

Need for new water projects identified

Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the single buyer of electricity and desalinated water output in the Sultanate of Oman, is firming up plans for new Independent Water Projects (IWP) to be established at key locations around the country in line with potable water demand growth. SEE P13



P10

AL RAWAHI EYES GOOD SHOW IN JORDAN



P15

INDIA BANS WHEAT EXPORTS



P20

WADIS FOR SUMMER HIKE



MUSCAT

STORM, STRONG WINDS AFFECT VISIBILITY

Dust rising wind continue to impact governorates as fresh northwesterly wind also disturbed horizontal visibility. Most of the desert and open areas of the Sultanate of Oman are witnessing moderate to active northwesterly winds that lead to the rise of dust and a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility and continue to do so. Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and open areas in Al Dakhiliyah have been tackling dust rising. Weather forecaster at National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre cautioned drivers, “It is best to be cautious to avoid road accidents.” SEE P5

DIM THE LIGHTS FOR BIRDS AT NIGHT!

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, has joined other countries to mark the World Migratory Bird Day which is celebrated on May 14 each year. Light pollution is the focus of the World Migratory Bird Day 2022 in reference to the increase in artificial light pollution by at least 2% per year which poses a threat to many bird species. Light pollution adversely affects migratory birds causing disorientation when they fly at night, leading to collisions with buildings and perturbing their internal clocks.



INSIDE



FINLAND SEEKS TO REASSURE RUSSIA ABOUT NATO BID

P6



EVERYTHING CARLYE WISEL BRINGS TO DISNEYLAND

P7

HIS MAJESTY OFFERS CONDOLENCES TO UAE PRESIDENT

HM congratulates Shaikh Mohammed on being elected as President of UAE



MUSCAT/ABU DHABI: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Saturday offered his condolences to Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), shaikhs, Al Nahyan Family and the Emirati people on the demise of Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan. During their meeting at Abu Dhabi Airport, His Majesty

the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased’s soul in peace in Paradise and grant Shaikh Mohammed, his family and the UAE people fortitude to bear the loss. On his turn, the UAE President expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation for His Majesty’s sincere condolences and prayers. He prayed to the

Almighty Allah to grant His Majesty good health and well-being and protect him and the Omani people against all harm. Earlier in the day, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on the occasion of electing him as a President for the UAE.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and well-being to Shaikh Mohammed. His Majesty prayed to the Almighty Allah to grant Shaikh Mohammed success in leading the UAE people towards further progress and prosperity.

TURN TO P2



Honourable Lady offers condolences

ABU DHABI: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, paid a visit on Saturday to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to offer condolences to the spouse of UAE President, spouse of the deceased, Al Nahyan family, and the UAE people on the demise of Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan. While offering the condolences at Al Bateen Palace in Abu Dhabi, the Honourable Lady expressed her heartfelt sympathies, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased’s soul in peace in Paradise and grant his family fortitude to bear the loss. — ONA

Workers wish early start to mid-day break as temperature rises

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Even as two more weeks are left for the annual mid-day break for outdoor work to begin in the Sultanate of Oman, workers feel that the period is advanced in view of the scorching heat. The three-month mid-day break, an initiative by the Ministry of Labour aimed at safeguarding the health and safety of workers, especially at construction sites, normally begins on June 1, suspending



work between 12.30 pm and 3.30 pm till August 31. Siraj Rahman, a worker engaged in the roofing work of a building in Ruwi, said, “I wish the break starts from the middle of this month as the temperature is

rising day by day. We are getting exhausted very fast”. Oman Meteorology in a statement, has already hinted at expectations of a rise in temperatures in some of the governorates in the coming days. Siraj, among thousands of blue-collar workers who work outdoor ignoring the scorching sun to earn a livelihood, said that the last two years left with accrued debts following non-payment of loan instalments back in their home countries.

TURN TO P4



SAYYID THEYAZIN ATTENDS ROYAL WINDSOR HORSE SHOW IN UK

Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, on Saturday attended the Royal Windsor Horse Show which is being held on the grounds of the British Royal Windsor Castle in the United Kingdom on the occasion of the celebration of the platinum jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. — ONA

SEE P4



HM offers condolences to UAE President



FROM PAGE 1
His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied by an official delegation comprised: His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers; HH Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan; HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman; HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister; Dr Hamad bin Said al Auji, Head of the Private Office; Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat; Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information; and Dr Sayyid Ahmed bin Hilal al Busaidy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UAE.

The Federal Supreme Council of the UAE on Saturday unanimously elected Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan as President of the United Arab Emirates.

The Council held a meeting at Al Mushrif Palace in Abu Dhabi, chaired by Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan; Dr Shaikh Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah; Shaikh Humaid bin Rashid al Nuaimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ajman; Shaikh Hamad bin Mohammed al Sharqi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Fujairah; Shaikh Saud bin Rashid al Mu'alla, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Umm Al Qaiwain and Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras al Khaimah.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Presidential Affairs said that according to Article 51 of the Constitution, Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan was unanimously elected as the President of the UAE to succeed the late Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan.

Their Highnesses, the Supreme Council Members and Rulers of the Emirates have reaffirmed their keenness to continue implementing the authentic values and principles laid down by the late Shaikh Khalifa, following on from the founding father, the late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan. These have consolidated the UAE's status at both regional and global levels.

The Federal Supreme Council expressed its full confidence that the people of the UAE will remain, as Shaikh Zayed and the founders believed, "a faithful guardian of the Union and its gains at all levels".

Their Highnesses wished Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan success in serving his people and country.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed expressed his appreciation for the precious trust placed in him by his brothers, Their Highnesses the Supreme Council Members and Rulers of the Emirates, praying to the Almighty to guide and help him to bear the responsibility of this great trust and to fulfil its tasks of serving his country and people. — ONA/WAM



Shaikh Hamad bin Mohammed al Sharqi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Fujairah (R), Shaikh Humaid bin Rashid al Nuaimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ajman (2nd R), Shaikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister of the UAE, Ruler of Dubai and Minister of Defence (3rd R), Shaikh Dr Sultan bin Mohammed al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah (5th R), Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah (6th R) and Shaikh Saud bin Rashid al Mu'alla, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Umm Al Quwain (L), offer condolences to Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Ruler of Abu Dhabi (4th R), on the death of Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, at Al Mushrif Palace.

Shaikh Mohammed: A leader keen on fostering trade and political ties across region

ABU DHABI: Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan was elected as the President of the United Arab Emirates on Saturday unanimously by the Federal Supreme Council, made up of rulers of the UAE's seven emirates. He has also been named as Ruler of Abu Dhabi.

Shaikh Mohammed, who was named Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi in November 2004, is the third son of Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE.

He has been serving as deputy commander of the armed forces and chairman of the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi.

Born in the capital on March 11, 1961, Shaikh Mohammed was sent to military school in Britain, where he graduated from the famed Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1979.

He rose through the ranks to become air force commander, deputy chief of staff and finally chief of staff in January 1993, and a year later was promoted to the rank of general.

Shaikh Mohammed has forged links in world capitals and particularly in the West. He is believed to have taken the decision to deploy troops in Yemen in 2015 as part of a Saudi-led military campaign.

His ambitions have been on display in recent years as the UAE built its profile as a regional player.

Under his leadership, Abu Dhabi has fostered trade and political ties across the region.

Shaikh Mohammed, who was named Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi in November 2004, is the third son of Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, the founder of the UAE. He has been serving as deputy commander of the armed forces and chairman of the Executive Council of Abu Dhabi

The UAE has in short order built a nuclear power programme and sent a man to space.

And in July 2020 it joined another elite club by sending a probe to Mars, to mark the 50th anniversary of its unification.

An avid football fan, Shaikh Mohammed is president of the local club in the oasis of Al Ain.

He is married to fellow royal Shaikha Salama bint Hamdan al Nahyan. The couple has four sons and five daughters.

As Shaikh Mohammed took office, flags were at half-mast around the UAE and businesses and government offices closed for three days as the country enters a 40-day period of mourning for Shaikh Khalifa, who had ruled since 2004. Images of the late shaikh stared down from billboards and road signs on major highways.

— Agencies





Sayyid Theyazin attends Royal Windsor Horse Show in UK



LONDON: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, attended the Royal Windsor Horse Show which is being held on the grounds of the British Royal Windsor Castle in the United Kingdom on Saturday.

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Royal Cavalry

at the Royal Court Affairs, took part in the Show which continues until May 15 on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom of Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth.

More than 500 horses and a thousand participants, including jockeys, musicians, writers and

actors from different countries are taking part in the show in response to a Royal invitation.

The Royal Cavalry participates in the traditional horse shows for which the Sultanate of Oman is famous. The Royal Cavalry musical band played Omani and international musical pieces. The Royal Cavalry participated in the

first day shows in the morning and evening sessions that drew a large crowd of fans of equestrian sports and traditional shows.

Dr Sarhan bin Salim al Zaidi, Director-General of the Royal Cavalry, said the Royal Cavalry's participation in the Royal Windsor Horse Show came in response to an official invitation for attendance

and participation following which the preparations for the participation began through meetings and communications with the organising committee to agree on the shows that would be assigned to the Royal Cavalry and their timings.

We are keen to highlight the cultural, civilisational and

heritage legacy of the Sultanate of Oman in this global show as such shows contribute to the exchange of experiences among the participants and we seek to make the most of our presence in this international event to serve equestrian sports and various musical fields, Al Zaidi said.

— ONA

Workers wish early start to mid-day break as temperature rises

FROM PAGE 1

His colleague Abdul Heman said that he could not skip the work even for a day as he has an accumulated debt from the previous two years due to lack of work resulting from Covid-19 lockdowns and other measures.

"The loans back in my country have increased manifold due to non-payment in the last two years. So I cannot wait for the mid-day break or a drop in the temperature. I need to work", he said.

Opening of activities now gives us hope for a new start of earning and livelihood, he added.

"We spent the last two years in a very bad state, so we are happy that there is enough work. But we wish that the break is advanced so that we could escape the heat during its peak hours", said Narasaiah, another worker. According to a

report from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, the number of expatriates in the construction sector stood at 373,184, compared to 353,584 workers at the end of 2021.

The mid-day break calls for strict regulation and prohibition of work for blue-collar workers in the heat from 12.30 pm to 3.30 pm. Many companies comply with this humanitarian rule, but there are a few who do not follow it and often face heavy fines from authorities.

Under Article 16 of Ministerial Decision No 286/2008, outdoor workers in Oman are banned from working in high temperatures during the summer months. Working hours are usually split between two shifts, in accordance with the mid-day break hours.

Oman's general services at impressive levels

LIJU CHERIAN
[@lijuchermanoman](#)

World's leading travel search engine Kayak rated Sultanate of Oman's general services at an impressive level as the country came up with a final score of 30 on 100 with travel scores of 73, local prices score at 80, health and safety at 36, scoring 6 for remote work, 4 for social life, and 48 for weather.

Oman has been ranked 15th for remote workers in the Middle East and Africa and 96th globally. Kayak released its first 'Work from Wherever Index' recently.

The study ranks countries and territories based on 22 factors that included entry and visa restrictions, local costs, safety and security, Internet speed, weather and social life.

Oman came up with a final score of 30 on 100 with travel scores of 73, local prices score at 80, health and safety at 36, scoring 6 for remote work, 4 for social life, and 48 for weather.

Mauritius took the top spot followed by Seychelles, UAE, Cape Verde, South Africa, Reunion, Kenya, Tanzania, Jordan, Tunisia, Kuwait, Algeria, Morocco and Nigeria in the Middle East and Africa category.

Among travel, factors like accessibility, hotel, car and fuel prices were considered. For local costs, apartment rental prices per



month and per day; transport, food and restaurant prices were taken into consideration.

For remote work various factors like remote work visas; co-working spaces; Internet speeds and for social life English proficiency; culture and clubs per capita while weather precipitation, temperature accounted for weather factors and for health and safety factors like political stability; air pollution; equality and road safety.

