mags away; they're not here to hurt me," Cassidy Hutchinson, who was a top aide to Trump's then-White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows, quoted Trump as saying that morning.

Hutchinson, in testimony on the sixth day of House of Representatives hearings into the deadly January 6 Capitol assault by Trump's followers, said the conversation was relayed to her by Tony Ornato, a senior Secret Service official who was Trump's deputy chief of staff for operations.

The New York Times and NBC, citing sources in the Secret Service, said the head of Trump's security detail, Robert Engel, and the limousine driver were prepared to testify under oath that Trump never lunged for the steering wheel. Engel was in the room when Ornato relayed the story, Hutchinson said.

The New York Times and CNN, citing unnamed sources, said Ornato also denied the story



Cassidy Hutchinson, an aide to then White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, testifies during a House Select Committee hearing to Investigate the January 6th Attack in the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington. — AFP

and was willing to testify.

Citing her conversation with Ornato, Hutchinson testified that Trump struggled with Secret Service agents who insisted he return to the White House rather than join supporters storming the Capitol where Congress was meeting to certify Democrat Joe Biden's victory over him in the presidential election.

Trump's supporters were roused by his false claims that his 2020 election defeat was the result of fraud

"I'm the effing president. Take me up to the Capitol now," Hutchinson quoted an enraged Trump as saying. She said Trump tried from the back seat to grab the steering wheel of the heavily armoured presidential vehicle and lunged in anger at a Secret Service official. Trump denied her account of his actions.

"Her Fake story that I tried to grab the steering wheel of the White House Limousine in order to steer it to the Capitol Building is 'sick' and fraudulent," Trump wrote on Truth Social.

— Reuters

10 arrested as Netherlands farmers hold fresh protests

AMSTERDAM: Dutch farmers have protested for the third day in a row against planned environmental regulations. At the German border, the A1 motorway near Oldenzaal was blocked with tractors for more than two hours on Wednesday.

There were smaller protests at various places in the country. In the east, police provisionally arrested 10 people for acts of violence and attempted manslaughter the previous day.

Farmers had broken through a police checkpoint in front of a minister's private house during the night, severely damaging police cars, blocking highways and setting fires.

The escalation of the protests was met with horror by government officials and police.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark

Rutte, who was in Madrid attending a Nato summit, lashed out at the farmers who rushed a minister's home, saying they were "exceeding all bounds."

Protesting farmers broke through a cordon around the home of Environment Minister Christianne van der Wal overnight to dump animal slurry. "You do not dump slurry, alarm children and endanger families," Rutte said.

Hundreds of farmers had also gathered in front of the provincial building in Leeuwarden, Friesland on Wednesday. There were also spontaneous rallies in front of other town halls.

The planned environmental regulations are coming into place to counter emissions of oxides of nitrogen.

Threats have been made against politicians at other locations,

police vehicles damaged and fires deliberately set.

The head of the police, Willem Woelders, said that aggression by the farmers was increasing and was directed at the police and emergency services as well as at politicians.

Representatives of farmers' associations distanced themselves from the violence.

The protests are directed at government moves to sharply cut the emissions of oxides of nitrogen across the country and close to nature conservation areas in particular, where emissions must be reduced by 70 per cent.

The government's own figures indicate that around 30 per cent of livestock farmers could be pushed out of business because the rules would mean fewer farm animals.

— dpa



Farmers gather with their vehicles next to a Germany/Netherlands border sign during a protest on the A1 highway, near Rijssen, against the Dutch Government's nitrogen plans. — AFP

Have we learned our lesson?



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

What we have been through in the past three years used to face our ancestors over centuries.

No generation of humanity before us were this connected and witnessing together at the same time a global pandemic along with conflicts, and financial crises wreaking havoc across the globe.

This could be our greatest blessing in disguise and a golden opportunity to build back the world a better place for ourselves and future generations. There could be three great lessons for humanity; one for our health, a second for our resources and a last but not least for our safety and security.

We are bound to reap the mistakes of the past, unless we truly learn our lessons from them.

To this day, instead of focusing on an objective way to learn the lessons about the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic, countries,

especially the world superpowers, were busy trading accusations.

For two years, cover-up accusations, mainly towards China, were floating in global media instead of well-meaning efforts led by the United Nations to make sure we can mitigate humanity's exposure to another devastating pandemic.

If there was one lesson that we could deduce from this is that the United Nations should set up an independent rapid task force team that does not play politics when it comes to our most valuable asset — health. The sole purpose of this task force is to identify and share with the world the most trusted status of potential threats to our health. Failure to work together towards such a purpose means that we are bound to repeat similar Covid-19 situations. The second valuable lesson that humanity can learn

A NEW INDEPENDENT BODY LOOSELY LINKED TO THE UN COULD BE CREATED TO INVESTING IN INCOME-GENERATING ACTIVITIES THAT MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC AND IMPROVED TO AVOID ADVERSE PANDEMIC RELATED ECONOMIC EFFECTS

from this post-Covid-19 era is that we are in this together, especially in terms of resources.

Economic hardships and poverty caused directly and indirectly from Covid related conditions, deaths and official closures created disparity between communities

that have and communities that do not have.

It is absolutely the duty of the communities that have been blessed with better resources to share their resources with less fortunate communities.

As we have witnessed over the past three years, our failure to see this big picture resulted in more intense migrations. Hence there were more brain drain and poverty cycles. Here, to avoid this the suction could be at the hands of the UN's global investment related bodies. A new independent body loosely linked to the UN could be created and dedicated to investing in income-generating activities that mitigate the impact of this pandemic and could be improved to avoid adverse pandemic related economic effects in the future.

Last but not least, while we as human beings did everything

in our power to hold on to our precious lives indoors for more than two years, we are now watching countless lives being wasted in vicious conflict cycles.

Wars, near and far, should not be our legacy as the most learned and connected generations the world has ever seen. Therefore, we should put mechanisms that contain current conflicts so that they do not spell over for the rest of this decade or even century.

This is because conflicts lead to more panic and fighting over resources at times where the world is already coping with the effects of other health and financial crises.

Whether the world applies similar aforementioned lessons or not will be felt around the world soon. I pray that we do leave a legacy where we are remembered as the generation that did not pass on lessons learned from the pandemic.

Covid can't break South Africa's love affair with shopping malls

NQOBILE DLUDLA

With two days to go until opening to the public, workers rush to put the finishing touches on the Kwen Square shopping complex, a shiny \$13 million sign that South Africans are defying the global “retail apocalypse”. Not even Covid-19 could separate them from their beloved malls.

“I love going to the mall with my daughter and my grandkids,” said 54-year-old Kowie Erasmus, who’s eagerly awaiting Friday’s grand opening of Johannesburg’s Kwen Square, which broke ground at the height of the pandemic.

“Malls are a social place.” The South African market has evolved differently from many other places in the world; high crime rates and a scarcity of safe public spaces have long driven both retailers and shoppers into commercial complexes. Armed guards and parking with restricted access ensured carefree consumer consumption.

The attachment to malls has confounded the expectations of many industry players and experts who saw lockdowns in South Africa - initially among the world’s strictest - as an opportunity for e-commerce to finally take hold and take significant bites into traditional sales.

Some leading players are now actually doubling down on brick-and-mortar expansion plans in Africa’s most developed economy, a \$62-billion retail market.

“Investments in physical stores will still be significantly greater than investment in online,” said David North, chief transformation officer at grocery and clothing group Pick n Pay , one of several retailers that said they would invest more in physical operations than online in this financial year. Commercial property developers are following the money.

More than 300,000 square metres of new leasable retail space are set to be completed across the country this year, compared with about 367,000 square metres over the previous two years combined, according to data from property consultants Rode & Associates.

The new spaces include a string of malls that are due to open in 2022, including Oceans Mall in the coastal city of Durban, kwaBhaca Mall in the Eastern Cape and Mamelodi Square in Pretoria

“The experience economy - being in a physical space and enjoying that space - is what South Africans crave and value the most,” said Ulana van Biljon of Emira Property Fund, a real estate investment trust.— AFP



Steven Erlanger

The writer is a US journalist who has reported from over 120 countries

Spotting the fault lines in Nato's united front

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, some asked whether Nato had any real reason to exist. But Russia's attack of Ukraine gave new urgency to Nato as a defensive alliance aimed at deterring Moscow.

Now, at its annual summit this week in Madrid, leaders of the 30 members of Nato are set to agree on the most significant overhaul of the alliance's defences since the Cold War.

There will be a large increase in the number of troops assigned to defend Nato's eastern flank, closest to Russia and Belarus, with a major commitment to position heavy military equipment there, like tanks and artillery, that would bolster an allied response to any Russian threat or aggression.

There will also be statements of unity on Ukraine, despite internal debates within the alliance on how long the war will take, how it will end and its mounting costs to Nato and European allies.

“The summit will show western solidarity as we go into a period of high gas prices and food scarcity, with Russia willing now to use both as weapons of war,” said Kori Schake, director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. “So we know that and can still hang together.”

At the same time, she said, debates about the future are rumbling among member countries. “The lesson the US is tempted to take away from Ukraine is the incapacity of the Russian military, suggesting that Europe should be able to handle the burden of European security,” Schake said. “But the European lesson is that unless the US is at the centre of the Western response, there will be no Western response, so they're trying to lock in American involvement.”

In Madrid, the alliance will also approve its first updated mission statement in 12 years, portraying a world of new perils, with threats not just from Russia but also China, a US priority, and from new forms of warfare ranging from cyber and artificial intelligence to disinformation and restrictions on energy, food and rare minerals. The mission statement,

ONE OF THE OTHER KEY DEBATES DURING THE SUMMIT WILL BE THE ISSUE OF NEW NATO TROOPS ALONG THE EASTERN FLANK — HOW MANY, HOW THEY ARE DEPLOYED, AND HOW PERMANENT THEY WILL BE

known as the strategic concept, frames defence planning, spending and resource allocation throughout the alliance. It sounds arcane but has been hotly debated, with France and Germany insisting on describing a rising China as a “challenge” to the trans-Atlantic security order, not as a “threat,” as Russia has clearly become.

There will also be discussion on how to convince Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the President of Turkey, to remove

his effective veto over the applications of Sweden and Finland to join Nato, a matter that inevitably will have to involve President Joe Biden.

One of the other key debates during the summit, which runs from Tuesday evening through Thursday, will be the issue of new Nato troops along the eastern flank — how many, how they are deployed, and how permanent they will be.

As the war in Ukraine has proceeded, Nato has established four more multinational battalion-sized groups in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia, to add to the ones already established in 2017 — following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 — in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.

The Baltic nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are pressing for larger permanent deployments, to move from the current “tripwire” defence — the roughly 1,500 rotating Nato troops in each country — to “deterrence by denial,” which would involve more permanent deployments of up to a division of American troops, as Estonia has been demanding.

They want the larger deployments to better defend all Nato territory from any conflict at its very start, fearing that they would be quickly overrun by Russian forces otherwise.