Within these categories, a total of 22 factors have been defined to reach a comprehensive overview of aspects that travellers may encounter and care about when deciding on the destination for remote work.

For the 100 best countries for remote workers, they have been ranked by their overall score calculated from the average of their six individual categories.

Portugal took the top spot among the 100 best countries for remote workers who have been ranked for 2022. The data in six categories has been collected in order to rank countries in terms of their attractiveness for remote work. The factors were the same like travel, local prices, health and safety, remote work, social life and weather.

Portugal was named the best country for remote workers, thanks to its visa and digital nomad schemes as well as its

great weather, safety and high English proficiency, with Lisbon, its capital, named the best city for remote workers.

Portugal was one of the first countries to launch the world's first digital nomad village, Digital Nomads Madeira. The new initiative seeks to attract digital nomads around the world to make use of free co-working spaces and subsidised accommodation.

Other than Portugal the 10 best countries for remote workers in the ranking were Spain, Romania, Mauritius, Japan, Malta, Costa Rica, Panama, Czech Republic and Germany.

The survey notes that increasing numbers of workers have jumped on a plane, laptops in their hand luggage, and set off in search of a better work-life balance. In response, several visitor-starved destinations launched innovative schemes to entice remote workers and make it easier to stay for longer.

Though the pandemic may have locked people down, the survey notes that it also freed many employees from the office.

The Caribbean nations of Antigua & Barbuda, Aruba, Bahamas, Bermuda, Cayman Islands and Dominica have all announced remote work programmes along with Estonia, Iceland, Mexico and Dubai among others.



Blind students display brilliance at graduation

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Students of Omar bin al Khattab Institute for the Blind manufactured prototypes of lamps powered by solar and other renewable energy sources.

Despite odds of being unable to see, their work includes streetlights, lamps for houses and fancy lights for occasions and celebrations. They work automatically in the absence of natural light.

All the lamps, lights, and the complete projects were on display at the graduation ceremony of the 18 General Diploma students who were part of the 13th batch of blind students who passed out from the school, under the auspices of Lujaina bint Mohsin Haider Darwish, member of the State



Council, on Thursday.

“These works are a landmark not only for the school, but also the entire nation as the initiatives are from these blind children,” said Badriya al Wahaibi, head of the school.

The graduation ceremony included many segments, including a simple exhibition

to introduce the services of the institute, materials and tools used to teach the students.

Various creative works of these visually impaired children, including souvenirs, fridge magnets, moulds and other curios, are currently available across the Sultanate of Oman thanks to the joint efforts of various ministries

and parents of these children. According to the school sources, there have been efforts to ensure copyright and funding for the innovative works and pilot projects for large-scale production and takers from local and international markets.

A short video about one of the graduates who spent nearly 15 years in the school, from kindergarten up to his graduation, captivated the hearts of parents of many such children.

Integrated in 2002, Omar bin al Khattab Institute for the Blind is the only institute in the Sultanate of Oman that provides educational services for visually impaired students. As many as 200 students from different governorates and wilayats of the country seek education here.

Meet on health, safety begins tomorrow

MUSCAT: The 8th Global HSE International Conference and Exhibition on Health, Safety and Environment, will begin on Monday at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The 4-day conference is held under the theme ‘HSE Excellence in Leadership, Sustainability and Technology’. The conference will be opened under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.



The conference, which is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, aims to complete the work process in creating a sustainable platform in health,

safety and environment and discuss various potential challenges that may face the sector and the local community. It seeks to propose solutions for the protection of workers and the environment.

The conference seeks to shed light on three main pillars: leadership and commitment, use of technology, and sustainability goals that organisations practise in competitive markets while maintaining their ability to meet legal requirements

and expectations of local communities.

A number of local and international speakers and experts, technicians, specialists and academics will participate in the conference and the exhibition, to present their experiences in the fields of health, safety and environment.

More than 50 local and internal firms will participate in the exhibition to display the latest technology and expertise related to safety, health and the environment. — ONA

Quran memorisation contest: 158 Al Dakhiliyah students feted



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 14

The General Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate felicitated 158 male and female students who excelled in memorising and reciting the Holy Quran and for good voice, at the governorate level. The ceremony was presided

over by Dr Mohammed bin Juma al Kharusi, Dean of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa (CAS Nizwa). Saif bin Mubarak al Julandani, Director-General of the General Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah, at the Higher Judicial Institute in the Wilayat of Nizwa, was also present.

Khalfan bin Salim al Busaidi,

supervisor of Islamic education in the Directorate, in his speech said, “The Holy Quran memorisation competition has received continuous care by those working in education in this governorate. The Director-General has supported the competition realising the great importance of refining students’ talents and skills in speaking Arabic, the language

of the Holy Quran.”

This year, about 460 students from various schools in the governorate participated, he added. The Directorate honoured along with 158 outstanding students, 22 male and female teachers who participated in the Quran memorisation competition for teachers, and 13 schools which qualified at the national level.

Strong winds affect visibility

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Dust-raising winds continued to impact governorates as fresh northwesterly winds also affected horizontal visibility.

Most of the desert and open areas of the Sultanate of Oman are witnessing moderate to active northwesterly winds that lead to the rise of dust and a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility.

Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta, and open areas in Al Dakhiliyah have been tackling dust rising.

The weather forecast from the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre has cautioned drivers, “It is best to be cautious to avoid road accidents.”

Sunday might also experience

haze caused by strong winds that are approaching towards Musandam, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah and Muscat.

The possibility of dust rising and a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility due to the active northwest winds are being experienced in the desert and open areas of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates as well, according to Oman Met Office.

The Salalah Airport Station recorded a wind speed of 23 knots with active gusts of up to 34 knots.

According to the Met Office, the temperature across the coastal areas would range around 36 degrees Celsius to 38 degrees Celsius and in the desert and open areas, the temperature could reach up to 39 to 41 degrees Celsius.

Medical rehabilitation conference begins

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 14

The second International Medical Rehabilitation Conference titled ‘Musculoskeletal Show’, being organised by the Directorate General of Specialised Medical Care (DGSMC) at the Ministry of Health (MoH) represented by the Department of Medical Rehabilitation Services, began on Saturday. It will conclude on May 20.

The conference is organised in partnership with “PhysioPod” training platform, which is based in the United Kingdom and in collaboration with the Omani Physical Therapy Association (OPTA).

The conference gathers an elite group of lecturers and experts in

various healthcare fields from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. Along with three Rehabilitation experts from Oman, the conference will include speakers from: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, UK, US, Australia, Spain, Italy and Mexico.

It will involve clinical topics in the fields of physical therapy and rehabilitation in terms of multidisciplinary healthcare approach. The conference, in its second edition, differs in the progress of the training content, as the lectures will demonstrate their published research papers and studies.

The activities of the conference will witness the registration of a large number of participants at the local and international levels.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No. (11/2022)

Specialized Companies in the field of tender shown below and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/001	2022/MM/HQ-3	Construction of Roads in Misfah Industrial Area (Phase - 1) (E- Tender)	Rial 200	04/06/2022	23/06/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/028	2022/MM/QS-14	Traking Path Development (Hiking) in Riyam (E- Tender)	Rial 25	04/06/2022	23/06/2022	This tender has been allocated for (S M E) contractors registered in Third grade
PRE/22/035	2022/MM/QS-15	Site Preparation for Street Vendors in Wilayat Bousher (E- Tender)	Rial 25	04/06/2022	23/06/2022	Second

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality.
- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).



A pedestrian walks past a heavily damaged car in the village of Vilkhivka east of Kharkiv. – AFP

Ukraine says holding back Russian assault

KYIV: Ukraine on Saturday claimed it was holding back a Russian assault in the eastern Donbas region and vowed to extract its last remaining fighters from a besieged steel plant.

The G7 group of the world's top industrialised nations meanwhile reiterated it would "never recognise" the borders Russia has attempted to redraw through aggression and pledged more sanctions to tighten the screw on Moscow.

Ukraine's head of military intelligence, however, predicted a turning point in the months ahead, and claimed that one of Europe's biggest conflicts since World War II could even be over by the end of the year.

Russia, which sent in troops to Ukraine on February 24, has increasingly turned its attention to eastern Ukraine since the end of March, after failing to take the capital Kyiv.



A rocket is launched from a truck-mounted multiple rocket launcher near Svyatohirsk, eastern Ukraine, amid the Russian attack of Ukraine. – AFP

Western analysts believe President Vladimir Putin has his sights on annexing southern and eastern Ukraine in the months ahead but his troops have appeared to be encountering stiff resistance.

The governor of the eastern Lugansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said Ukrainian forces had prevented Russian attempts to cross a river and encircle the city

of Severodonetsk.

"There's heavy fighting on the border with Donetsk region," Gaidai said, reporting big Russian losses of equipment and personnel.

"From interceptions (phone calls), we understand that a whole (Russian) battalion has refused to attack, because they see what's happening."

Aerial images showed dozens of destroyed armoured vehicles on the river bank and wrecked pontoon bridges. UK military intelligence also said Russian forces had sustained heavy losses as they attempted the river crossing.

The highly risky manoeuvre reflected "the pressure the Russian commanders are under to make progress in their operations in eastern Ukraine", it added.

Russian forces had "failed to make any significant advances despite concentrating forces in this area", it said. — AFP

Finland seeks to reassure Russia about Nato bid

KYIV: Finland on Saturday sought to allay Moscow's fears about its bid to join Nato, as fierce fighting raged in Ukraine's east, slowing down a hoped-for Russian advance.

Wives and parents of Ukrainian fighters trapped in the bowels of a besieged steel plant in the country's south meanwhile made a desperate appeal to China to help secure their release.

And the G7 vowed to further turn the screw on the Kremlin with fresh sanctions, pledging never to recognise the borders it was attempting to redraw through destructive force.

One of Europe's fiercest conflicts since World War II has seen more than six million people flee for their lives, and according to Kyiv has caused an estimated \$90 billion in damage to civilian infrastructure.

One senior Ukrainian general



Different badges are seen as a few hundred protesters gather during a demonstration against a possible Nato membership of Sweden outside the ruling Social Democrats party's office in Stockholm. – AFP

predicted a turning point in the months ahead, and that the fighting could be over by the end of the year.

In Turin, Italy, a world away from the fighting, Ukraine's Kalush Orchestra is the bookmakers' favourite to triumph at the world's biggest live music event — the Eurovision Song Contest — on a

wave of popular support.

But even here the war cast a shadow.

"We have one band member who joined the territorial defence of Kyiv on the third day of the war," said lead singer Oleh Psiuk.

"We are very worried about him, and we hope to see him safe once we are back." — AFP

North Korea reports 21 new Covid deaths

SEOUL: North Korea announced 21 new "fever" deaths on Saturday and said more than half a million people had been sickened nationwide, two days after confirming its first cases of Covid-19.

Despite activating its "maximum emergency quarantine system" to slow the spread of disease through its unvaccinated population, North Korea is now reporting tens of thousands of new cases daily.

On Friday alone, "over 174,440 persons had fever, at least 81,430 were fully recovered and 21 died in the country", the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

North Korea confirmed on Thursday that the highly contagious Omicron variant had been detected in the capital Pyongyang, with leader Kim Jong Un ordering nationwide lockdowns.

It was the North's first official admission of Covid cases and

marked the failure of a two-year coronavirus blockade maintained at great economic cost since the start of the pandemic.

From late April to May 13, more than 524,440 people have fallen sick with fever, KCNA said, with 27 deaths in total.