— New York Times



US President Joe Biden and other leaders pose for the official group photograph during the Nato summit at the Ifema congress centre in Madrid. — AFP

A shift in social behaviour


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The writer is a journalist, academic, researcher of media studies

The “I don’t get it, I’m not interested” approach to news disengagement. News avoidance is on the rise. There are many reasons for such a shift in social behaviour, one of which is a lack of trust. The mistrust stems from political, business, and other interested parties interfering in the news context. So, it is not surprising that the ‘avoiders’ are mostly among the young people.

Two other reasons for news avoidance relate to a significant disparity in income and education. If one cannot understand the news, or there are other priorities rather than reading about glossy summits, then, social media can provide quick and entertaining information according to the person’s social and economic status. TikTok and Instagram are doing a great job in holding on the attention of those 18-24 years old.

Who can blame the less educated or young people when the world is turning upside down with no clear direction? This avoidance could also be a result of the dramatic changes that are happening around us while creating political apathy and reluctance to disagreement.

Looking back to understand today’s world we need to re-visit some events from the past. One of them is the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. It had its

THE MISTRUST
STEMS FROM
POLITICAL,
BUSINESS
AND OTHER
INTERESTED
PARTIES
INTERFERING
IN THE NEWS
CONTEXT

objective to reconcile economic development with the protection of the environment. It was the largest earth summit with 117 heads of state and representatives of 178 nations. They all have committed to the cause — they all promised. What have they delivered? The Brazilian Amazon

deforestation this 2022 has exceeded its own record of area destroyed.

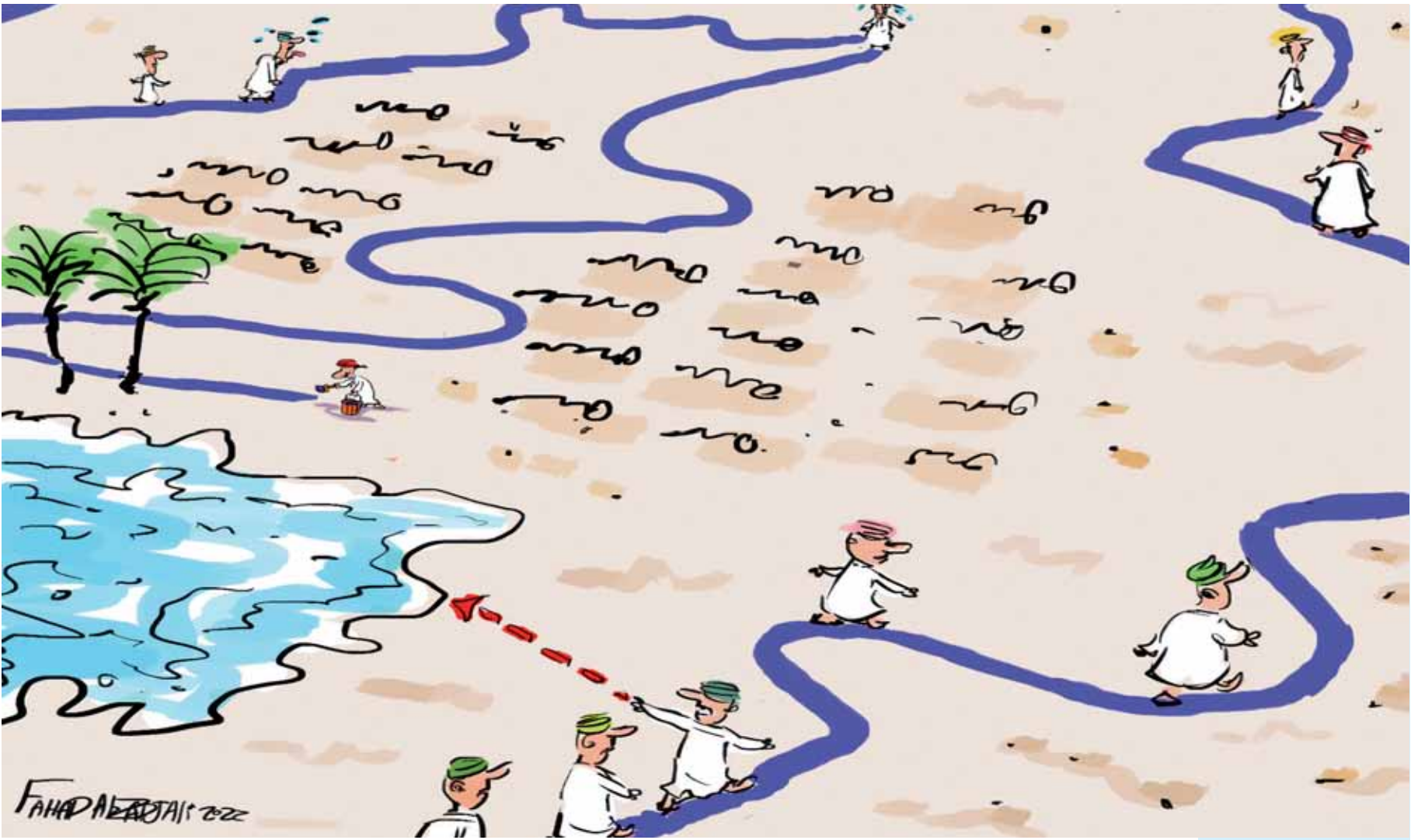
From the pledges to protect the environment for future generations, we see forests, rivers, oceans and natural habitats being destroyed. The pledges had all fallen short of realisation. Where is the money for these pledges gone?

Again, in less than one year, 100 world leaders signed an agreement in Scotland to halt deforestation by 2030. But let’s refresh our minds, in 2014, in New York, more than 200 government, private sector and civil society organisations signed a declaration calling for a halving of deforestation rates by 2020, and a complete halt by 2030. Instead, deforestation remains rampant worldwide.

Meanwhile, global poverty is increasing — possibly due to misplaced priorities. The rising of food prices and living costs contribute to people falling into life-threatening poverty, or having to choose between extreme priorities. As if there weren’t enough depressing reminders, previously eradicated diseases are making a comeback. Gold and diamond mining and smuggling practices have been well registered and analysed — full stop. Territorial invasions are being normalised. Radicalisation, both political and religious, is on the rise. People are being milked on several fronts, and the gaps are widening. Politicians, business groups, and lawmakers act like little gods — as if they are immune to explaining their actions to their societies. They bet on our short-term memory.

With so much going on almost simultaneously, those with a vested interest will keep the media as a public relations exercise. The educated ask questions, but don’t receive adequate responses. The wealthy pay for high quality information — paywall! Persuading younger people to pay for online news is a critical issue because they would rather consider saving for more essential things.

Then, it is not surprising that there are people who choose to be ignorant of what is happening in the world, they are the intentional news avoiders. Within the half empty or the half full approach, social media can fill their interest with parodies on TikTok and visual designs on Instagram. While people argue online about futilities other larger and more profitable interests are shielded from speculations and explanations. The result is a less informed and engaged society, a more polarised news environment and new trends on cultures of news consumption.



Europe, we have a problem

**KRIS PEETERS AND
RODRIGO DA COSTA**

The digital revolution’s potential to create new growth opportunities, transform our economies and support the green transition relies heavily on technologies that are literally out of this world. Powering today’s automated services and artificial-intelligence applications requires precise, timely data furnished by space-based technologies (global navigation, earth observation, environmental monitoring and communication satellites).

This is true in agriculture, transportation, energy, defence and even finance. Farmers rely on satellites to make decisions about which crops to plant and when, while ships, planes, trains and automobiles use satellite data to navigate safely and efficiently.

Power companies need satellites to monitor performance and maintain their grids, and financial services use the unique data they collect to inform investment decisions and for accurate time stamping.

The European Union has invested heavily in this area through multi-billion euro projects such as Galileo and EGNOS (European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service); Copernicus, the Earth-observation system and GOVSATCOM, the secure satellite-communication programme.

Europe also boasts many companies that are at the forefront of space innovation. But European investment in space-based technologies — particularly fast-growing strategic sectors such as consumer solutions and drones — is being outpaced by others, including the United States and Asia.

Europe’s place in tomorrow’s world will be determined largely by its competitiveness, influence and ability to act autonomously. That means we will need to invest more in space-based technologies, many of which have defence

as well as civilian applications.

According to the EU Agency for the Space Programme and the European Investment Bank’s joint Global Navigation Satellite Systems Investment Report, research spending on satellite navigation-related technologies and services in Europe rose at a compound annual rate of 5.7 per cent between 2016 and 2019.

Yet North American and Asian companies increased their annual research spending in the field by 8.6 per cent and 8.7 per cent, respectively. To stay competitive and maintain its space-technology autonomy, Europe will need to invest as much as €42 billion (\$44 billion) in research and development over the next ten years.

As much as 85 per cent of European R&D spending on satellite-navigation services comes from just five large companies.

While these industry leaders have both resources to reinvest and easy access to capital markets, smaller European companies find it much more difficult to secure funding, especially compared to their US or Asian competitors.

One factor holding Europe back is a lack of venture-capital investors who specialise in the space sector.

This scarcity forces many of Europe’s rising stars to turn to foreign capital. Over the last five years, North American and Asian competitors have acquired stakes of at least 5 per cent in as many as 14 European companies in the satellite-navigation sector. Such acquisitions not only lower Europe’s share of global revenues; they also undercut its competitiveness by reducing potential technological capabilities along the innovation value chain. The public sector plays a huge role in the space industry, both in Europe and among our competitors. As the EU bank, the EIB supports the European space industry

through its regular lending activities, venture debt operations, the European Investment Fund (EIF), and various targeted programmes.

These include the €1 billion CASSINI Space Entrepreneurship Initiative, launched in January 2022, and the new €6 billion Strategic European Security Initiative, which the EIB unveiled in March 2022. We have also invested in innovative, high-potential European satellite makers such as Spire (Luxembourg), D-Orbit (Italy) and EnduroSat (Bulgaria).

But it is not enough to match America, China and Japan, which, in addition to providing direct funding to help space start-ups grow and mature, also support their space industries by awarding government contracts to rising-star companies.

This approach affords American, Chinese and Japanese companies a public stamp of approval and steady revenues, which in turn help them emerge as powerful global players.

The stakes of the new space race are as high as they were during the Cold War. But this time, Europe is a contender.

To stay in the match, however, we will need to do much more to make our brightest stars shine.

That starts by channelling more tailored funding to small and medium-size enterprises in this critical sector to help scale up and commercialise their new technologies.

On June 29-30, diverse market participants will come together in Paris to discuss these issues at a workshop organised by the EIF — Backing the Stars of Europe: New Horizons for Private Investment Funds in the Space Sector. As recent global developments have shown, Europe cannot afford to postpone efforts to secure its own competitiveness and autonomy, both on Earth and in space.

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Europe boasts many companies that are at the forefront of space innovation.