The report did not specify whether the new cases and deaths had tested positive for Covid-19, but experts say the country will be struggling to test and diagnose on this scale. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

NEW DELHI

Two arrested as building fire kills 27, injures 12 in New Delh

Police in New Delhi on Saturday arrested two people suspected of flouting fire safety rules after at least 27 people were killed in a major fire at a building in the city. Twelve more were injured in the blaze that engulfed a four-storey building in the Mundka area in the city's western suburbs on Friday, Fire Services chief Atul Garg told reporters.

Garg said the fire started from the first floor that houses a company which manufactures



security cameras and spread to the other floors.

Two brothers, owners of the firm, were arrested by the police,

according to Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who visited the site. The owner of the building had absconded. The building did not have safety clearances from the fire department nor was it equipped with fire-safety equipment, Garg said.

The blaze turned into a huge conflagration after inflammable plastic material used to manufacture equipment and cardboard for packaging caught fire, he said. — dpa

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka begins 'unity' government with opposition boycott

Sri Lanka on Saturday named the first ministers of a "unity" government tasked with rescuing the country from its crippling economic crisis, but which has failed to secure opposition support. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, appointed on Thursday, has attempted to put together a cross-party coalition that can begin mending the island nation's decimated finances. But opposition parties have called his premiership illegitimate and some lawmakers have demanded fresh elections. Wickremesinghe has instead been forced to rely on the support of lawmakers allied to President Gotabaya Rajapaksa,



whose administration is blamed by many for leading Sri Lanka's economy to the brink of collapse.

Rajapaksa's office announced the appointment of four ministers on Saturday including Gamini Peiris, who returns to the foreign

ministry just days after losing his job when the previous cabinet was dissolved. Peiris and the other three appointees — for public administration, urban development and energy — are all members of Rajapaksa's Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party.

The all-important finance ministry post remains vacant at a time when Sri Lanka is in negotiations for a much-needed International Monetary Fund bailout. Earlier on Saturday, legislators from the SLPP held a closed-door meeting where they resolved to support the new prime minister. — AFP

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Holding invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2022/13	AMI/AMM Rollout Consultants The Project consists of: Providing AMI/AMM Expert consultants to support in managing the AMR Project Implementation for a period of 18 months. The fulltime resources required are: • AMI/AMM Technical and Project Management Expert	19-May-2022	29-May-2022	50/- Plus VAT Amount (2,500 OMR) Total: 52,500 OMR (Non-Refundable)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 1.00 pm time of the Sultanate on Sunday 29 - May - 2022.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception area.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding

In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200 / 246
E-Mail: Sharifa.AI@Shukaili@Holding.nama.om

Everything theme-park journalist Carlye Wisel brings to Disney

CARLYE WISEL

I'm a theme-park journalist. (Yes, that's a real job, and no, it's not all cotton candy and roller coasters!) I spend my days wondering about how Butterbeer was created, sharing breaking news, and flying to Florida a bit too often to report stories for magazines, websites, and my podcast, Very Amusing with Carlye Wisel.

I've refined my park essentials over the years, mastering the delicate balance of packing absolutely everything I could possibly need without collapsing under the weight of it all in 90-degree weather with 80 per cent humidity. There are the health-and-safety essentials, like antibacterial gel (I'm partial to Bath & Body Works fun and convenient keychain holders), along with the requisite sunscreen and sunglasses.

Face coverings — disposable N95 masks and kids masks — are no longer required, but I like to pack a variety and swap them out depending on the crowds and the duration of indoor attractions. And then there are the things you don't realise you need until you need them. Here's what I won't hit the parks without.

I often have pen and paper on hand to take notes, which helps jog my memory for future stories. (Yes, I come prepared for all kinds of journalistic and/or Mickey Mouse autograph emergencies.)

And more and more theme parks are embracing digital apps and mobile ordering, which in turn means your phone will certainly die before lunchtime. I stock up on 4-inch lightning cables (which do the trick without taking up space) and pack a lightweight external charger with multiple charges.

I'll sometimes grab cheap phone lanyards, which keep my phone at the ready and can hold any paper tickets I'll need to have handy for more jam-packed visits. I use an Otter + Pop case and a tripod since selfie sticks are often banned.

Theme parks are meticulously designed to be an exciting and fantastical experience, and this can make remembering annoying, real-world things tricky. I rely on Superhuman, a paid e-mail client, to seamlessly surface to the top of my inbox dining reservations, ticket-confirmation codes, or reminders of what foods I absolutely have to try, so I never have to search for them while I'm out and about. Gmail has integrated a lot of the same functionality, such as snoozing e-mails to a specific date and time or adding an e-mail to a task and making it visible with a date and time in your calendar. But Superhuman offers keyboard shortcuts for the most reliable, easy-to-use e-mail reminder functionality I've experienced. It's worth every penny to be able to distinguish trip-related communication from work conversations that I'm ignoring until I'm back home.

I'm all about a Dagne Dover backpack. The mesh and



Carlye Wisel, a theme park journalist and expert whose critique extends to which Mickey pretzel stand has the best cheese. Often traveling the globe, she has mastered what to pack to make kitschy themed hotels feel like home.

neoprene materials keep relatively cool in the summer heat, and the bag is jam-packed with pockets — there's this genius slit in the side for your phone, which I swear makes it easier to access than pulling it out of your back pocket. (The Dagne Dover Ace Fanny Pack is a Wirecutter pick.)

Inside, I'll keep personal items organised in a Kipling Creativity Pouch or the small pouches from Stoney Clover Lane. SCL has an adorable collaboration with Disney.

Yes, the pieces are on the pricey end, but they're bedecked

with the iconic princesses or Mickey and Friends characters, so they can be worth the dough for die-hard fans. (Full disclosure: I'm friends with Stoney Clover Lane's founders, so they've occasionally gifted me items.) I fill the pouch with single-use eyeglass wipes and wet wipes, bandages, a pill case stocked with Lactaid — basically anything I could want and could never find once I'm deep in Fantasyland. I'll even add some emergency cash for balloons, since they don't take cards for everything, FYI.

The unlikely ascent of New York's compost champion

CARA BUCKLEY

There were good reasons Domingo Morales, a city kid from the Bronx, didn't want to try his hand at urban farming. He was terrified of germs. He thought vegetables were disgusting. Plus, everyone knows the ground in New York City is shot through with lead.

But Morales' bosses in 2015 really wanted him to give it a shot, so he did. To his astonishment, he loved it. And though he couldn't know it at the time, Morales would fall in love with insects, bacteria and even vegetables, and before long, become arguably the most famous compost guy in New York.

Morales, a doe-eyed, vibrant 30-year-old once known on the street as "Reckless," is on a mission to make composting cool, by which he means accessible to everyone, by which he means the people he grew up around in hard-bitten neighbourhoods in New York City.

Through a programme Morales created that brings composting to public housing, home to as many as 600,000 New Yorkers, he is showing his community what, for him, is still an astonishment: Recycling food scraps can help them grow nutritious food.

"For many years, compost has been that evil, stinky upper class thing that white people do," Morales said. "But it's really a great introduction to sustainability as a whole."

The climate benefits could be immense. Food scraps and yard waste make up one-third of everything New Yorkers throw away and, once in landfills, release vast amounts of methane, which traps far more heat in the atmosphere than carbon dioxide. Composting food waste can drastically slash those emissions.

Morales' devotion to that end, and infectious



Domingo Morales, founder of Compost Power, at a public housing complex in the Canarsie neighbourhood of Brooklyn.

enthusiasm, has landed him an ever-widening spotlight. He has been named "New Yorker of the Week" by the television station NY1, and profiled on the "How to Save a Planet" podcast as well as by the climate site Grist. In the fall of 2020, he won a \$200,000 prize to take his composting ideas citywide, after which his face appeared on a billboard in Dumbo, Brooklyn. All of which are remarkable feats for anyone, not least Morales, whose onetime goal in life was to make it to 18 alive.

"To be a kid from the hood and then person on the news, an educator, teacher, mentor, role model — it's good," Morales said.

Garrulous and affable, Morales all but fizzes with

Morales won a \$200,000 prize to take his composting ideas citywide, after which his face appeared on a billboard in Dumbo, Brooklyn

energy and ideas. As he threaded his way through the streets of Harlem after visiting one of his compost sites one recent day, he pointed to a community garden: He's aching to stage an intervention on its saggy looking compost bins and install a concrete pad that would deter rats and make shoveling easier. He also thinks the manual labour involved in composting could be packaged as outdoor workouts he'd call "Motion With Meaning," and is working on a video series.

"I have all this burning energy that never dwindles," Morales said. "It's just there."

Stamina was drilled into him early. Morales grew up with six siblings in Soundview Houses, a public housing complex in the Bronx. On her paydays, to save on subway fare, his mother had the whole family walk some 15 miles to Red Hook, Brooklyn, where she worked as a home health aide, to pick up her check. To help with rent, Morales sold candy on the subway, often getting ticketed for illegally moving between subway cars.

The family moved to public housing in East Harlem where Morales, who is small in stature, learned to fight. After his stepfather got arrested and charged with marijuana possession, the kids were split up and sent to foster care. "My whole family was destroyed for weed," Morales said. Yearning to belong, Morales befriended guys who hung out on the street. Some committed suicide, others were stabbed or shot.

At 17, Morales learned that his girlfriend was pregnant; they had a second child two years later. Morales found work as a hotel porter, a repairman, a computer technician. "I always mastered the job, it became very boring, the same thing over and over, and in most cases I was underpaid," he said. After quitting a salad bar gig that paid \$6.75 an hour, he sank into despair.

The robot will see you now



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

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

If you have been to a hospital or a clinic you would know the sequence of events. You walk into your appointment, the clerk will register you, then the nurse will take your pulse, temperature and blood pressure and when it's your turn she will announce 'the doctor will see you now.'

Imagine that you enter the clinic and your doctor is a robot. This is not a part of a science fiction movie but soon will be a reality that expands to reach different fields in healthcare.

The use of Artificial Intelligence in the medical field was introduced years ago when a micro-surgical arm performed a surgical operation then gradually took over while the human professionals monitor the situation remotely and only intervene when necessary.

A study from China showed that the robotic surgeon is 20 per cent

superior to the human doctor, as the robot has stable hands without vibrations which is essential in operations requiring accuracy and stability.

Robots have also been used in other health fields such as the pharmacist robot who can dispense 12 prescriptions in less than one minute without making a single mistake. One would argue that helping people with emotional distress can only be done by humans. After all, how can a machine understand feelings and express empathy?

You would be surprised that there are smartphone applications that provide psychological counselling via text chat. Such programmes are generally designed around the idea of cognitive behavioural therapy and provides practical tips for solving problems and overcoming common psychological problems

‘THE USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS BECOMING WIDESPREAD IN HEALTHCARE BUT CAN A ROBOT REPLACE THE HUMAN DOCTOR?’

such as anger, sadness, anxiety and negative thoughts.

There are also other applications that monitor the patient's phone and record his 'Internet behaviour' by recognising that he has not left his home for several days. For example, or has not chatted with anyone via social media or made a phone call, which is what happens when a person is experiencing major depression. Out of curiosity, I downloaded one of these

applications and started chatting.

After registering the application asked if I preferred random chats or choose a specific time to communicate. The chat usually started with the application greeting me then asking 'Where you now and what are you doing?'. Then it asks me to choose a quick emoji that describes my feeling at that particular moment. If I said I was happy he suggests that I write three reasons for my happiness in the gratitude note. If I was feeling sad he asked about three symptoms of this sadness so that he can assess if I needed to speak to a human psychologist.

If my symptoms are mild then he would give me a few tips to improve my mood. Sometimes he would share a 'personal experience' to make the discussion more interesting, like his avoidance of learning new things for fear of

failure.

The programme reminds you from the beginning that it is 'a tool for psychological counseling and self-development and is not a substitute for a psychiatrist or psychologist.'

I wanted to know how other people would react to the application so I asked my friends on social media to download it and try it and send me their feedback. One person wrote "The app can empathise to an impressive degree, it is also credible and does not deal with cases that exceed its capabilities. While another friend said, 'I liked the narrative style and sense of humour, I do not get bored of using it.' Another said, 'It is impossible for the application to replace the human, how can a robot understand emotions? So dear reader, would you consult a robot if you are in distress?'

Lack of competition fuelled US baby formula shortage

DELPHINE TOUTTOU

There's no end in sight to America's shortage of baby formula -- and the crisis has highlighted the lack of competition that has spread to all parts of the US economy, even essential ones such as food for infants.

The problem "is not going to solve itself in a day or week," Brian Deese, a top White House economic advisor, told CNN.

He was unable to say how long the crisis would last.

Initially caused by supply chain blockages and a lack of production workers due to the pandemic, the shortage was exacerbated in February when, after the death of two infants, manufacturer Abbott announced a "voluntary recall" for formula made at its factory in Michigan and shut down that location.

The shortage has left many parents frantic and fearful their infants may starve. Formula is a necessity for many families, particularly in low-income households where mothers have to return to work almost immediately after giving birth and cannot breastfeed.

A further issue is that prices for the formula that remains have skyrocketed.

An investigation by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) cleared Abbott's formula but made 483 "observations" about the factory, Abbott said in a statement on Friday.

"We immediately began implementing corrective actions and subject to FDA approval, we could restart our Sturgis, Mich., site within two weeks," the company said.

The FDA promised to announce plans next week that would allow, among other things, the import of formula produced overseas.

The FDA currently bans most foreign infant formula, including products made in Europe, not because of health concerns but due to labelling and packaging standards.

"We believe these and other ongoing efforts will help dramatically improve the supply in the US in a matter of weeks," FDA head Robert Califf said on Friday on Twitter.

US President Joe Biden also said it "will be a matter of weeks or less" to start fully refilling shelves. He said that stock levels in stores had begun to stabilise this week.

According to the data collection agency Datasembly, as of last week, 43 per cent of the usual formula supply was out of stock, up 10 per cent from the April average. — AFP



STEVEN ERLANGER

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

After years of neutrality, Sweden weighs joining Nato

The Gotland regiment of the Swedish army was going through its paces, practising how to use its Swedish-designed lightweight anti-tank missiles, the NLAWs that are proving so effective in Ukraine.

The regiment, which was resurrected in 2018 on this strategic island that helps control the air and naval space of the Baltic Sea, is in the process of rebuilding with the aim of expanding to 4,000 soldiers from the current 400 — still a far cry from the 25,000 that served here during the Cold War.

In a major recalculation of its security posture precipitated by the Russian war of Ukraine, Sweden is relearning how to be a military power. And pulled along by its strategic partner, Finland, it is about to apply to join Nato, ending more than 200 years of neutrality and military non-alignment.

The new commander of the Gotland regiment, Col Magnus Frykvall, has a clear view of this mission to rebuild Sweden's defences, as well as the importance of the island his regiment is guarding. "If you own Gotland, you can control sea and air movement in

the whole of the south Baltics," he said.

A parliamentary report presented by Sweden's foreign minister, Ann Linde, said its membership in Nato, alongside Finland, would have a deterrent effect in northern Europe, although the analysis also cautioned that retaliatory measures from Russia could not be ruled out in the transition period if Sweden applies for membership in the

THE SWEDISH PUBLIC NOW FAVOURS JOINING NATO, ESPECIALLY IF FINLAND JOINS, UP FROM ABOUT 27 PER CENT BEFORE THE UKRAINE WAR

alliance.

Sentiment in Finland, having fought two wars against the Soviet Union, has swung massively in the past six months in favour of joining Nato, guided by Sauli Niinisto, its president.

But in Sweden, the debate is more of a psychodrama within the ruling Social Democratic Party, with Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson ruling out Nato membership for Sweden as late as March 8, after the Russian war. But by mid-April, her position had evolved.

The Swedish public has followed along, with 52 per cent now favouring joining Nato, especially if Finland joins, up from about 27 per cent before the war.

On Sunday, after discussions with members from all 26 of the country's districts, the Social Democrats will announce their decision, said Kenneth G Forslund, a member of the party executive and chair of the Parliament's Committee on Foreign Relations. The consensus is that the party will reluctantly back joining Nato alongside Finland.

– The New York Times



A view shows the city centre of Imatra, south-eastern Finland. For many Finns living on the border to their eastern neighbour, signs of Finland applying to join Nato have been welcomed with relief. — AFP

Wisdom and integrity mocked: I just don't get it



The writer is a media consultant

Though what we think contributes to who we are, it's our actions that define us, whether as individuals, communities, societies, nations, regions, races, cultures, or... whatever.

Our thoughts, our ideas, or opinions, are the result of either thinking, rationalising the information available to us into single coherent concepts, or inspiration, having been mentally or creatively stimulated towards a sudden, brilliant, usually timely, thought. Usually, we want to share them, and especially in the socially transparent, ecumenical, world of ours, that sharing appears to have become a requirement rather than an option. I just don't get it.

So much hurt is caused, and so much angst experienced, in the name of 'throwaway' comments that were probably meant, and 'posted,' in a moment of madness, that, on reflection and should be taken back. But it can't be, can it? "It's been said, it's been done, I can't back down now, can I?" Friendships, relationships, partnerships, families, teams, governments, they have all been the victims of this insane need to express oneself publicly. Back in the day, and not so long ago, we had an old colloquialism that you, "don't want to hang out your dirty washing for all to see." Today it appears, not only do you, but you must. I just don't get it.

The 'WAGatha' trial taking place in the UK is just one example of just how badly friendships and relationships can go wrong, as the social media libel trial of the century sees Rebekah Vardy and Colleen Rooney, spouses of two well-known football identities face of over who-said-what, to-whom, about-whom, and who cares. They are clearly two self-obsessed women who have lost all respect for themselves and their society. I just don't get it.

Meanwhile, celebrity couple Johnny Depp, of Pirates of the Caribbean fame, and his former spouse Amber Heard, more famous for her previous marriage to Elon (Twitter and Tesla) Musk have also gone head-to-head in a 'sensational' Supreme Court battle. This time in America, and it's another he-said-she-said full of lurid details we are mostly utterly disgusted by and played out blow-by-blow (no pun intended) by a frenzied media circus. I just don't get it.

Comparatively, the absurdities of Western 'justice,' continue to rise to the surface, with the UK Post Office scandal, where hundreds of postmasters were accused, and found guilty, even jailed, for theft, based on software that was known to be flawed. No officials have faced even reprimand, yet even compensation is being fought in this absurd court and justice system by postal authorities. Even worse, Tower Hamlets Mayor Lutfur Rahman was found guilty of vote-rigging in 2015 but was re-elected last week. That, I certainly don't get!

America's founding fathers initially, in 1789 set up the highest court in 1789 under Article Three of their constitution, and now Jefferson, Franklin, and doyen lawmaker Howard Marshall must all be turning in their graves at this abuse of a system set up as the guardian of civil justice. Not feeling any better will be the lengthy succession of Kings, Queens, Counsellors, or Lord Chancellors of the UK who created the High Court of Justice by bringing together eight different court systems seeking protection and justice for all. To what end? I don't know, and I don't get it.

Maybe the bad old days of 'hang'em high' justice, 'duels at dawn,' and the like would be more appropriate proliferation of real justice... I mean shouldn't there be a triage system that determines what needs to go before the courts and what doesn't? I do understand these are not Omani settings, or Omani justice I'm talking about here, but we are all global citizens, and surely there are more important issues to be considered and administrated by the most illustrious legal minds in the world. I certainly know most of us will not understand these legal profiteroles, these empty jousts. I just don't get it.

Till next week then... watch Judge Judy, Ironsides, Rumpole of the Bailey, A Few Good Men, and Inherit the Wind, not real, but surely more authentic.



SHE WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

Schoolchildren watch as Palestinian artists paint a mural honouring slain veteran Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, on Saturday. – AFP

Farewell to a great leader



Samuel Kutty @samkuttyyp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

With the demise of Shaikh Khalifa bin Zayed al Nahyan, the president of the UAE, who ruled the Emirates for about 18 years, the Gulf and Middle East region lost a visionary leader and statesman.

The news was received with sorrow, grief and genuine sadness by the world.

A leader with great achievements, Shaikh Khalifa was a man of honour. He believed in developing peaceful ties with countries all over the world, including neighbours while emphasising the need to follow international law.

As a UN spokesman described, Shaikh Khalifa was a ruler who led the Emirates through a significant period of development, marked by great economic advances and a surge in its regional and global influence.

While he focused on the need for restructuring in his country, not just in terms of governance but also in terms of society and nationalism, Shaikh Khalifa continued to ensure that the country pursued an active foreign policy. He believed in developing peaceful ties with countries all over the world, including his neighbours, and upholding international law.

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, throughout his period of reign maintained solid social, economic and cultural relations.

Declaring three days of national mourning, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik said: "The Sultanate of Oman shares the grief of the leadership, government and people of the brotherly United Arab Emirates in their great affliction."

Relations between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman have, over the years, witnessed very positive growth in all areas, making them a model of cooperation and friendship. The relationship has been marked by tremendous changes and rapid developments.

On the demise of Sultan Qaboos, Shaikh Khalifa had said, "Today, we mourn an exceptional leader who was one of the most prominent leaders of the Arab and Islamic world. He spared his life for serving his loyal people."

Regular exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries has immensely contributed to the deep mutual understanding between them.

The visits have been within the framework of the "one family" relationship that binds the two countries and which stems from a deep-rooted joint history and good neighbourly ties.

Leaders of the two countries have always stressed the strong relations of cooperation among the Gulf Cooperation Council, and both sides have always found ways to boost ties that bring the two countries together.

During Shaikh Khalifa's visit to Oman in 2005, the two countries signed a number of agreements, prominent



MODEL OF FRIENDLY TIES

Relations between the UAE and the Sultanate of Oman have, over the years, witnessed very positive growth in all areas, making them a model of cooperation and friendship

Regular exchange of visits by the leaders of Oman and the UAE has immensely contributed to the deep mutual understanding between them

Through the 1999 Oman-UAE border pact, the two countries enhanced their socio-economic relations exponentially

among them were the data link over the Internet between securities markets in Abu Dhabi and Muscat.

During the past three decades, albeit differences, there have not been any hindrances in the two countries' quest for greater economic cooperation, which

eventually led to a better relationship.

Through the 1999 Oman-UAE border pact, the two countries enhanced their socio-economic relations exponentially. The accord opened the door for cooperation in the fields of trade, tourism, investment and other areas.

On the business side, the level of trade and investment cooperation between the two countries has grown in recent years, and the Sultanate of Oman has become one of the most important markets for Emirati trade. Non-oil exports between the two countries increased 28.7 per cent to RO 389.9 million in the first six months of 2021, compared to RO 302.1 million during the same period in 2020.

The imports from the UAE to Oman also increased from RO 1,582.5 million in 2020 to RO 1,930 million in 2022.

While the capital city of Muscat is only 500 km away from the UAE's commercial hub of Dubai, the other cities in northern Oman are less than a three-hour drive from the UAE. Thousands of people seamlessly commute between the countries every day. The world will always remember the late leader thanks to his stances that reflected an honourable image of the region.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



OMAN TAKE ON BANGLADESH IN FINAL OF ASIAN GAMES QUALIFIERS

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 14

Oman justified their top billing to set up a title-clash with Bangladesh in the final of the 2022 Asian Games hockey qualifiers in Thailand capital of Bangkok on Saturday.
The final will begin at 1 pm (Oman Time) on Sunday.