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The Star Sailors League is a great challenge and a tough test of team work, speed and tactics. Our team joined the event last season and it was a very valuable experience, and we hope to improve on that performance. Cuba, Mexico and Guatemala are all good teams but we have been training on the boat used in the Star Sailors League and we feel ready

NASSER AL MASHARI
Oman captain



Oman Sail’s team begin Star Sailors League season

MUSCAT: Oman Sail’s team has commenced the Star Sailors League season with Qualifying Series on Lake Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

The top two in the group will join other qualified teams in the draw for the SSL Gold Cup 2022 Finals Series when the knockout stages begin in October.

Representing Oman are Ahmed al Balushi, Ahmed al Hasni, Abdul Rahman al Mashari, Yasir al Rahbi, Musab al Hadi, Raad al Hadi, Haitham al Wahaibi, Waleed al Kindi, Zakaria al Wahaibi, Husain al Jabri and Skipper Nasser al Mashari. Marwa al Khaifi will also join the squad as team administrator.

Nasser al Mashari, Skipper of

the Sultanate of Oman team, said, “The Star Sailors League is a great challenge and a tough test of team work, speed and tactics. Our team joined the event last season and it was a very valuable experience, and we hope to improve on that performance. Cuba, Mexico and Guatemala are all good teams but we have been training on the boat used in the Star Sailors League and we feel ready.”

Star Sailors League, a World Sailing Special Event, was created by sailors for sailors and is the ultimate challenge between sailing nations. Held in the Kingdom of Bahrain from October 28 to November 20 2022, the SSL Gold Cup Finals Series follows a similar

format to the Fifa World Cup where groups of four teams face each other and the top two teams advance to the next round.

Forty nations start the competition, including the World’s Top 23 Sailing nations plus 16 teams coming from the Qualifying Series — held between May and July 2022 — and host nation Bahrain, all racing on the exact same boat, the SSL47, a 14-metre performance racing boat.

The Finals Series in October will see an initial 16 teams race in four Groups, with the top two being joined in the next round by high-ranking teams that have already qualified for the Last 16, Final 8 and Quarterfinals.



Lukaku ‘happy’ as he arrives in Milan ahead of Inter return



MILAN: Romelu Lukaku said he was, “very happy” to be back after the Belgian international striker arrived in Milan on Wednesday ahead of his return to Inter Milan on loan from Chelsea.

A beaming Lukaku emerged from Linate airport in the early hours of Wednesday morning and gave his short but delighted response to the handful of reporters awaiting his arrival.

The 29-year-old will undergo a medical later in the day before making his long-awaited Inter comeback official.

Chelsea agreed to a reported deal in which Inter will pay an initial eight million euros (\$8.42 million) plus a further potential three million euros in bonuses for the loan.

Lukaku will again lead Inter’s attack as they attempt to regain the Serie A title after taking a pay cut — a reported 8.5 million euros for the coming campaign.

Lukaku leaves London after failing to make an impression for a second time at Chelsea,

not meeting high expectations following a £97.5 million move from Inter last summer.

He had made himself a fan favourite over two years at Inter after scoring 64 times in 95 games and driving them to their first Serie A title in over a decade, the 2021 Scudetto ending both an 11-year drought and Juventus’ grip on Italian football.

However the financial problems of Inter’s owners the Suning Group, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic led to coach Antonio Conte leaving the club almost as soon as the title was won.

He claimed the cost cutting required by Inter would have prevented him building the team he wanted to challenge domestically and in Europe.

Lukaku followed Conte out the door after then European champions Chelsea offered a whopping sum which eased some of Inter’s financial issues, and started well on his return to Stamford Bridge.

Coach Thomas Tuchel said

“he was the type of guy we were missing” after he netted four times in his first four games, but his next goal didn’t come until early December and injury, Covid-19 and poor form kept him out of the team.

He then infuriated Chelsea fans by conducting an interview with Sky Sport Italia in which he expressed his unhappiness and said he had Inter in his heart and wanted to return.

Those comments also led Inter’s hardcore ultras to say they weren’t interested in having him back, considering his move to Chelsea a betrayal of his claim to love the Milanese club.

They told other fans not to arrive en masse to welcome Lukaku back as he is now “just one of many” after previously being “treated like a king” by supporters.

Lukaku will be critical to coach Simone Inzaghi’s bid to snatch back the league crown from AC Milan after they finished two points behind their local rivals last term.

— AFP

25th Gulf Cup
venue to be
confirmed
today



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 29

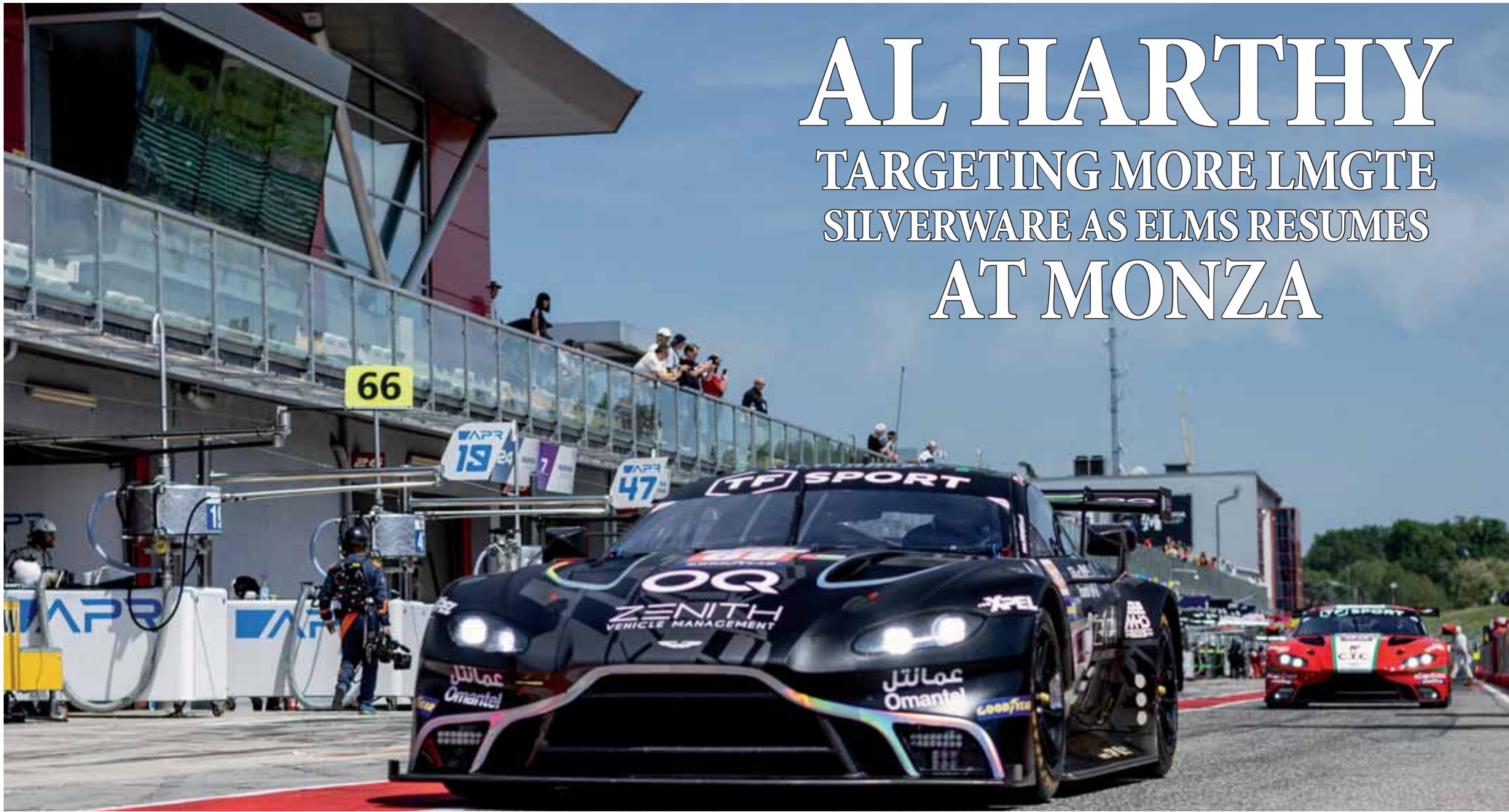
The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation will decide the fate of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup, today in Qatar, which is presently scheduled to be held in Basra, Iraq, during the period from December 24 to January 7, 2023.

It is noteworthy that the tournament was postponed more than once in light of the conditions of the coronavirus pandemic, in addition to the continental competitions in the World Cup qualifiers, the Asian Cup and the Arab Cup.

The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation will decide whether to host the tournament in Basra or move it to Kuwait.

According to the last report of the delegation of the Gulf Cup Federation, which visited the city of Basra to see the stadiums and hotels, and identify the facilities and divide them according to the needs of the event (team hotels, VIPs, media, organising committees, referees).

The General Assembly of the Arabian Gulf Cup Football Federation decided in 2021 unanimously to award the hosting rights of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup to Iraq, and on September 20 last year the event was postponed to January 2023.



AL HARTHY
TARGETING MORE LMGTE
SILVERWARE AS ELMS RESUMES
AT MONZA

MUSCAT: European Le Mans Series LMGTE championship leader Ahmad al Harthy returns to Italy later this week for the third round of the season at legendary Monza, where the Aston Martin racer is hoping to deliver another star performance and further enhance his points tally.

After a memorable, history-making weekend at Imola just over a month ago – where Oman's number one racing driver stormed to a sensational maiden ELMS race victory in the LMGTE class on only his second outing in the championship – more of the same is the target just days from now.

Of course, Al Harthy and team-mates Sam De Haan and Aston Martin factory driver Marco Sorensen do not take the challenge lightly. Not least due to how their 2022 campaign in the ELMS began at Paul Ricard in France in April, lap one contact causing immediate retirement with broken steering.

Bouncing back in the best

I can't wait to be back at Monza, it's been a while since we last raced there so I really am looking forward to driving there in the LMGTE car

AHMAD AL HARTHY
Omani driver

possible style, with an outstanding performance weekend-long in Imola, the Oman Racing trio were exceptional. Flawless in qualifying, Al Harthy dominated to secure a dream LMGTE pole position.

He was then faultless in the

four-hour race where he set things up perfectly for the victory bid with a superb double-stint, calmly dealing with several Full Course Yellow and Safety Car interventions and never putting a wheel wrong. De Haan completed hour three of the race before Sorensen took the run to the flag in hour four – winning a lap clear of the sister TF Sport-run Oman Racing car.

It is that same teamwork which the squad is determined to replicate at legendary Monza this coming weekend, July 2-3, a track where Al Harthy and Oman Racing have enjoyed great success in the past in GT3 racing.