In the first semifinal, Oman blanked Indonesia 2-0 in an evenly contested encounter.
After a barren first-half, Oman opened the account when Sami al Laun found the target from a penalty corner in the 37th minute.
Indonesia made valiant efforts to pull one back but their efforts ended at the strong Oman defence and goalkeeper. The opponents failed to convert the penalty

corners that came their way.
Oman sealed the final spot with a brilliant field goal from Mubarak al Qasmi in the 51st minute.
Oman successfully weathered some counter attacks in the last ten minutes to keep the score intact.
BANGLADESH PREVAIL
In the second semifinal, Bangladesh outsmarted hosts

Thailand 4-1. The Thais stunned the Tigers when Chanachol Rungniyom slotted in a field goal in the 10th minute.
Bangladesh sprang into action after the goal and Roman Sarkar hit the equaliser in the 22nd minute through a field goal.
Ashraful Islam made it 2-1 as Bangladesh took the lead against the hosts one minute before the half-time break.

The story was not different in the third quarter as Islam converted another penalty corner in the 35th minute as Bangladesh consolidated position with a 3-1 lead.
Mohammed Rakibul struck in the 47th minute to complete the scoreline with a field goal.
The Thai players could not capitalise on the opportunities in the last 10 minutes as Bangladesh

booked the final with a 4-1 score.
All the semifinalists have qualified for the finals of Hangzhou Asian Games 2022.
In the fifth to eighth position matches earlier, Uzbekistan beat Singapore 4-2 in the penalty shoot-out after a 2-2 draw at full time and Sri Lanka thrashed Hong Kong 5-2. With the result, Sri Lanka qualified for the Asian Games finals.

Al Rawahi eyes good show in Jordan International Rally



Abdullah al Rawahi in action.

MUSCAT: Talented young Omani rally driver Abdullah al Rawahi has set himself a challenging target of finishing in podium position at the Jordan International Rally, the fourth round of Middle East Rally Championship (Merc) from May 19 to 21.
Al Rawahi on Skoda Fabia R5 with Jordanian co-driver Atta al Hmoud is currently ranked third in overall Merc standings after retiring from his last rally in Kuwait.
Abdullah was forced for an early retirement in Kuwait due to technical problem and engine overheating of the car.
The rally consists of 12 stages in Jordan River and Dead Sea area, where three stages will be repeated two times on Friday. The remaining three stages will be repeated two times also on Saturday.
Abdullah, who have 54 points in the Merc championship, is sponsored by Ministry of Culture,

Sports and Youth and Sohar International and Al Manar Financial investments and Motel.
Al Rawahi said he will do his best efforts to come back with good result from Jordan.
“I am looking forward to the start of the rally. I have good knowledge of the Jordan terrain and stages. My Jordanian co-driver Atta al Hmoud’s support is important for this big championship like this.”
ZAKARIYA PULLS OUT
Meanwhile, Zakariya al Amri, another Omani driver who had registered for the rally, had to withdraw from the rally due to lack of financing and support to this participation in Jordan.
“Unfortunately, I’m short of funds and support for the participation in Jordan International Rally. My car needs a lot of accessories and parts during the rally,” Al Amri said.



Oman to host AFC U-17, U-20 Asian Cup qualifying tournaments

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

The Asian Football Confederation announced that the AFC Junior and Youth Championship qualifiers will be held in Muscat during September and October 2022.

As many as 44 teams will take part in the qualifiers for the tournament. The draw for the qualifiers for the U-17 Asian Cup 2023 in Bahrain, and the U-20 Asian Cup qualifiers 2023 in Uzbekistan will be held on May 24 via video communication technology in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur.

The qualifiers for the AFC U-20 Youth Cup 2023 will be held in 10 host countries namely, Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Saudi Arabia and Tajikistan from September 10 to 18.

On the other hand, the U-17 AFC Asian Cup qualifiers will be held in Oman, Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, from October 1 to 9.

The draw ceremony for the tournament will be broadcast via the AFC channel on YouTube.

The Oman Football

Association had adopted the junior team (U-17) programme, which included eight camps in preparation for the Asian qualifiers, including a European camp.

The Oman U-17 team started its first camp from May 6 to 10, and the last camp will be from September 26 to 30 before the Asian qualifiers, which will be contested from October 1 to 9.

Meanwhile, the youth team (U-20) preparation programme will start from April 6 to 10 and the last camp will be in September and will last until September 9 before the Asian qualifiers from September 10 to 18.

Sufyan to rub shoulders with top-class players in USA T20 tournament

MUSCAT: Oman's experienced cricketer Sufyan Mehmood is all set to showcase his potential at the forthcoming Unity Cup T20 tournament in Maryland, USA, from May 24-31. The all-rounder, who represented Oman in the past, has been performing consistently in the shorter formats of the game.

Organised by 22 Yards Cricket Club in the USA, this private tournament is organising the second edition. A total prize money of \$130,000 is on offer for the 16 participating teams.

Sufyan will be rubbing shoulders with international cricketers like Unmukt Chand, Mohammad Asif, Corey Anderson and Liam Plunkett to name a few.

Sufyan has been flying Oman's flag high in various T20 and T10 tournaments in the past,



Sufyan Mehmood

having featured in teams during tournaments in Nepal, Qatar, Singapore and USA.

He represents Renaissance CT in the domestic league and was among the top-three wicket-takers in the inaugural Oman D10 league held in March, 2022.

Ahead of his travel, Sufyan thanked Renaissance CT management and his employers for giving him an opportunity to compete with some of the best players in the world.



64 participants in Ibri chess tournament

MUSCAT: The Ibri Club organised a rapid chess tournament in cooperation with the Oman Chess Committee. As many as 64 participants from various governorates and residents of Oman participated in the tournament. Shreyas Sheshadri clinched the first place, Mohammed al Saidi came in second place and Salem al Balushi claimed the third place. Dinesh Shaurya finished fourth and Vivala Rajavash ended in fifth position.

Bairstow, Livingstone trounce Royals



MUMBAI: Punjab Kings thrashed Royal Challengers Bangalore by 54 runs in the Indian Premier League match on Friday following blistering knocks by Liam Livingstone and Jonny Bairstow.

Kings were put in to bat and amassed a challenging total of 209 for nine in 20 overs after Bairstow and Livingstone scored brisk fifties against a faltering bowling line-up of Bangalore at the Brabourne Stadium in Mumbai.

Bairstow hit a 21-ball half-century but was caught by Mohammed Siraj off Shahbaz Ahmed at 66 before Livingstone took charge and scored a 42-ball 70 run knock.

Kings opener Shikhar Dhawan made a 21-run knock but was clean bowled by Australian Glenn Maxwell in the powerplay.

But Bairstow continued with the attack hitting seven sixes and four fours.

Skipper Mayank Agarwal tried to accelerate the score but fell to Harshal Patel at 19.

Kings tail-enders could not capitalise on the brilliant innings by Livingstone who kept losing their wickets.

Patel was the top wicket taker for Bangalore and returned with figures of 4 for 34.

Wanindu Hasaranga took two while Maxwell and Ahmad bagged once each. In reply, Bangalore lost the momentum in the powerplay after they were down by three wickets for 40.

Bangalore skipper Faf du Plessis and Virat Kohli opened the innings for the team but could not make a mark with their bats.

Kohli scored 20 runs before Kagiso Rabadahe picked him up in the third over followed by Du Plessis in the next at 10.

Rajat Patidar's knock of 26 ended after he fell to Rahul Chahar

but Maxwell on the other end tried to accelerate the run scoring.

Maxwell scored three fours and a six in his 35 before being caught at long-off by Arshdeep Singh off Harpreet Brar.

Bangalore tail-enders buckled under pressure and kept losing their wickets at regular intervals, losing four wickets for 38 runs.

Mohammed Siraj (9) and Josh Hazlewood (7) remained unbeaten at the end of 20 overs.

"Stats would suggest I quite enjoy opening the batting. The bats are very good, I must admit," Bairstow said, who was declared the player of the match. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Punjab Kings 209-9 (Liam Livingstone 70, Jonny Bairstow 66; Harshal Patel 4-34) beat Royal Challengers Bangalore 155-9 (Glenn Maxwell 35, Rajat Patidar 26; Kagiso Rabada 3-21) by 54 runs.

Mediacom, DB Schenker emerge champions

MUSCAT: Mediacom and DB Schenker claimed the titles in the A division and B division respectively during the finals of the Grand Group of Companies 5x5 basketball tournament at the Al Amal Sports Complex on Friday.

The tournament concluded in the presence of the chief guest of honour, Dr Mohammad bin Humaid al Alawi, Director of Finance and Administrative Affairs at Jaalan Bani Bu Ali Hospital, and the tournament founder Ali bin Humaid al Alawi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Grand Global Investment.

Also present were Qais al Hina, representative of the technical sponsor of Omantel, Rabie Awlad Thani, Secretary of the Oman Basketball Association,



Division A champions Mediacom

Hanif al Balushi, Chairman of the Competitions Committee of the Oman Basketball Association, representatives from the Philippine Embassy headed by Honourable Labour Attache Gregorio Abalos and the heads of

sponsoring companies.

The first final match of Division B started with the matches of the Travel Buddies Holidays team and the DB Schenker team at 1 pm. The match was characterised by strength and rivalry between the



Division B champions DB Schenker

two teams, which lasted for two hours, in which the DB Schenker team clinched a deserved victory by 95-84 and became the B division champions.

The second final match of division A also witnessed

competition and excitement between the Octal team and the Mediacom team, which started at 4 pm and ended at 5.45 pm.

The Mediacom team won with a score of 78-69 and was crowned the division A champions.

The tournament ended with the Omani Royal Anthem and the Philippine National Anthem, and then the chief guest of honour presented trophies to the first three teams of the division A and division B. Representatives of the Oman Basketball Association, Omantel Communications Company and representatives of the Philippine Embassy distributed individual prizes to the best players, technical officials and organisers of the tournament.

At the end, chief organiser Ali bin Humaid al Alawi congratulated the winning teams in the tournament, and extended thanks and gratitude to the organising committee, the FMB Committee, OPBL and the sponsors of the participating teams for the success of the tournament.

Brazil capable of clinching World Cup in Qatar, says Silva



ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 14

Brazilian World Cup winner Gilberto Silva said the ‘Selecaos’ are capable of claiming the World Cup honours in Qatar World Cup 2022.

Silva, a defensive midfielder, who won the World Cup with Brazil in 2002, was in the Sultanate of Oman to unveil the original World Cup trophy in Muscat on Friday.

“The present Brazil team is very much capable of winning a sixth World Cup for the country,” Silva said during an interaction at a special function organised by Coca-Cola at the Royal Opera House.

“There are talented and superstar players along with experienced ones in the current lot. We hope to pick the best squad for the soccer extravaganza in Qatar.”

The former Arsenal player and Premier League winner said however the campaign may not be easy for his home country.

“Without doubt, it will be a tough challenge with many countries putting up impressive

squads for the World Cup. There are many top teams who themselves are in top form at the moment. It will be a tough task for Brazil,” he added.

Silva said he was happy to be in Oman along with local icon Ali al Habsi.

“It was a great honour to be in Oman for unveiling the trophy during its global tour.”

The Brazilian midfielder called on the local players to dream big and work hard towards fulfilling it.

The legendary Oman goalkeeper, who had an illustrious career in English Premier League, said he was proud to be part of World Cup trophy tour.

“This World Cup trophy is very much inspiring for me as well as Oman footballers. We hope to qualify soon for the big event and make a memorable debut at the World Cup,” the former Oman captain, who led the country to its first Gulf Cup title in 2009, said.

Al Habsi said: “Finally, seeing the original Fifa World Cup Trophy is also a huge motivation for us as it gives us hope that we too will win this trophy some day and not just host it.”



Oman athletics team ready for confident start at GCC Games

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 14

The national athletics women and men’s team will commence the Sultanate of Oman’s participation at the GCC Games which will begin in Kuwait on Monday.

The women athletes arrived to Kuwait on Wednesday and had their last few warm-up sessions ahead of the official competitions start, while the men’s team arrived earlier on Saturday.

The Sultanate of Oman’s top sprinter Barakat al Harthi is among the national athletics team

squad besides Oman’s fastest woman sprinter Mazoon al Alawi, who represented Oman for second successive participation in the last Olympics Games in Tokyo.

Moreover, talented young sprinter Ali al Balushi is also in the team and it is expected Oman may record good show in this Games by getting more medals in athletics. National experienced coaches Mohammed al Hooti and Hamood al Dalhami are leading the coaching staff of the national athletics team.

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) aims from the athletics

team to register more medals for the Sultanate of Oman in this Gulf event which features participation of more than 1,700 athletes representing six GCC countries in 16 sports including athletics, handball, volleyball, futsal, swimming, electronic games, karate, judo, fencing, shooting, cycling, ice hockey, table tennis, 3X3 basketball and padel.

On the other hand, Oman futsal team, coached by local coach Younis al Fahdi, was among the first national team to arrive in Kuwait.

The team had their first

preparatory game in Kuwait City against Kuwait’s Al Qadsia SC. The match ended in a 6-6 draw. The national futsal team will begin their Gulf campaign against the UAE team on Wednesday. Coach al Fahdi announced the final squad of the team which featured 12 players including Hisham al Wahaibi, Issa al Balushi, Abdulaziz al Raqadi, Issa al Jabri, Mohammad al Lawati, Louay al Wahaibi, Mohammad al Raisi, Mutasem al Shamsi, Khalfan al Maawali, Samer al Balushi, Mansoor al Hadi and Zamil al Balushi.



LEXUS
EXPERIENCE AMAZING

CELEBRATE WITH
LEXUS LUXURY



LAST
FEW DAYS

EXCLUSIVE OFFER

FREE SERVICE*
**5 YEARS /
50,000 KMS**
(WHICHEVER IS EARLIER)

FREE REGISTRATION#
1 YEAR

Own a Lexus and experience distinctive luxury. Every Lexus offers amazing experiences through inspiring advancements in design, technology and safety features. Backed by an exceptionally personalised and prompt service delivered by our friendly Lexus staff. Visit your nearest Lexus showroom today!



Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC (Lexus Division)
(ISO 9001: 2015 Certified) | C. R. No. 1703412
Muscat: 24578913, 92844016, 93320817, Al Mawaleh: 99375422,
Barka: 99471397, Buraimi: 25660261, Sohar: 99374199,
Ibri: 99895249, Nizwa: 92858001, Salalah: 99103579

Campaign Period: 3rd April 2022 to 1st June 2022. The above benefits are applicable for all purchases except RAC, Government Organisations & Ministries. *5 Years / 50,000 kms (whichever is earlier) covering 5 services at 1 Year / 10,000 kms service interval (whichever is earlier) for all models. #Free one year registration on all models. Vehicle specifications are subject to change without notice. Pictures & colours are indicative. For further details, please visit your nearest Lexus showroom.



YouTube Lexus Oman



Instagram Oman.Lexus



Facebook Lexus Oman



www.lexusoman.com





**For the first time in the Sultanate,
BankDhofar introduces the PaySticker**

Now you do not have to worry about forgetting your debit card. Place the sticker on your mobile phone and use it to pay by tapping your mobile phone on the POS machine.*

*The maximum payment via the PaySticker is OMR 40 per transaction, OMR 100 per day.

For more information
<https://www.bankdhofar.com/en-GB/PaySticker.aspx>



**بنك ظفار
BankDhofar**

*Terms & conditions apply

the best bank for you

24751111 www.bankdhofar.com

Global tourism is recovering: UNWTO



MUMBAI: Global tourism is roaring back to life despite Covid travel headaches and the effects of the war in Ukraine, but it has yet to return to its pre-pandemic health. International tourist arrivals worldwide have more than doubled, up 130 per cent in January 2022 on the same period last year, according to the latest UN World Tourism Organisation figures.

Travellers are regaining confidence, and Europe and the Americas are leading the resurgence. Worldwide, there have been 18 million additional visitors, the UNWTO said, “equivalent to the total increase recorded over the whole of 2021”.

In 2019, global tourism revenues reached \$1.48 trillion. That figure dropped by almost two thirds due to the pandemic the following year.

While January confirms the recovery trend that began in 2021, the UNWTO highlighted how the Omicron Covid variant

recently put the brakes on the rise. International arrivals in January 2022 were still 67 per cent lower than before the pandemic. Most regions have seen travellers return and rebound from the low levels of early 2021, with Europe faring three times better and the Americas twice as well.

That’s still some way off pre-pandemic numbers, but Larry Cuculic, general manager of the Best Western hotel company, is optimistic. “I travelled earlier this week and I can tell you that the airports, the international terminals in the US are very crowded and there is a demand or an interest in travelling to Europe, because for several years we couldn’t do that,” he said. “We miss going to Paris, Rome and Berlin.”

The Middle East is also experiencing a boom, with arrivals up 89 per cent on 2021, and so is Africa, with numbers up 51 per cent — but these two regions are still very far from their 2019 totals, according to the UNWTO. — **AFP**

Sultanate of Oman concludes successful trade mission to India

STRONG APPEAL: 94.8% increase in number of Indian businesses registering with Invest Easy

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 14

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion wrapped up a successful trade and investment mission to India on Friday. Led by Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and accompanied by over 40 high-profile Omani organisations, the delegation visited New Delhi and Mumbai to develop new business opportunities and strengthen investment and trade ties in manufacturing, healthcare, renewables and tourism.

After an intensive series of trade and investment focused meetings with Indian ministers and leading industrialists earlier in the week, on Thursday Al Yousef held talks with senior officials at Invest in India and Niti Aayog, the Indian government’s public policy think-tank.

He then went on to deliver opening remarks at the 10th Oman-India Joint Business Council meeting at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry.

Commenting on the important commercial relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and India, Al Yousef remarked, “As Oman’s economy moves forward under



the wise guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and given the new opportunities already opened up by Oman Vision 2040 we are seeing a growing number of Indian SMEs and investors looking to leverage Oman’s strategic location and world-class transport infrastructure to enter the GCC and African markets.

This is borne out by the recent trade and investment figures, but we cannot take this ongoing interest for granted. We are fully committed to encouraging new and impactful collaborations in health, renewables, tourism and manufacturing, sectors where our nations have complementary capabilities.

This is the message I delivered loud and clear at Thursday’s Joint

Business Council meeting and indeed I was most gratified by the positive response this received.”

Highlighting the growth potential for Oman-made goods in India, Al Yousef noted, “The 172 per cent increase in our 2021 non-oil exports to India demonstrates the appetite for Omani products with Indian consumers. From discussions held during this trip it is clear this is very much the tip of the iceberg in terms of demand, particularly given the growth of India’s middle class.

The prize is substantial. On our return, my team and I will be engaging with Omani exporters to encourage them to seize the opportunities and capitalise on the wealth of possibilities presented by the Indian market given that by 2050 it will be the

world’s third-largest importer, following China and the United States.”

Today, Indian businesses are operating in multiple industries across every region of the Sultanate of Oman with an estimated investment of \$7.5 billion. Trade and investment flows between India and Oman have remained on a positive trajectory despite the pandemic.

This can be seen in the 94.8 per cent increase in the number of Indian businesses registering with MoCIIP’s Invest Easy portal, up from 450 in 2019 to 877 in 2021. While bilateral trade also witnessed robust growth increasing from \$5.4 billion in 2020-21 to \$9.9 billion in 2021-2022, an impressive annual growth of 82.6 per cent.

Need for new water projects identified

ESCALATING GROWTH: Potable water demand ranges from 3pc per annum in Main Interconnected System, 5pc in Sharqiyah Zone to 8pc in Dhofar

CONRAD PRABHU
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the single buyer of electricity and desalinated water output in the Sultanate of Oman, is firming up plans for new Independent Water Projects (IWP) to be established at key locations around the country in line with potable water demand growth.

Peak water demand in the

Main Interconnected System (MIS), covering much of the northern half of the country, is projected to increase at an average rate of 3 per cent per annum to around 1,341,000 cubic metres/day (m3/d) in 2027, up from 1,067,000 m3/day in 2020, the state-owned procurement company (Member of Nama Group) noted in its 7-Year Outlook Statement spanning the 2021 – 2027 timeframe.

The trend averages 5 per cent annually in the Sharqiyah Zone where water demand is anticipated to climb to 204,000 m3/day in 2027, up from 145,000 m3/day in 2020. Dhofar is poised to witness stronger demand growth of 8 per cent annually to 285,000 m3/day in 2027, versus 165,000 m3/day in 2020.

Based on growth assessments



provided by Oman Water & Wastewater Company (OWWSC), also a member of Nama Group, OPWP is firming up proposals for new water capacity primarily in North

Batinah and Dhofar.

A procurement process initiated by OPWP for a new water scheme in the MIS in 2018 is expected to be progressed in the coming years. The proposed

Peak water demand in the Main Interconnected System (MIS), covering much of the northern half of the country, is projected to increase at an average rate of 3 per cent per annum to around 1,341,000 cubic metres/day (m3/d) in 2027, up from 1,067,000 m3/day in 2020, OPWP noted

North Batinah IWP, as it is called, is sized at 150,000 m3/day (33 million imperial gallons per day – MIGD) of capacity.

According to an earlier timeframe for its implementation,

the water scheme was proposed to come fully on stream in Q2 2026, with an initial phase becoming operational earlier in Q2 2025.

Also expected to make headway is Dhofar Water 2025 – an Independent Water Project with a capacity of 150,000 m3/day (33 MIGD). A Request for Proposals (RfP) is envisioned upon “confirmation of land allocation and availability of transmission infrastructure”, OPWP noted in its Outlook Statement.

The procurement company also foresees the need for additional capacity of about 100,000 m3/day to be developed in South Al Batinah following the expiration of Barka II PWPA (Power & Water Purchase Agreement) in 2024.

NBO launches ‘Tamayuz’ career development programme



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) has officially launched ‘Tamayuz’, a core component of the bank’s Development Centre.

As a talent development initiative, NBO has selected 58 high-potential employees from across the bank, including branches network and Muzn Islamic Banking, to develop in line with customised plans which chart their ongoing progression and equips each individual with the skills required for professional growth.

Tamayuz will run its first batch until December 2023 in collaboration with elite business schools and training institutes, and features several milestones. Tamayuz will include workshops and courses alongside external coaching to help participants strengthen their areas of development, which will prepare participants for leadership roles in the future.

Participants will also undertake assignments in line with NBO’s strategic goals and will also be able to earn

professional certification to help progress their aspirational and organisational goals.

Aliya al Balushi, Head of Talent & Performance Management at NBO, said, “People are at the heart of NBO’s operations, and following assessments, we have introduced a career development initiative where technical and leadership, development needs were all meticulously considered.

Tamayuz is connected to all aspects of the bank and aims to deliver wide-reaching long-term benefits to the entire organisation as well as the potential to shape the direction and future of the National Bank of Oman.”

The capabilities and the development of NBO’s people is the key to the successful delivery of the bank’s strategy, and represent one of the priority areas of strategic focus for NBO.

More details about NBO’s range of products and services are available in-branch, online at www.nbo.om or by contacting the Call Centre on 24770000.

Harvard Business School Club of the GCC hosts OIA President

MUSCAT: The Harvard Business School of the GCC hosted Abdulsalam al Murshidi, the President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) during the ‘Strategy & Leadership Transformation’ talk which was held recently.

During the session, Al Murshidi explained that in the world of business and economy, “we must learn from great leaders who have achieved significant success. Leadership is the beating heart of all organisations and some have tended to define it as a set of personal qualities, while others have tended to define it as a mandate and official authority, while other studies state that leadership is the behaviour, interaction and influence one has on others.”