Perhaps surprisingly, it's three years since the Omani last raced at Monza. During his previous visit in 2019, he achieved a top three podium finish in the Pro-Am class of the then Blancpain Endurance Cup – now known as the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup. In 2017, he raced to his first Pro-Am victory in GTWCE at Monza with then

2022 EUROPEAN LE MANS SERIES – LMGTE DRIVER STANDINGS (AFTER RD2)

==1st Ahmad al Harthy/Marco Sorensen/Sam De Haan, 26pts
==1st Nicolas Varrone/Pierre Ehret/Memo Gidley, 26pts
==1st Henrique Chaves/John Hartshorne/Jonathan Adam, 26pts
2022 European Le Mans Series – LMGTE Team Standings (after Rd2)
==1st Oman Racing with TF Sport, 26pts
==1st Rinaldi Racing, 26pts

team-mate Jonny Adam.

"I can't wait to be back at Monza, it's been a while since we last raced there so I really am looking forward to driving there in the LMGTE car," said the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and

MHD-ITICS backed sportsman.

"Imola was incredible, absolutely incredible, and we all hope to deliver a similar performance this weekend.

"Everyone in the team worked so hard, the TF guys did an amazing job with the strategy and Sam and Marco were fantastic. Personally, I really was delighted with my own performance and to have achieved the first ELMS win for Oman is something very special. Obviously, taking the lead of the LMGTE championship was the icing on the cake for us and we hope to build on that in Imola and put some space between ourselves and our rivals."

Oman Racing's first track time at Monza with the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE will come on Friday, July 1, with the opening free practice ahead of a standalone session for the 'Bronze' graded drivers, such as Al Harthy. Free practice two will take place on Saturday, July 2, with LMGTE qualifying beginning at 13.40 local time.

India survive scare in tense
T20 win over Ireland

LONDON: India held their nerve to beat Ireland by four runs as the world's top-ranked Twenty20 side survived a scare in Malahide on Tuesday.

The tourists chalked up their second successive victory in the two-match T20 series but it was a closer call than they would have expected.

India scored an imposing 225-7 in their 20 overs after winning the toss.

After opener Ishan Kishan fell for three, Sanju Samson and Deepak Hooda put on a world T20 record 176-run partnership for the second wicket.

Samson fell for a vibrant 77 from 42 balls, leaving Hooda to take top billing with his blistering 104.

Hooda hit nine fours and six sixes in his 57-ball masterpiece before Josh Little dismissed him.

Ireland pinned the Indians back at the death as Dinesh Karthik, Axar Patel and Harshal Patel all went for nought.

Set a target of 226, Paul Stirling hit 40 from 18 alongside captain Andrew Balbirnie, who scored 60



India's Deepak Hooda celebrates his century during the second T20I against Ireland at Malahide Cricket Club, in Dublin. – AFP

from 37.

Ireland needed 38 from the final 18 balls and some quick runs from George Dockrell and Mark Adair moved them within touching distance of a famous victory.

But, needing eight runs from

three balls and then six from the final delivery off Umran Malik, Ireland fell just short on 221-5.

— AFP

BRIEF SCORES:
India 225-7 (D. Hooda 104, S. Samson 77; M. Adair 3-42) bt Ireland 221-5 (A. Balbirnie 60, P. Stirling 40)

Lyon bags five as Australia bowl out SL

GALLE, SRI LANKA: Spinner Nathan Lyon claimed five wickets as Australia bowled out Sri Lanka for 212 on a turning pitch at Galle in the opening Test on Wednesday.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Niroshan Dickwella made a defiant 58 before the Sri Lankan innings folded in the third session of a fast-moving game on the opening day of the two-match series.

Lyon, who bagged his 20th five-wicket haul in Tests, combined with fellow spinner Mitchell Swepson, a leg-spinner who took three wickets, after the tourists were put in to field first.

Fast bowlers Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc struck early with a wicket each as Sri Lanka took lunch at 68-2. The spinners soon took charge on a pitch traditionally known to assist the slow bowlers.

The left-handed Dickwella counter-attacked during his 59-ball stay at the crease and put on key partnerships, including a 54-run stand with Ramesh Mendis, who made 22, for the seventh wicket.

Dickwella reached his fifty off 42 balls in the second session but Lyon got him out soon after, also sending back Mendis after tea.

Lyon got his fifth wicket in



Australia's Nathan Lyon celebrates after taking five wickets. – AFP

SCOREBOARD

SRI LANKA FIRST INNINGS: P Nissanka c A Carey b Cummins23 D Karunaratne c Warner b Lyon28 K Mendis c Carey b Starc3 A Mathews c Warner b Lyon39 D de Silva c Carey b Swepson14 D Chandimal c Warner b Swepson0 N Dickwella c Carey b Lyon58 R Mendis lbw Lyon22	J Vandersay c Starc b Swepson6 L Embuldeniya c Khawaja b Lyon6 A Fernando (not out)2 Extras (B-5, LB-6)11 Total (all out, 59 overs)212 Fall of wickets: 1-38, 2-42, 3-74, 4-97, 5-97, 6-139, 7-193, 8-198, 9-206 Bowling: Starc 9-0-31-1, Cummins 12-4-25-1, Lyon 25-2-90-5, Swepson 13-0-55-3
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Lasith Embuldeniya and Swepson ended the innings after 59 overs.

Earlier, Swepson struck on successive balls to get Dhananjaya de Silva, for 14, and Dinesh Chandimal, for nought, as David Warner held on to a juggling catch after the ball deviated from the wicketkeeper's glove.

Dickwella denied Swepson his hat-trick and hit back with three

boundaries in one over from Lyon.

But the off-spinner came back strong in his next over to dismiss Angelo Mathews, for 39, and ended a 42-run stand for the sixth wicket.

Australia were unchanged from the team that secured a 1-0 series win over Pakistan in March.

— AFP



SERENA’S CAREER AT A CROSSROADS AFTER WIMBLEDON DEFEAT

LONDON: With her 41st birthday just months away and without a Grand Slam title since 2017, Serena Williams faces searching questions over her future after a painful first-round Wimbledon exit.

The American was back on Centre Court on Tuesday after a year away from singles tennis but it was a miserable return to the scene of some of her greatest triumphs.

The 23-time major winner was cheered as she entered the court and supported throughout by a crowd desperate to see her recapture former glories against unseeded Harmony Tan of France.

But she looked a pale shadow of her former self, making 54 unforced errors in an uncharacteristically sloppy display that ended with a tame forehand dumped into the net.

Despite her lack of form and fitness, Serena, who lost 7-5, 1-6, 7-6 (10/7), looked to have the match in her grasp at various points.

She served for victory when 5-4 up in the decider and even in the tie-break raced into a 4-0 lead before her game fell apart.

Putting a brave face on her defeat, the American said it was “definitely better than last year”, when an ankle injury forced a tearful exit in her first-round match against Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

The 40-year-old only returned to tennis last week, teaming up with Ons Jabeur in the doubles at Eastbourne.

Asked if she might have played her final Wimbledon, she said she was unsure.

Uncertain future

“I don’t know,” she said. “Who knows? Who knows where I’ll pop up?”

Questioned as to whether she would be happy if the defeat by 115th-ranked Tan was her final memory of Wimbledon, she said: “Obviously not. You know me. Definitely not.

“But today I gave all I could do. Maybe tomorrow I could have given more. Maybe a week ago I could have given more. But today was what I could do.”

The former world number one, handed a wildcard to compete at the All England Club, first won Wimbledon way back in 2002.

But despite her bitter disappointment she sounded motivated to play on, even though she is nearly twice as old as world number one Iga Swiatek

“It definitely makes me want to hit the practice courts because, you know, when you’re playing not bad and you’re so close,” she said.

The US Open, which starts in August, is

firmly in her sights.

Williams’s win there in 1999 was her first singles Grand Slam triumph, launching her stellar career in the majors — which has featured periods of near-total dominance.

“When you’re at home, the US Open, that being the first place I’ve won a Grand Slam, is something that’s always super special,” said Williams, who has won at Flushing Meadows six times.

“Your first time is always special. There’s definitely lots of motivation to get better and to play at home.”

Williams’s place in the pantheon of all-time greats is already assured but she remains agonisingly one singles title short of Margaret

**THE AMERICAN WAS
BACK ON CENTRE COURT
ON TUESDAY AFTER
A YEAR AWAY FROM
SINGLES TENNIS BUT
IT WAS A MISERABLE
RETURN TO THE SCENE
OF SOME OF HER
GREATEST TRIUMPHS**

Court’s all-time Grand Slam record of 24.

The American, who has also won multiple major doubles titles with her sister Venus, last won a Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in 2017, giving birth later that year to her daughter, Olympia.

Since then, she has been in four Grand Slam finals, including two at Wimbledon and two at the US Open, but has come up short each time.

Williams, who has won 73 singles titles in her career overall, has plummeted to 1,204th in the world after her year out of the game.

It must look a long way back to the top for a once-dominant player as she considers her future in the game. — AFP



France’s Harmony Tan celebrates winning her first round match against Serena Williams of the US. — Reuters



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The Sustainable City — Yiti signs escrow agreement with Sohar Islamic Bank

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 29

The Sustainable City — Yiti, set to be the first fully sustainable community in the Sultanate of Oman, signed on Wednesday a Memorandum of Understanding with Sohar Islamic Bank to open an Escrow Account for the newly launched master planned project in the capital city of Muscat.

This agreement was made in accordance with Royal Decree 30/2018, which aims to protect developers' funds. Accordingly, The Sustainable City — Yiti can now offer Escrow services for the buyers of its upcoming 1,657 residential units — including 300 eco-friendly and energy-efficient villas, 1225 apartments and 132 luxury serviced apartments.

The agreement was signed by Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, Chairman of Sustainable Development and Investment Company (SDIC) and Abdulwahid bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer, Sohar Islamic. The ceremony was also attended by key stakeholders from OMRAN Group, Diamond Developers and Sohar Islamic.

Commenting on this partnership, Hashil al Mahrouqi, Chairman of SDIC, said: "With an investment value of nearly \$1 billion, this project marks a unique milestone in our journey as we



continue to invest, develop and maximise the limitless potential of Oman's tourism sector. We are committed to working with our partners to ensure the smoothest experience for our buyers and investors. Our agreement with Sohar Islamic, one of the leading financial institutions in the country, not only protects customers but assists in attracting investors to Oman's real estate market."

Al Murshidi of Sohar Islamic said: "We always aspire to collaborate with key strategic partners in the development space. This agreement was a result



of a very detailed dialogue and requirements definition exercise between the teams from both sides, and we are delighted to be offering bespoke services to The Sustainable City — Yiti buyers

“With an investment value of nearly \$1 billion, this project marks a unique milestone in our journey as we continue to invest, develop and maximise the limitless potential of Oman's tourism sector.”

HASHIL AL MAHROUQI
Chairman, SDIC

and to support the property sector and the overall economic growth of the Sultanate of Oman."

The Sustainable City — Yiti project is a partnership between OMRAN Group, the executive arm of the Sultanate of Oman for developing the tourism sector, and Diamond Developers — the leading company in developing sustainable communities. The project will be the largest operational sustainable community in the region, designed to deliver measurable outcomes across the three pillars of sustainability: Social, environmental, economic and will achieve net-zero carbon targets by 2040.



'Greenwashing': A new climate battleground

PARIS: Fossil fuel firms are misleading the public about their moves to cut greenhouse gases and curb climate change — and social media are hosting ads that perpetuate this "greenwashing", researchers say.

AFP Fact Check took an in-depth look at how this is happening. The full report, including lobbying and communications fact boxes on 10 top oil and gas companies, is at <http://u.afp.com/wDuA>.

Many companies have vowed to reach the "net zero" level of greenhouse gas emissions needed to keep global warming below 1.5°C under the Paris climate accords, the threshold established by scientists for avoiding the worst impacts.

At the same time, research shows, they are advertising and lobbying for more drilling and burning of the fossil fuels that are heating the Earth's surface.

Leaders and businesspeople agree that changing how we warm our homes and power industries is no simple task.

But critics say the gap between slogans and action undermines meaningful efforts to cut emissions.

In a study published by the open-access science journal 'PLOS', scientists analysed the gap between talk and deeds on climate and low-carbon energy by four big oil companies: BP, Shell, ExxonMobil and Chevron.

Their green strategies "are dominated by pledges rather than concrete actions", concluded the study, under lead author Mei Li of Tohoku University in Japan.

"Until actions and investment behaviour are brought into alignment with discourse, accusations of greenwashing appear well-founded."

A search on the Facebook pages of big oil and gas firms and the social platform's Ad Library shows that companies are posting green slogans while also running ads urging customers to "fill up your tank" or win "a year's worth of gasoline". Contacted by AFP, the companies detailed plans to develop lower-carbon energy sources and measures such as carbon capture and storage — a method currently not advanced enough to be very helpful, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

TURN TO P14

Dhofar to host major economic forum next month

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JUNE 29

Against the backdrop of this year's khareef season, a major economic conference will be held in Salalah with the goal of spotlighting Dhofar Governorate's potential as a tourism, business, economic and investment destination.

The Dhofar Economic Conference, organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Dhofar), will be held at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex, Salalah, during August 21-22, 2022. It will take place in parallel with an exhibition of Omani products and services, according to a key official.

"The Dhofar Economic Conference aims to highlight the investment environment, investment components, incentives and opportunities available in the Sultanate of Oman in general and Dhofar Governorate in particular", said Eng Hussain Huthaith al Batahari (pictured), Chairman — OCCI



(Dhofar Governorate).

"In addition, the forum will open up opportunities for Omani companies aspiring to enhance their exports to neighbouring and other target countries, and expand the sales of existing companies by meeting potential importers."

Speaking to the 'Observer', Al Batahari stressed that the conference will focus on Dhofar's investment appeal, particularly in the fields of manufacturing, logistics, tourism, mining and food.

Attendees will also have the opportunity to enjoy directly the experiences and success stories of companies that have taken



advantage of Oman's promising business environment, he said.

The Forum is expected to attract the participation of business owners from the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, in addition to countries that have well-established economic sectors, notably food and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and fisheries, and other emerging sectors.

Special emphasis will be given to investment opportunities available in the Sultanate of Oman during the forum, he noted.

It is estimated that more than 150 participants, representing multinational companies, consulting companies, investment funds, concerned regional and international institutions and officials from the government sectors in the Sultanate of Oman, will attend the forum. Dedicated sessions will also bring together the CEOs of the largest international companies to explore new investment opportunities.

On the sidelines of the

exhibition, there will be bilateral meetings between Omani companies and foreign investors in addition to Omani exporters and international importers. The exhibition itself will showcase Omani products and services linked to the country's thriving plastics, chemicals, foodstuff, minerals, industrial stones and other sectors.

Also supporting the Dhofar Economic Conference are a number of government and public sector entities, including: Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Oman Investment Authority, Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Salalah Port, Credit Oman, Asyad Group and its subsidiaries, Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority, Petroleum Development Oman, Ministry of Labour, Nama Group, beah and Khazaen.

Sohar International honoured with ‘Leading CSR Campaign of the Year’ title

MUSCAT: Recognising its dedication to knowledge sharing, Sohar International was awarded the highly coveted title of ‘Leading CSR Campaign of the Year’ for its ‘Take It from Us’ initiative at the OERLive Digital Transformation Conference and Awards 2022.

The event, which was conducted on June 29, 2022 at the Sheraton Hotel, and hosted by Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Maashani witnessed the presence of HH Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Chairman of Oman Information and communication Technology Group (ITHCA) as the chief guest.

The event was attended by senior-to-mid level bankers, Fintech experts, finance and investment professionals, insurance experts and business consultants.

Representing Sohar International at the glitterati summit and Awards ceremony was Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retails Banking Officer at



Sohar Internal, and a number of the bank’s executive management. Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer of Sohar International received the prestigious award from the chief guest of the event, HH Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said.

“At Sohar International, we

have always been passionate about creating a differential experience and this is reflected in how we plan our campaigns. We are delighted to have received this honour and it is heartening to know that our campaign has had a strong impact on the community.

By empowering the community

with financial knowledge, Sohar International has played a crucial role in enabling individuals to make more mindful, prudent, and well-strategised financial decisions. In a fast-evolving economic market, adequate financial literacy is quintessential for maximising welfare, both individually and for

society at large,” said Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retails Banking Officer at Sohar Internal.

Sohar International’s initiative ‘Take It from Us’ or ‘Khudha Minna’ gained increasing popularity since its launch earlier in the year. Live-streamed monthly, the programme was geared at spreading financial knowledge by providing free advisory on different banking products and services offered by the local banks.

With each episode delving into different financial instruments, the bank was successfully able to engage with the community and respond to their various queries. It covered various topics like personal loans, auto loans, insurance, and savings accounts.

To make the programme more entertaining while taking on a more comprehensive approach, it also highlighted the unique tourism adventure experience offered by SMEs or local companies.

BankDhofar launches Soft POS payment solution



MUSCAT: In line with its efforts to enhance customer experience through providing innovative and different payment methods, BankDhofar recently launched Visa’s Point of Sale (SoftPOS) Payment Solution. The first of its kind solution in the Sultanate of Oman is a low-cost, maintenance-free solution that allows merchants to accept payments quickly and conveniently through their NFC-enabled Android devices.

Commenting on the launch of Soft POS, Abu Baker al Balushi, Head of Digital Banking at BankDofar, said: “To support Digital initiatives and the country’s evolution to a cash-less society, we are proud to announce the launch of the Point of Sale (SoftPOS) Paymentsolution that will enable a range of existing and new businesses to transform their mobile devices and tablets to payment terminals accept payment.

The Soft POS will change the landscape of digital payments in the Sultanate of Oman enabling many merchants to accept all digital payments affordably and to enhance the value we add to our customers, as we continuously strive to expand on our value-driven, technologically-enabled products and services.” With the Soft POS solution, businesses can accept payments from any contactless-enabled card or mobile wallet right from their NFC-enabled Android device. Items can simply be selected on the mobile application where the merchant can receive the payment by using their mobile or tablet device as a point of sale (POS) device. The service requires no additional hardware and delivers quick and convenient payment experiences. Merchants also have the option to send the payment receipt via email or SMS. “The Soft POS highlights our ongoing efforts to provide seamless and convenient banking solutions to our customers. This low-cost, maintenance-free solution allows merchants to facilitate payments through a variety of contactless-enabled cards and devices. The solution will enable businesses to enter the market by making payment easier than ever. With no additional hardware required, companies can easily emerge into the marketplace with as little as a mobile device on hand.” Abu Baker Karim al Balushi, Head of Digital Banking, added. To use Soft POS after merchant onboarding merchants can download the app from Google Play Store and proceed using it’s services.

‘Greenwashing’: A new climate battleground

FROM PAGE 13

ExxonMobil and Chevron spokespeople insisted that due to energy demand, the scenarios foreseen by the Paris deal and the IEA mean fossil fuels will have to play a part in the transition.

Watchdogs also see greenwashing in environment-friendly but limited gestures by firms that campaigners say distract attention from their climate-harming operations.

Digital monitor Eco-Bot.net monitors cases where an online post “selectively discloses the company’s credentials or portrays symbolic actions to build a friendly brand image”.

It flagged ads and posts on protecting silkworms (Mexican cement firm Cemex), frogs (gas firm TransCanada), possums (Eletronuclear, subsidiary of Brazilian power firm Eletrobras), forests (various companies, including Spanish oil company Repsol) and one by US giant

ExxonMobil on recycling fishing ropes in Patagonia.

New York-based greenwashing researcher Genevieve Guenther told AFP the key is to measure pledges against two standards: The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) net-zero date of 2050 and the IEA’s clean 2021 energy transition roadmap.

The latter says that to meet the 2050 target there would have to be “no investment in new fossil fuel supply projects” from now on. Any company planning new investments while also trumpeting net zero targets, Guenther said, is guilty of greenwashing.

An analysis by London-based research group InfluenceMap showed the five biggest publicly traded oil and gas companies spent \$1 billion over three years to push misleading climate messages on Facebook. — AFP

Bank Nizwa’s instant auto finance now includes Nissan and Toyota

MUSCAT: As Oman’s leading Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa has been pioneering innovative digital financing solutions through strategic FinTech collaborations.

Earlier in the year, Bank Nizwa agreed with the Islamic Finance Initiation Network (IFIN) to introduce the first-of-its-kind Shariah-compliant Fintech proposition that enables customers to avail of on-the-spot financing for their dream car. Starting the offer with instant auto finance solutions, the ‘10-minute financing process’ time provided a significant impetus to the proposition, enhancing the customer experience.

In addition to the previously attained Mazda, Bank Nizwa recently joined hands with two more car dealers, Nissan and Toyota, in response to



the dynamic demands of the market.

Khaled al Kayed, CEO of Bank Nizwa, said, “Bank Nizwa has become synonymous with ‘innovation’ as we continue to explore untapped avenues, leverage it to our advantage and open new doors of opportunities that the entire Islamic banking sector can capitalise on. Our partnership with IFIN to

introduce instant auto finance is one such initiative and its growing preference in the local market further validates this decision.

On the one hand, the proposition has helped Bank Nizwa strengthen its bonds with retailers, SMEs, corporate companies and regulators. On the other, it has led to improved customer satisfaction levels.”

Oman Cables receives OER Manufacturing Excellence Award for empowering local talents

MUSCAT: Oman Cables Industry SAOG (OCI), Oman’s leading manufacturers of industrial cables, participated in the OER Manufacturing Summit 2022 where the company received the OAE Manufacturing Excellence Award for Empowering Local Talent.

The company has raised its Omanisation rate to nearly 50 per cent within the last year by introducing training and development programmes designed to unlock the potential within the local workforce.

The summit offered an ideal opportunity to share the company’s vision for supporting Oman Vision 2040



by implementing the world-leading innovative production technologies to enhance the nation’s competitiveness.