Al Murshidi added, “We often meet and rave about the success of projects that we have worked on, whether in governmental or semi-governmental institutions, but we rarely talk about the people behind those successes that are comparable if not superior to the hidden soldiers behind the scenes of global success stories.

We make a continuous effort to vigilantly study global experiences that give us ideas and inspire us in the same context via looking at the mechanism and vision through which the successful steps were implemented so that we can apply the same in our institutions. To attract, develop, train and retain talented people to create leaders for the future.



Harvard Business School



Club of the GCC





ThinkTank

GUEST OF HONOR

H. E. Abdulsalam Al Murshidi

President, Oman Investment Authority

Live-virtual | Exclusive invite only

Strategy & Leadership Transformation

Our investment strategy depends, above all, on the competence and experience of our employees, who are one of the most important factors for our success. Whoever has the qualities of a leader, has a passion for change.”

The vision of Harvard Business School Club of the GCC is to communicate with various institutions at the regional level within the framework of economic and governmental transformation in a global ecosystem witnessed by the region. This is to enable societies to take into account the commitment to the ideal values

of respect for rights, the exchange of different visions, honesty, integrity and transparency in dealing with all members of society, as well as a high sense of leading the scene with prudence and professionalism.

Moreover, the Harvard Business School Club of the GCC seeks to strengthen commercial and social relations between the representative members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and to promote regional business and the educational and social climate through participation and exchange of experiences with local and regional companies and governments,

and providing the necessary support to organisations and institutions that serve the public interest and focus on continuing education and making leaders.

The Harvard Business School Club of the GCC is led by its Chairman, Sulaiman Hamad al Harthi, the CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank. The club regularly hosts a number of prominent speakers in various sectors to talk about leadership and management which have resulted in a significant impact on the socio-economic environment in the Sultanate of Oman in line with the demands of the modern world.

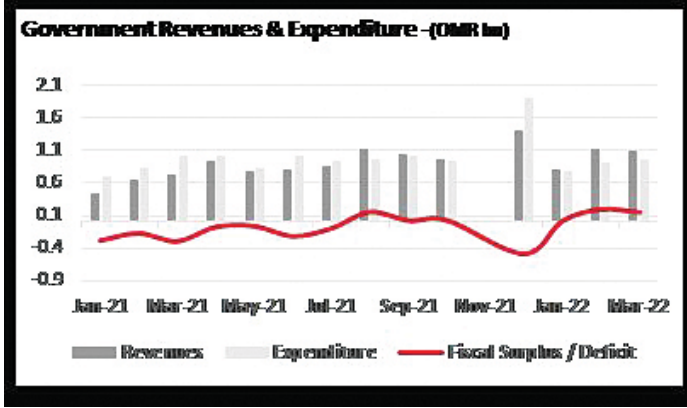
MSX closes the week lower, weighed down by all indices

MUSCAT: The MSX30 Index ended the week lower by 0.30 per cent. All indexes ended the week lower. The Financial Index closed down marginally by 0.06 per cent. Industrial and services Index ended lower by 0.55 per cent and 1.09 per cent respectively.

The MSX Shariah Index closed lower by 1.61 per cent. The State Budget continues to register a surplus as it reached RO 357 million at the end of first quarter of 2022.

The surplus will be utilised for accelerating economic recovery, enhancing development spending and reducing the risks of the public debt portfolio. As of end-first quarter 2022, public revenue amounted to RO 3,025 million, up by 66.3 per cent when compared to the same quarter in 2021, according to the monthly bulletin of the Ministry of Finance.

This is mainly as a result of an increase in the net oil revenue by 70.2 per cent at the end of Q1-2022 to reach RO 1,565 million compared to the same period in 2021.



This is due to an increase in average oil price to 78 US Dollars per barrel and higher average oil production to 1,025 thousand barrels per day, compared to average oil price of 45 US Dollars per barrel and average oil production of 952 thousand barrels per day over the same period in 2021.

By the end of the first quarter of 2022, public spending amounted to RO 2,668 million, up by 3.8 per cent when compared to the same period in 2021.

At the end of Q1-2022, the budget continues to register a surplus, totalling RO 357 million as compared to a deficit of RO 751 million over the same period in 2021.

Omani banks’ credit

fundamentals are recovering as pressures on the operating environment have eased and economic activity is gradually picking up amid higher oil prices, Fitch Ratings said last week.

In a new report on Oman’s banking sector, Fitch Ratings said that Omani banks have been fairly resilient to the pandemic shock which caused a 3.2 per cent GDP contraction in 2020. ‘Omani banks’ performance metrics recovered substantially in 2021 and this is expected to continue in 2022, supported by higher interest rates.

Capital metrics will remain reasonably sound, while pressures on Omani banks’ funding and liquidity profiles have eased. This

has been underpinned by the government support measures combined with the recent rebound in oil prices,’ Fitch Ratings said.

Recently, another global credit ratings agency Moody’s also revised up its outlook for the Omani banking system to ‘stable’ from ‘negative’ due to an improvement in the banks’ operating environment.

The first industrial city in Musandam Governorate has begun welcoming investors eager to capitalise on its proximity to key regional markets to ignite the growth of a manufacturing hub in this strategically important part of the Sultanate of Oman.

Mahas Industrial City — the latest addition to the expanding chain of national industrial parks administered by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) — is coming up in the Wilayat of Khasab. An area of around 1.44 million sq metres has been earmarked for the new facility, primarily for small and mid-scale manufacturing ventures.

[Courtesy: U-Capital]

Bank Muscat launches limited edition Visa prepaid card

MUSCAT: In celebration of the countdown to the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of an exclusive limited edition Visa prepaid card in partnership with Visa.

Customers can apply via Mobile or Internet Banking for the Visa card, which has been designed as a collector’s item and can be used for both local and global payments.

On this occasion Abdullah Tamman al Mashaani, General Manager — Products, Bank Muscat, said: “We are delighted to launch the new Limited edition Visa Prepaid Card to celebrate the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022, thanks to Visa.

Bank Muscat Visa Prepaid Cards continue to lead local and regional benchmarks in providing a secure and convenient payment option for our customers. The growth of Bank Muscat’s Visa Prepaid Cards has been impressive over the years, and we continue our leadership in launching Visa payment products which fulfil the financial needs of our customers.” It is important to note that the Visa Prepaid Card features contactless payment technology and can be managed easily through the bank’s Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking.

Customers can apply for a personalised card with its unique design, load funds and top it up instantly, and also review transactions to manage their expenses.

In addition, the cards can be used for secure online payments apart from PoS payments and ATM withdrawals.

Bank Muscat’s contactless Visa Prepaid cards are a popular option for customers to complete their low-value point-of-sale (POS) transactions at groceries and supermarkets with a simple tap of the POS terminal without the need to enter their personal identification number (PIN) for transactions up to RO 40.

Recently, Bank Muscat launched an option for customers to apply for Visa Prepaid Cards through Internet or Mobile banking.

The new process continues the bank’s customer-centric strategy of launching new payment products and services that improve financial inclusion and offer new, convenient and highly secure e-payment options.

The bank has stated that it will continue to launch new digital payment services and platforms to further enhance the ease of banking and customer convenience. It must be noted that contactless cards feature best-in-class security for PoS and online transactions.

In case of any loss or misplacement of the card, it can be blocked immediately by calling the Bank Muscat Contact Centre on 24795555.

For more details on the bank’s Visa Prepaid cards, please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/bm-cards/Pages/Visa-Prepaid-Card.aspx>.





Mideast medical costs rising faster than global average: Report



Key trend: New Mercer Marsh Benefits report forecasts regional trend rate increases of more than 10 per cent

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 14

New research published by Mercer Marsh Benefits (MMB) highlights that health insurers operating in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) are forecasting a 10.1 per cent increase in the year-on-year cost of medical claims in 2022, up from 9.5 per cent in 2021.

The report, MMB Health Trends, surveys 210 insurers globally and explores the major trends influencing the future of employer-provided medical benefits.

According to the research, 62 per cent of insurers operating in MEA reported that medical claims activity in the region remains higher than pre-pandemic levels and is continuing to trend upwards, significantly higher than the global figure of 41 per cent.

Further, 31 per cent of respondents cited Covid-19 as

one of the top three causes of claims costs by dollar amount and frequency in MEA in 2021, trending closely to global data (34 per cent).

As a result, one in five (21 per cent) insurers globally are actively considering introducing long Covid exclusions, while 8 per cent have already changed their policies to include pandemic-related exclusions and more than a third (34 per cent) are invoking restrictions around pre-existing conditions relating to long Covid.

Commenting on the research, Julio Garcia-Villalon, Mercer Marsh Benefits Leader, MEA, said: "While the full course of the Covid-19 pandemic remains unpredictable, it is clear that its impact on employer health programmes will persist for years to come.

"The pandemic has also affected how people interact with healthcare systems, and how they behave with regards to the management of their health. It is increasingly important for employers to encourage employees to embrace preventive care, through initiatives such as annual health screening and well-being programmes."

Accounting of cryptocurrency is fraught with challenges



DR SHAHNAWAZ KHAN

The Sultanate of Oman is preparing to be part of the global crypto ecosystem by implementing the "Regulatory Framework for Virtual Assets (VAs) and Virtual Assets Service Providers (VAPs)" (the framework).

While the Capital Market Authority (CMA) initiated the process of drafting and implementing the framework, a new challenge is approaching in the form of accounting for VA or cryptocurrency in line with the generally accepted accounting principles or International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

A cryptocurrency is a unit of value that is native to a blockchain. It is a means of exchange within the blockchain to incentivise the network of participants to use the blockchain.

The cryptocurrencies Bitcoin, Ether, Ripple and Litecoin are all examples of native cryptocurrencies also known as digital money.

There are no defined rules or IFRS which cover the accounting of cryptocurrency. Some of the possible combinations of accounting for the cryptocurrency are as below:

Can cryptocurrency be recognised as cash and cash equivalents since they are a medium of exchange?



IAS 7 "Statement of Cash Flows" requires any medium of exchange to meet the definitions of cash and cash equivalents to have the following attributes:

- Legal tender in virtually all jurisdictions
- Backed by a government or central bank
- Readily be exchanged for any good or service
- Short-term, highly liquid investments

Cryptocurrency does not have any of the attributes above and hence does not fall within the provisions of IAS 7.

Can cryptocurrency be recognised as a financial instrument?

IAS 32 "Financial Instruments" defines a financial instrument as a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

Cryptocurrency does not fall into the definition of financial assets due to the lack of a contractual relationship that results in a financial asset for one party and financial liability for

another entity.

Can cryptocurrency be recognised as an investment property?

IAS 40 "Investment Property" defines investment property as property (land or a building or part of a building or both) held (by the owner or by the lessee under a finance lease) to earn rentals or for capital appreciation or both.

Cryptocurrency does not fall into the definition of property as it has no physical substance.

Can cryptocurrency be recognised as an intangible asset?

IAS 38 "Intangible Assets" defines the three critical attributes of an intangible asset as below:

- Identifiability (non-monetary asset without physical substance)
- Control (power to obtain benefits from the asset)
- Future economic benefits (such as revenues or reduced future costs)

Identifiability: Cryptocurrency has no physical substance and is a non-monetary asset.

Control & Future economic

benefits: Cryptocurrency is an asset for sure because the asset is a resource controlled by an entity as a result of a past event from which future economic benefits are expected to flow to the entity.

The evolving nature of cryptocurrencies, coupled with the lack of relevant formal accounting pronouncements, presents complex accounting challenges.

Virtual Assets, therefore, requires a detailed understanding of both blockchain ledger technology and relevant accounting concepts.

In the absence of further action by accounting standard setters or the CMA, holders of Virtual Assets may be unable to achieve the accounting treatment they consider most appropriate and would account for the Virtual Assets or crypto assets as intangibles or as inventory in line with the provisions of IAS 2 "Inventory" if they are held for trading by the Virtual Assets Service Providers.