Cinzia Farisè, CEO of Oman

Cables and Prysmian Group MEAT Region was present to underline the company’s commitment towards supporting Oman’s economic diversification

by producing and offering the most advanced cable technology.

OCI is guided by a vision of ‘Empowerment, Innovation and Excellence’ which extends from its products and services to the opportunities available to its workforce.

As part of the Prysmian Group, Oman Cables has access to the Prysmian Group Academy which comprises the Prysmian Business School, Prysmian Professional School and Prysmian Digital School where employees can complete training programmes in partnership with international Business and Technical Schools with a special focus on strengthening individual skills.

Oman Cables Industry recently launched several educational initiatives to guarantee long-term sustainable growth of the company and its human capital.

Development programmes to upskill employees throughout the company have been designed to empower local talents in various roles. “STEM IT”, “SELL IT” is aimed at sales and “SUM IT” for controlling and finance.

Each programme is delivered over three-to-five years with digital training, technical training and project experience, and offers exposure to workplace cultures in Italy, North America and the ASEAN region to enhance the learning experience.



Jumeirah Group opens first luxury resort in Oman

New experiences: Luxury hospitality leader continues international expansion with announcement of new property

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 29

Jumeirah Group, the global luxury hospitality company and a member of Dubai Holding, further expands its international portfolio with the unveiling of an exceptional new resort in the Middle East — Jumeirah Muscat Bay. Nestled within the secluded cove of Bandar Jissah between the Hajar mountains and Sea of Oman, just 15 minutes from the capital Muscat, Jumeirah Muscat Bay will offer a true sense of serenity and escapism.

With sea, mountains and a historic city on its doorstep, it is the ideal spot to disconnect and spend blissful days on the beach, explore the great outdoors via an array of adventurous well-being experiences, or venture out to discover the Sultanate of Oman's



rich history.

José Silva, Chief Executive Officer of Jumeirah Group, said: "Oman is a popular destination for those looking to combine nature and wellness with cultural interest. At Jumeirah Muscat Bay, we have

focused on taking cues from the natural landscape and its restorative energy and have brought this to life through design and architecture and in keeping with the hallmarks of Jumeirah Hotels & Resorts, our innovative dining concepts,

signature service and exceptional experiences are well represented throughout this resort.

As we continue to expand our portfolio, we are delighted to open the doors to this beautiful resort and bring our brand promise of

Stay Different, for the first time to Oman."

Jumeirah Muscat Bay will offer 206 spacious rooms and suites, all assuring breath-taking ocean vistas, with connecting rooms available for the perfect family holiday. In addition, five secluded summerhouses in two-and four-bed configurations, and the exceptional Sanctuary Villa, will provide the ultimate hospitality experience, each with a private pool, dedicated butler service and access to an exclusive private beach.

Modern arabesque design features throughout the resort to ensure that Oman's natural beauty takes centre stage, while its interiors elegantly blend traditional Omani craftsmanship with light and modern hotel design.

With a focus on exceptional dining experiences, the new resort will be home to five diverse venues, overseen by Culinary Director Claudio Dieli, who brings over 26 years of experience in the global culinary industry, including tenures at several international hotels with three Michelin-stars.

Guests can delight in ocean side multi-cuisine restaurant PERIDOT, featuring interactive live cooking stations showcasing fresh and healthy favourites from all over the world, unwind over an indulgent afternoon tea in TARINI lounge, offering a tranquil escape from the Omani sun, or refuel, refresh and while the day away with tasty bites at chilled poolside eatery ZUKA.

As night falls, enjoy thirst-quenching signature global cocktails from master mixologists, Asian-style signature bites and an exquisite cigar selection at the intimate ANZO bar and terrace, boasting stunning views across the bay.

Set to open in September, signature restaurant BREZZA will provide a cool, contemporary setting with the best views in Muscat, serving exquisite sharing-style seafood and stunning culinary creations from Chef de Cuisine Cristiano Goattin, an Italian-born chef with a Michelin-star background, alongside Jumeirah's famous mixology, available in the restaurant and at the rooftop bar.

OQ wins awards for digital technologies and alternative energy strategies

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 29

OQ Group was presented with two awards at a conference held in Sheraton Oman on Wednesday under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Secretary General at the Secretariat General for the Council of Ministers.

The first award recognises

the company's efforts in using technology in both Upstream and Downstream business of oil exploration and production.

The second award was granted to honour OQ's achievements as the best company to implement alternative energy strategies in the Sultanate of Oman for the year 2022.

Commenting on the awards, Maryam al Shibani, Vice-

President of People, Technology, and Culture at OQ stated, "We are extremely proud to have received two awards that recognise all the efforts exerted by OQ Group in utilising technology in both Upstream and Downstream processes of oil exploration and production, which has directly contributed to reducing oil production costs."

"As a diversified energy group,

OQ has been successful in integrating all its activities, right from exploration to operation and marketing.

This has contributed to increasing oil production and embowering new assets by enhancing their operational efficiency in addition to the deployment of several digital initiatives such as block chain technology, she added.

ME financial services industry undergoing major value shift: Report

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 29

Following the release of their much anticipated global 'State of the Financial Services Report' – which finds a shift in value towards new players, but also a set of market conditions ripe for smart incumbents to regain market share – global management consultancy Oliver Wyman looks at what these findings mean for the Middle East.

According to Mathieu Vasseux, Partner – Head of IMEA Financial Services, and KSA Market Leader at Oliver Wyman, "The financial services sector in the region is undergoing a once-in-a-generation value shift, as new fintech entrants and incumbents jostle for position in a market rapidly expanding into new services".

Notwithstanding this shift, there is significant opportunity for established players though, according to Vasseux: "In light of specific market conditions at present (high interest rates boosting bank earnings, regulators championing change, and fintechs under pressure from investors to demonstrate real ROI), there is a real opening for established



players to get back in front – if they make their move wisely".

The impact of new players in the sector can certainly not be ignored: in 2019 – 2021, MENA's fintech sector captured the largest portion of venture capital investments across all tech sectors, at \$720 million+, with deal volume growing 60 per cent YoY, and deal values more than tripling.

Buoyed by a new generation of users actively seeking different experiences, both new players and incumbents are diversifying, digitising and releasing new innovative products: digital wallets from incumbents, like Al Rajhi Bank's URPay, and other sectors such as STC Pay (7.8m+ users) provide the cashless, user-centric experience the next generation of consumers crave.

Entry-level investment platforms like Sarwa (more than 50,000 users) are drawing in a growing pool of novice investors.

Two of more than 10 BNPL offers in the Middle East Tamara and Tabby raised \$50m and \$110m in Series B and A funding respectively, catering to credit anti-interest, card-shy younger users, while FAB's Magnati and Mashreq's Neopay signify a strong reaction from incumbents to restore dominance in payments.

Dubai's Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority becomes world's first regulator to make its debut in the Metaverse, with Dubai also issuing the first law regulating virtual assets.

Bahraini Rain Financial raised \$110m investment earlier this year, a record for the crypto industry in

NEW FINTECH ENTRANTS AND INCUMBENTS JOSTLE FOR POSITION IN A MARKET RAPIDLY EXPANDING INTO NEW SERVICES.

region, while CoinMENA became the first licenced crypto exchange in Qatar.

Cryptocurrencies have entered the mainstream, with Damac and Emirates now accepting it as payment, and the Kingdom's futuristic NEOM will get a metaverse city, incorporating crypto and non-fungible tokens.

Digital banking is also on the rise with incumbents venturing into this space (Emirates NBD actively growing its Liv platform), and newcomers at the gate: KSA awarded the first digital banking licence to STC Pay just last year.

"The winners in this battle for dominance will be those who deploy their capital strategically and pivot decisively toward new sources of value.

For proactive incumbents, there are significant opportunities to be had in the current environment – they just have to identify and seize them" commented Vasseux.

Britain extends steel tariffs in breach of trade rules



A worker cuts newly manufactured bars of steel at the United Cast Bar Group's foundry in Chesterfield, Britain. – Reuters

LONDON: Britain on Wednesday extended a package of tariffs and quotas on five steel products by two years to shield local steelmakers, acknowledging it would breach international trade rules but saying it was needed for the national interest.

Trade Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan told parliament the safeguards would help defend a strategic industry and British steel producers could face "serious injury" were the measures not maintained.

Since leaving the European Union and the bloc's common trade policy, Britain has sought to carve out a role on the global stage as a champion of free commerce, calling out restrictive practices by others like China and advocating for World Trade Organization (WTO) reform. Trevelyan, too, described herself as a champion of free trade, but said present circumstances warranted the extension of safeguards.

"The decision... departs from our international legal

obligations under the relevant WTO agreement", Trevelyan said.

"However, from time to time, issues may arise where the national interest requires action to be taken." Britain is ready to take up any concerns raised by WTO members following its decision, Trevelyan added.

The move, while welcomed by the UK steel industry, is likely to upset some local manufacturers, which say they have to rely on overseas steel because domestic suppliers cannot meet demand.

"The extension of the UK's steel safeguards is absolutely vital to the long-term health of the steel industry in the UK and is in line with the course of action being taken by governments across the world."

"Deficient or absent safeguards measures risk trade diversion away from shielded markets elsewhere, resulting in surges of imports into the UK", said Richard Warren, an official with trade body UK Steel. — Reuters

EU split over climate fund to help most vulnerable

EU countries battled through the night to hash out the bloc's new measures to fight climate change, with negotiations focused on a "Social Climate Fund" for those most vulnerable in the green transition.

Late on Tuesday, environment ministers from the European Union's 27 member states adopted a common position on achieving zero-emission new cars by 2035, and on a special fund to help firms and consumers cover the cost of their climate efforts. But the proposal for the Social Climate Fund (SCF) — a key component of the plan presented by the European Commission in July 2021 — was the subject of tense debate late into the night.

Establishing the special budget would help offset the impact of price increases for the bloc's most vulnerable households, and would also go towards housing and road transport measures that would reduce costs.

The subject is extremely sensitive for governments — linked to energy prices — is on the rise.

With divisions still deep, the 27 member states agreed on the plan in principle but remained at odds on the size of the fund.

Initially the fund aimed to provide over 72 billion euros in EU funding from 2025 to 2032.

But richer countries — like the Netherlands and Germany — want a smaller fund, with the spending targeted towards innovation, while Eastern European countries are pushing for a bigger budget to help cover the cost of going green.

Berlin had initially proposed the allocation of 20 billion euros — the smallest possible portion — but finally on Tuesday raised it to 48 billion euros.

France, which holds the rotating presidency of the EU, rallied the majority of states to the amount of 59 billion euros for a shorter period (2027-2032), calling it a "fairly balanced compromise".

The agreement did not convince Poland, which denounced "decisions that risk undermining popular support for the climate plan", while Latvia voiced concerns about a fund "unable to meet the challenges faced".

Other issues, including a revamp of the EU's Emissions Trading System, were less contentious.

On Wednesday, member states announced they had agreed to gradually eliminate the free emissions allowances granted to certain industrial sectors. — AFP

France, which holds the rotating presidency of the EU, rallied the majority of states to the amount of 59 billion euros for a shorter period (2027-2032), calling it a "fairly balanced compromise".



ROUBLE VS DOLLAR
Russian rouble coins are seen in front of displayed US Dollar banknote in this illustration taken. The Russian rouble rallied on Wednesday to its strongest levels in more than seven years, nearing 50 against the dollar for the first time since May 2015. At 07:24 GMT, it was up more than 3 per cent to 50.22 against the dollar on the Moscow Exchange after hitting 50.01. The rouble has become the world's best-performing currency this year, boosted by measures taken to shield Russia's financial system from western sanctions. — AFP

Wrong on the dollar – for now



STEPHEN S ROACH
The author is a faculty member at Yale University and former chairman of Morgan Stanley Asia

THE THEORY STRESSES THAT SAVING-SHORT ECONOMIES MUST IMPORT SURPLUS SAVING IN ORDER TO KEEP GROWING, AND THEN RUN LARGE CURRENT-ACCOUNT DEFICITS IN ORDER TO ATTRACT THE FOREIGN CAPITAL.

I should have listened to Alan Greenspan — at least when it comes to currency forecasting. The former chair of the Federal Reserve once told me it was a fool's game, with the odds of getting currency calls right worse than a successful bet on a coin toss. Two years ago, I ignored the maestro's advice and went out on a limb, predicting that the US dollar would crash by 35 per cent.

After a tantalising 9 per cent decline in the second half of 2020, the broad dollar index has gone the other way, soaring by 12.3 per cent from January 2021 through May 2022.

That puts the dollar 2.3 per cent above its level in May 2020, around the time I made this seemingly foolish call. How did I get it so wrong? Three factors shaped my thinking: America's current-account deficit, Federal Reserve policy, and TINA ("there is no alternative").

I argued that the external deficit was headed for big trouble and that a passive Fed would do little to arrest the problem — effectively forcing the bulk of the current-account adjustment to be concentrated in a weakening currency rather than in rising interest rates. I also took a swipe at the TINA defence of the dollar and tried to make the case for euro and renminbi appreciation.

Basically, the Fed saved the dollar — aided and abetted by Russian President Vladimir Putin. The US current-account deficit, the crux of my fundamental case against the dollar, has in fact deteriorated dramatically over the past two years.

The broadest measure of America's international balance went from -2 per cent of GDP in the first quarter of 2020 to -4.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, with the

just-reported data for early 2022 revealing the second-sharpest quarterly deterioration since 1960.

America's current-account deficit hasn't been this large since mid-2008 in the depths of the global financial crisis. My dollar-crash narrative hinged importantly on the possibility of an increasingly unstable post-pandemic current-account dynamic, with outsize federal budget deficits leading to a sharp compression of already-depressed domestic saving.

The theory stresses that saving-short economies must import surplus saving in order to keep growing, and then run large current-account deficits in order to attract the foreign capital. In the face of exploding budget deficits, the theory worked as expected: the net domestic saving rate plunged to zero in the middle two quarters of 2020.

Surprisingly, domestic saving has since rebounded, with the net national saving rate averaging 3.25 per cent in 2021 and moving up further to 4.2 per cent in early 2022.

Over the post-pandemic period starting in the second quarter of 2020, however, the net domestic saving rate has averaged just 2.6 per cent of national income, a dramatic shortfall from the longer-term 45-year average of 7 per cent from 1960 to 2005. This matches up reasonably well with the sharp recent widening of the US current-account deficit.

History demonstrates that sharply deteriorating current-account balances are not a sustainable outcome for countries lacking domestic saving.

Foreign creditors will demand concessions for lending their surpluses: higher returns (interest rates), cheaper

financing (the currency conversion), or both. If one option is closed off, then the other channel bears the brunt of the current-account adjustment.

This is where the Fed saved the dollar. It certainly didn't seem that way in 2020 and early 2021. During that period, the Fed was steadfast in maintaining its overly accommodative policy stance, even in the face of an emerging inflationary shock that it initially misdiagnosed as "transitory." I viewed this intransigence as good reason to believe that interest rates would remain uncomfortably low.

As a result, the US current-account adjustment would be increasingly concentrated in the sharp depreciation of an overvalued dollar. My call for a 35 per cent correction in the dollar was in line with the 30 per cent average of three earlier large cyclical drops that had occurred in the 1970s, 1980s, and in the early 2000s.

When the Fed belatedly pivoted in late 2021, I should have done the same thing with my dollar call. Forward-looking financial markets correctly sensed that something had to give and moved well in anticipation of the Fed's about-face; roughly half of the dollar's 12.3 per cent appreciation since January 2021 occurred prior to the Fed's conversion the following December.

Putin's saber-rattling and subsequent military aggression in Ukraine added a significant safe-haven bid to the dollar. The euro and even the renminbi fell, instead of rising, as I had predicted, and the Japanese yen collapsed, as the Bank of Japan was more than willing to accommodate an inflation surprise as an antidote to its third "lost decade."

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'Made in Oman' in collaboration with Qatar



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

Qatari investments in the Sultanate of Oman have strengthened in recent years, becoming concentrated in several active economic sectors, including the industrial sector.

One significant project resulting from such serious investments was inaugurated the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Duqm recently. Karwa Motors, the first factory for the assembly of buses, is the product of Omani and Qatari investments.

Although the first phase of the bus assembly project is modest in its capital at \$71 million, there is optimism that the two countries

will inject further funding in the project in future. Qatar's Mowasalat has a 70 per cent stake in Karwa Motors, while Oman Investment Authority contributes the remaining 30 per cent of the project's capital.

The recent inauguration of the project witnessed participation of a number of Qatari and Omani officials and personalities, who praised the specifications and high quality of buses assembled at the plant.

Such factories need more local and foreign investments plants manufacturing automotive spare parts and equipment required by the bus industry. This opens up opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises

specialising in the manufacture of parts and components. Elsewhere in the world, automotive plants typically stimulate the growth of hundreds of factories that supply all kinds of parts and accessories necessary for the industry.

For example, we find that the Toyota in Japan depends upon around 40,000 Japanese small and medium enterprises for the parts and equipment that go into the brand's cars, buses and other vehicles.

The Japanese not only monopolise the manufacturing space for their products, but they also open up opportunities for others to enter these industries, thereby igniting the growth of millions of job openings in various

economic sectors. This is what we hope to see achieved in our Gulf region, which has financial, human and logistical capabilities.

Today, the Sultanate of Oman is working to achieve economic diversification, whether in manufacturing or in other economic sectors, by allocating large areas for individuals and institutions that wish to engage in productive work. It works alongside industrialisation by exploiting maritime, agricultural and mineral resources that the Almighty has blessed the nation with.

This Omani-Qatari factory, which is supported by Chinese technologies, is only a useful model that Oman can replicate in driving the growth of industrial

investment over the coming years. It is the product of real economic partnership between the two brotherly countries.

This project aims to achieve a set of development goals in the Sultanate of Oman and Qatar through the transfer of modern technologies, enhancement of local added value, and contributing to the employment of qualified Omani workers in such modern centres and factories.

While production was partly delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the first batches of buses are headed to the sisterly State of Qatar, where they will deployed for passenger transportation during the 2022 Fifa World Cup in November.

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#Living_with_COVID19

Keep your children engaged by allowing them to do chores

One of the challenges of mothers from around the world is how to keep their children engaged. As such, many mothers are diversifying their programs not only for their children to learn academic lessons but also to learn some important life skills and chores at home. Omani mothers are sharing some of their best practices so you too can keep your young ones busy... **P20**

Magnificent ancient mosaic found near Tel Aviv returns home

AN EXCEPTIONALLY well-preserved Roman floor mosaic, showing a rich variety of fish, animals, birds and ships, has returned to the site where it was first found in a Tel Aviv suburb after a decade-long tour of some of the world's top museums.

The 1,700-year-old mosaic, from the late Roman period, was discovered in 1996 during highway construction work, but was not put on display until 2009, when sufficient funding to pre-

serve it was donated.

The colourful mosaic, 17 metres (55 ft) long and about 9 metres (29 ft) wide, may have served as the foyer floor of a mansion in a wealthy neighbourhood of Lod, near what is now Tel Aviv, the Israel antiquities Authority said in a statement.

"The owner was probably a very rich merchant because he travelled throughout the world and he saw things, like all the

ships and the fish on display in the mosaic", said archaeologist Hagit Torge from the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The design of the mosaic was influenced by North African

mosaics and lacks any depiction of people, suggesting it may have belonged to a Christian or a Jew who wanted to avoid pagan attributes such as depiction of Roman gods, said archaeologist

Amir Gorzalczy from the Israel Antiquities Authority.

The mosaic will now be exhibited at an archaeological centre built where it was found, in Lod. — **Reuters**

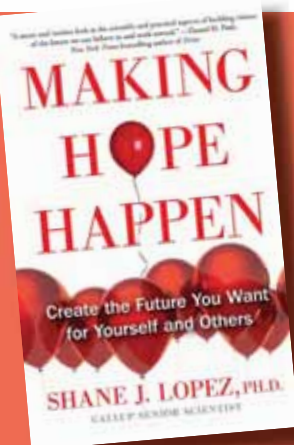


READ

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BY SHANE LOPEZ

Making Hope Happen is an inspiring book for the readers that believe that the future can be better than the past or the present.



ENTERTAINMENT

It was a sun-drenched love affair between Diana Ross and revellers at Glastonbury on Sunday when the U.S. singer played in the "legends" slot on the final day of the festival. — Reuters



ANIMAL AFFAIR

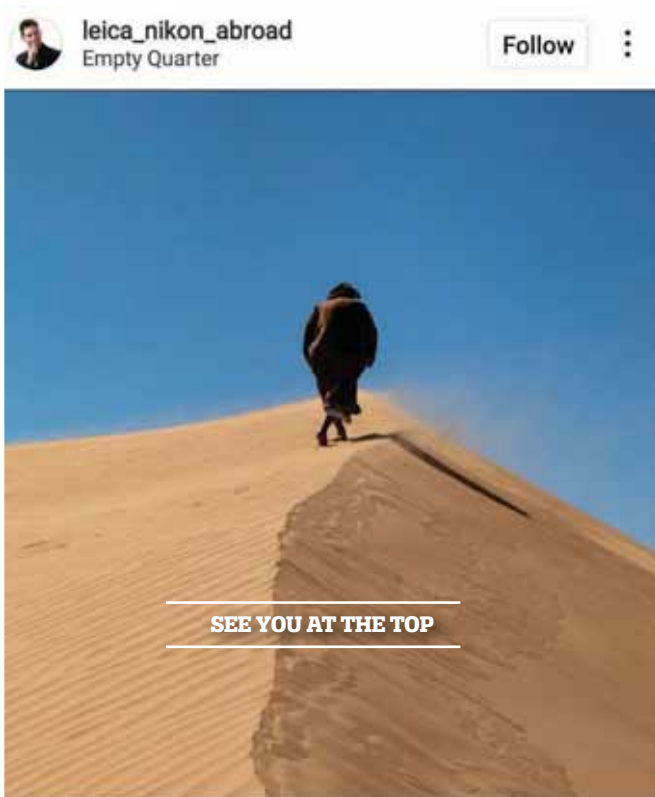
This photo shows a panda enjoying a cake made with ice during its birthday at a zoo in Nanning, in China's southern Guangxi region.





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

With 'Thirteen Lives,' Ron Howard revisits Thai cave rescue



THE DRAMATIC rescue of 12 youth football players and their coach from a flooded cave in Thailand in 2018, a captivating operation already revisited in an award-winning documentary, is now getting the big-screen dramatic treatment from Ron Howard.

"Thirteen Lives" hits theaters in North America on July 29, and the Oscar-winning Howard -- who cast a mix of bankable stars and untested talent in the movie -- says making the film was an "exciting challenge."

He called his latest a "very extreme version of my favorite kinds of films -- you know, the kinds of films that prove that remarkable outcomes are not the stuff of fiction, that when people pull together, incredible things can happen."

"Thirteen Lives" -- which stars Joel Edgerton, Colin Farrell and Viggo Mortensen -- retells the story of the spectacular rescue of the 12 boys and their coach who, in June 2018, found themselves trapped in Tham Luang cave for more than two weeks.

Recreating the conditions of the intense incident was both physically and psychologically challenging for the actors. Farrell, who plays British cave diver John Volanthen, said during a screening of the film's trailer on Monday that it was "terrifying" to film most of the time under water, even under expert supervision.

It didn't help that Farrell, by his own admission, "can't really swim." "It's a different world beneath the surface of the water," the Irish actor said. "Water's wet, no matter how much control you have or don't have."

- 'MANY BRANDS OF HEROISM' -

The spectacular rescue is already the subject of the 2021 National Geographic documentary "The Rescue," which featured some never-before-seen footage obtained from the Thai military after two years of tough negotiations. Howard attempted to delve even more into the personal drama, and highlight the work of those who volunteered to help, at risk of their own lives.

"It was this ongoing process of... creating the environment and the effort, and then attaching the humanity to it," the director said. "There are all kinds of, many brands of heroism that are demonstrated through the movie."

He also emphasized the need to accurately depict the local population in Thailand's northern province of Chiang Rai -- the teens in the film are played by actors from the area, so that the language spoken is authentic.

"It's not just an accent -- it's also phrasing," said Howard, who worked with the film's co-producer Vorakorn "Billy" Ruetaivanichkul, to help the boys understand the mindset of those who were trapped.

"I asked them... imagine that you are in a tight space and imagine that you have a lack of food and water for a few days already, and you are unlikely to get out very soon," Ruetaivanichkul said.

- 'BURDEN BUT AN HONOR' -

Mortensen highlighted the "team-oriented effort" of making the film, noting that it mirrored the relationships between the real-life rescuers the actors were playing.

For his part, Farrell spoke about the "responsibility to honor the lives that were passed and not just the spirit of those who survived the rescue," recalling that two people associated with the cave extraction died.

"It was a burden but an honor, and we were really aware of it," he said.

"Thirteen Lives" will be available in August for streaming via Amazon Prime after its cinematic release. —AFP

COMMUNITY EVENTS

ORFAN: A data management system dedicated to volunteer organisations



By Qusai al Abri

VOLUNTEERISM FILLS in many gaps in our society today with volunteers rendering services to often forgotten segments of communities that needed not just the care but also the guidance and support.

Hasna al Salti is one of those people who love volunteering having found the passion when she first volunteered in 2013 through her organisation specialising in serving orphans, struggling families and people with disabilities.

While other volunteers focus more on the nurturing side of this programme, Hasna focused more on her academic specialisation wherein as a software developer, she helps different organisations by developing a system that manages the data of these organisations.

Hasna has been instrumental in the creation of the data managing system called ORFAN. Through this system, data is accessed and controlled electronically and quickly.

Hasna worked on it for a while during her studies at the university, and this was the first time she worked on an integrated system. She used a new programming language that she had previously studied at the university, where she learned it individually. It took her too long to programme and design this system.

The random collection of

data in these volunteer teams motivated Hasna to programme an organised, well-designed database. This randomness of data resulted on multiple mistakes, so, the idea of converting data into a database was necessary to speed up the pace of work and keep the data secured.

"This system is made by personal diligence and self-learning. But it was with the help of the academic staff at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Sur and the cooperation of the professors of the Information Technology Department that she could continue the programme", she says.

The assistant professors encouraged Hasna to continue working on her dream and develop it, yet, they had great credit for developing and implementing this system with her.

She chose to create this system because volunteer work is her own world in which she finds herself. She believes that it is necessary to harness the specialisation she is studying for the service of volunteer work. Hasna looks forward and hopes



that there will be a clear database for all volunteer teams in Oman, through which they organise their work and avoid randomness and ensure that aids reach their beneficiaries without missing anyone. She seeks to develop it better and turn it into an online platform that can be accessed from all devices at any time.

She is also currently seeking to make her program the first approved system for all volunteer teams in the Sultanate of Oman. She is also looking to reach outside the Sultanate of Oman or even help those who wish to develop a similar system to manage the data of volunteer teams around the world.

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

To keep yourself safe, take the annual booster

BY NOW, everyone already has a good understanding that the original recipe of vaccination held up quite well against Covid-19 in the last months.

Unfortunately though, as we also learned, the virus also fights against these developments and also has changed drastically and even more so maybe in the coming winter. We can definitely expect that whatever these alterations are, vaccines will definitely be fitted to ensure their effectiveness.

Interestingly, my question here is whether the next round of picks will still contain the original version of the virus as well or new formula by adding any part of Omicron for instance would protect people better than another dose of the original vaccine prescription, whose protective power wears off for months.

However, as all of us observed during the last period of this pandemic, that the protective power of corona shots will depend largely on how far they reach: I mean more people who get them as recommended, the better they will work! Hence, the health institutions and community should understand also this critical point. As such the community may need another round-up of shots may be ahead of the coming winter, for instance, understanding that it won't just be a sequel to the last year and a half injections, but it will be

an opportunity for a true cultural reminding the catastrophic sequel what we faced two years back with many families who lost their beloved!

However, injecting the bodies of vaccinated people with particles of Omicron strain should expand their defences, even if the replacement is not exactly the same as the version of the virus. As we should after all need to understand that the virus has changed and now the vaccines also need to be changed or if I can say need to be updated!

Of course, a lot of people are just anxious to keep their loved ones safe and they want to hear that this can be achieved with a booster vaccine, so don't let say, Corona affect the survival of your family reunion and ask if your children on the max of boosters? Everyone should realise the importance of the vaccine and the booster vaccine. On other hand, I could name it as an annual vaccine if that irritated some, looking to its benefit in long run.

In the end, those talks about the booster and preparing taking it with such information about it, besides adding particle of a variant to the original vaccine and its importance, have to get off the ground now or you risk not getting off at all.

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

art & life

Local Scene

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THURSDAY | JUNE 30 | 2022

Keep your children engaged by allowing them to do chores

By Ruqaya Al Kindi

Children are instinctively eager to experience everything in their surroundings. The things that are common sense to adults are fertile and attractive materials for youngsters to explore because they are ignorant of that experience and have not yet satisfied their curiosity.

"As someone said: "Every child is born a scientist", because they explore, research and question by trying things, breaking them down and putting their senses on them, and we just need to enrich their curiosity in various ways", Jawaher al Tamimi, who is a mother rediscovers the world through the eyes of her two children, and she is interested in involving her children in home activities (Insta account: orange.om).

Jawaher confirmed that household activities should not be limited to the summer period because it represents an effective tool for the child to experience his senses and satisfy his

curiosity about how things work, differentiate between them, solve some visual and motor problems and strengthen the various muscles of the body.

"To achieve amazing results, the child needs a long-term learning journey", she added.

One of the easy-to-do home activities, according to the mother Amira al Yarubi, who seeks to have an enjoyable motherhood journey with her children, is taking care of plants.

"Allow your kids to take care of the indoor plants, they can learn how to water properly, and how to place the plants in good light so they can grow well. Children are naturally drawn to playing with water and sand, so use that desire to take care of the backyard; You can get them the planting essentials and let them create their own mini garden in the backyard", she said.

"Gardening is one of the wonderful activities that help children to know everything related to agriculture and its importance in our lives and make it different for them since childhood. The child can also contrib-

ute to trimming trees and cleaning gardens", she added (Insta account: amira_alyarubi).

PARENTS, AS WELL, CAN ENJOY PLAYING FAMILY GAMES WITH THEIR KIDS. "This has a lot of benefits, you kids can learn different skills like sharing, taking turns patience and teamwork. Summertime can be a good time to introduce traditional family games as well like Monopoly, Chess and Uno", Amira noted.

FAMILY TALENT SHOW IS ANOTHER GREAT IDEA.

"Design a poster to invite family members to take part in this show. Family members can choose to showcase anything that they are good at and proud of", Amira mentioned.

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION IS AN OPTION.

"Allow your kids to use Google or books to search for answers to all the questions they ask throughout the day. You can also pick a topic and let them search for more details about

it", Amira shared.

CHILDREN, AS WELL, CAN INVOLVE A HOME WORKOUT.

"Talk to your child about the benefits of physical activity and spare some time to exercise with them. Keep it fun, ask your child which activities they like and enjoy the most. Mix it up from day to day", Amira said.

DEEP CLEANING CAN BE A JOYFUL ACTIVITY FOR CHILDREN.

"Let you kids take part in home deep cleaning. The summer holiday is a very good time to deep clean stores, drawers, back yard... etc. This can help kids value clean-up and keep the house tidy", Amira referred.

CHILDREN WOULD LOVE TO HAVE VIRTUAL TRAVELLING.

"Allow your kids to choose a destination. Let them gather information about it, then head to YouTube or any other Virtual reality apps and travel with your kids. Virtual field trips can have some benefits for kids like learning about history, discovering science and checking outer

space", Amira explained.

LETTING THE CHILDREN BE LITTLE CHEF IS AN EXCITING IDEA.

"Allow your kids to help in cooking meals. Let them serve the meal and learn some life skills. Cooking with family can also develop happy and adventurous eaters with plenty of happy memories", Amira shared.

PRACTISING ARTS WITH FAMILY GIVES THE EXPERIENCE A DIFFERENT PLEASURE.

"Schedule some art sessions for the family. Art can encourage quality time with family members and stimulate creativity and imagination", Amira said.

Jawaher al Tamimi stressed that parents should take into account that devoting time to doing home activities for the child at an early stage of his life represents a great investment in his mental and physical structure, which will help him later to learn many sciences and skills more easily than his peers who did not practice similar activities.