(The writer is CEO of Baker Tilly Oman)

India bans wheat exports, citing threat to food security

NEW DELHI: India has banned wheat exports with immediate effect, just days after saying it was targeting record shipments this year, as a scorching heatwave curtailed output and local prices hit an all-time high amid strong export demand.

A notice in the government gazette by the Directorate of Foreign Trade said a spike in global prices for wheat, partly due to the war in Ukraine, was threatening the food security of India and neighbouring and vulnerable countries.

The government said it would still allow exports for letters of credit that have already been issued and on the request from countries that are trying "to meet their food security needs". Prior to the ban, India was targeting to ship out a record 10 million tonnes this year.

Global buyers were banking on the world's second-biggest wheat producer for supplies after exports from the Black Sea region plunged following Russia's war of Ukraine. Before the war, Ukraine and Russia accounted for a third of global wheat and barley exports.

Since Russia's February 24 war, Ukraine's ports have been blocked and civilian infrastructure and grain silos have been destroyed.



The Indian ban could drive up global prices to new peaks and hit poor consumers in Asia and Africa.

"The ban is shocking", a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm said. "We were expecting curbs on exports after two to three months, but [it] seems inflation numbers changed government's mind."

Rising food and energy prices

pushed India's annual retail inflation up towards an eight-year high in April, strengthening economists' view that the central bank would have to raise interest rates more aggressively to curb prices.

Wheat prices in India have risen to record highs, in some spot markets to as high as 25,000 rupees (\$465) per tonne, versus the government fixed minimum

support price of 20,150 rupees.

Lower crop size

Even though it is the world's second-largest producer of wheat, India consumes most of the wheat it produces.

It had set a goal of exporting 10 million tons of the grain in 2022-23, looking to capitalise on the global disruptions to wheat supplies from the war and find new markets for its wheat in

Europe, Africa and Asia.

Much of that would have gone to other developing countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

Apart from problems with weather hurting harvests, India's own vast stocks of wheat — a buffer against famine — have been strained by distribution of free grain during the pandemic to some 800 million people.

But a sharp and sudden rise in temperatures in mid-March means the crop size could be smaller than expected at around 100 million tonnes or even lower, a New Delhi-based dealer with a global trading firm said, versus a government estimate for an all-time high of 111.32 million tonnes. "The government's procurement has fallen more than 50 per cent.

Spot markets are getting far lower supplies than last year. All these things are indicating lower crop", the dealer said. In April, India exported a record 1.4 million tonnes of wheat and deals were already signed to export around 1.5 million tonnes in May.

"Indian ban will lift global wheat prices. Right now there is no big supplier in the market," the second dealer said. — **Agencies**

France consumer prices rise at record pace

PARIS: France consumer price inflation accelerated to a record high in April, final data from the statistical office INSEE showed.

The consumer price index rose 4.8 per cent annually in April, as estimated, following March's 4.5 per cent increase.

The record increase in inflation resulted from the acceleration of service costs by 3.0 per cent and the rise in food inflation to 3.8 per cent.

Manufactured goods prices also increased at a faster rate of 2.6 per cent. Although the increase in energy prices moderated in April, the annual growth was 26.5 per cent.

On a month-on-month basis, consumer prices rose 0.4 per cent after the 1.4 per cent increase in March.

Year-on-year, core inflation climbed to 3.2 per cent from 2.5 per cent in March.

The harmonised index of consumer prices rose 5.4 per cent annually after a 5.1 per cent increase in March.

— **dpa**

Ukraine’s key IT sector booming despite Russian war

Ukraine’s IT sector is booming despite the Russian war. Workers with stickers on their laptops recline on beach chairs outside a warehouse for start-ups in the west Ukraine city of Lviv giving off major Silicon Valley vibes.

But the atmosphere inside is different.

Through the glass doors of the complex, young Ukrainians zig-zag between stacks of bulletproof vests and cardboard boxes filled with helmets ready for the front.

They are part of Ukraine’s burgeoning tech sector which was forced to adapt after Russia’s war and has become key to supporting the war effort.

“Most tech companies had developed contingency plans” in case of war said Stepan Veselovskiy, the head of the “IT Cluster Lviv” community.

He said that companies transferred servers to secure locations and established back-up systems outside the country before Russia invaded on February 24. When Russian bombing started, IT companies shut offices in the capital Kyiv and eastern city of Kharkiv and engineers found refuge in western Ukraine or Poland next door.

Veselovskiy said there were already around 500 tech companies in Lviv before the war but now estimates that 80 per cent of the sector is in the western city.

One is Infopulse, which provides various digital services to mainly European customers. It brought 300 of its 2,300 employees to Lviv, where it has offices in one of the city’s few buildings equipped with a bunker.

There are bunk beds and stable Internet underground so employees to continue working in the event of an air raid.

There are also generators in case Russian forces target power stations and terminals for Elon Musk’s Starlink internet service.

“Even in the most drastic conditions, business can continue”, regional manager Ivan Korzhov said. They can even thrive.

Since the start of the war, Infopulse has gained four new customers and in April it created 25 new jobs in Ukraine. — AFP

Companies transferred servers to secure locations and established back-up systems outside the country before Russia invaded on February 24



LOLLARS FOR THE DAY

Lebanese women withdraw fake banknotes called 'Lollars' from a mock ATM during a stunt to denounce corruption that has wrecked the country, in the capital Beirut.

The dollars stuck in accounts, regular citizens can only withdraw in Lebanese pounds at a fraction of its real value, are locally known as Lollars (Lebanese Dollars).

Two days before parliamentary elections, the Lebanese Transparency Association (LTA) decided to take the joke to the streets, with a stunt encouraging people to use "Lollars" for the day.

— AFP

The crypto apocalypse has begun



STEFANO VIRGILLI
stefano@virgilli.com

The writer is a member of the International Press Association

I have been involved in cryptocurrency since 2016. At the beginning as a spot trader, then with a series of jobs in the industry.

More recently, very close to the DeFi movement and derivative products. A major turning point for me was the bear market of 2018. Like many out there, I lost quite a bit of my crypto investment in a few weeks.

Up to that point, all cryptocurrencies seemed to be on an unstoppable rocket to the moon, with crazy returns. But all came down crumbling in the post ICO era, in a collapse that lasted until mid 2020. I resumed my trading activities then, and it was an excellent entry point, as — once again — the rocket ignited its trajectory to the moon.

Bitcoin went from \$6k to \$67k. Ethereum from \$99 to \$3k. Binance’s coin BNB from \$15 to \$500. And many other unknown coins went from nothing to a fortune in less than 24 months.

But as I said earlier, the major turning point of 2018 scares me up to these days. And thankfully so. My perception of an overvalued token or coin is very high. Too

high in some cases, so that I miss some growth opportunities when I fear a sudden collapse. But this time around I was blessed by sensing the bear market ahead of the “apocalypse”.

Let’s go by steps. In January 2018, Korean national Do Kwon incorporated Terraform Labs in Singapore. From there, he built an ecosystem based on a token called Luna and its algorithmic stable coin Terra (UST).

The former being the speculative asset, and the latter the balancer. Initially the project was extremely successful. Terraform Labs acquired over \$1.6B in Bitcoin as a reserve.

But last week all came down crumbling when the “stable” coin lost its peg to USD. At the time when I am writing this article, UST is valued \$0.54, a stunning 46 per cent lower than its target price of one US dollar.

But even more shocking is the down spiral of Terra’s speculative coin LUNA, which collapsed from \$85 last week, to 20 cents today. We are not talking about a pair of random alt-coins.

UST and LUNA were both among the top 15 most traded tokens on the market. Moreover, as a Layer 1 ecosystem,

Terraform Labs offered the infrastructure for other projects to exist.

Most of which are experiencing the same type of catastrophic performance. The vacuum created has sucked away \$600B from the market, with traders pulling their funds out.

The repercussions on other coins and tokens have been drastic. In a week Bitcoin went down 32 per cent to \$26k today. Ethereum is down 38 per cent at \$1.8k. Binance’s and Ripple’s coins are both down by around 44 per cent. Cardano -53 per cent, Solana -58 per cent, Polkadot -54 per cent, Avalanche -64 per cent, Polygon -55 per cent, and Sushi -58 per cent.

The more crypto savvy readers will recognise among those that I have mentioned, that most of them are DeFi projects. In other words, they are not just tokens for the sake of being a token, like Dogecoin which is down 47 per cent in a week anyway.

But these projects built entire ecosystems for other tokens to thrive or perish. And perishing seems the direction where most of them are headed right now. Some will disappear. Others will come back up.

To fight inflation, fight protectionism



PINELOPI KOUJIANOU GOLDBERG

The author, a former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University

One of the main goals that US President Joe Biden has set for his administration is to empower American workers and the country’s middle class.

Many believe that globalisation contributed to stagnating real wages, rising inequality, and the sense that American workers have lost out to workers in other countries with lower labour standards.

But in its attempt to reverse these trends, the Biden administration has embraced protectionist rhetoric and policies that will cause American workers to lose once again.

Though any mention of the word “openness” is met with suspicion nowadays, the surge in inflation — the US Consumer Price Index was up 8.3% in April — has nonetheless prompted a discussion among economists about whether trade

liberalisation (and openness more generally) could be used to rein in rising prices.

Since one of the main arguments for free trade is that it lowers prices for consumers, the link between open borders and inflation is worth contemplating.

To be clear, no reasonable economist claims that the recent inflation is the result of trade restrictions. By now, the causes are well understood to be a combination of pandemic-driven supply-side shortages, policy-fueled demand, and further supply-side disruptions caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine.

But as policymakers struggle to contain inflation without causing a recession, they must recognise that “Buy American” requirements, tariffs, and immigration restrictions may be making a bad situation worse.

According to Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE)

policy brief, a feasible reduction of trade barriers “could deliver a one-time reduction in [CPI] inflation of around 1.3 percentage points.”

The study is conservative, focusing only on trade restrictions that can plausibly be lifted in the short term, and its authors are careful to emphasise that the result would be a one-time outcome.

The proposed reduction of trade barriers would not solve the problem of rising prices, but it would make today’s high prices lower.

US consumers would welcome such short-term relief. If the Biden administration finds it necessary to sell oil out of the Strategic Petroleum Reserve despite its commitment to addressing climate change, why shouldn’t it also recognise the need to reverse Donald Trump’s tariffs?

In 2021, according to the PIIE brief, these duties still applied to more than half of US imports “subject to high tariffs, penalty

duties, or severe quotas.” Perhaps more importantly, openness, whether it is free trade or immigration, also contributes to consumer welfare in indirect ways.

Though these effects are often hard to quantify, they are of first-order importance, which is why economists often turn to first principles when debating them.

One of the most important benefits of free trade is that it exposes domestic firms (and labour markets) to greater competition, which induces them to keep prices low and to innovate constantly to stay ahead of the curve.

Similarly, immigration eases labor-supply shortages, and high-skilled newcomers can boost productivity and innovation

Forward-looking countries understand this and embrace immigration. The United Kingdom, for example, has adopted a new skilled-worker visa programme that welcomes graduates of top

global universities.

It is deeply misguided to restrict trade and immigration at a time when rising domestic prices are of paramount concern.

Now that everyone is fixated on inflation, it is worth considering why inflation was so low these past two decades, despite full employment in the United States (prior to the pandemic) and despite ultra-expansive monetary policies.

Globalisation arguably had a lot to do with it, as did automation.

The prospect of outsourcing jobs to lower-wage countries or to machines constrained workers’ bargaining power.

At the same time, foreign competition constrained domestic firms’ pricing power (though there is ample evidence that the cost reductions they achieved by globalising production still allowed them to make hefty profits).

©Project Syndicate, 2022.

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
Choose from a wide range of brands & models
PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

Ask For Free Demo

Cloud Computing Services

For Tally Sales, Services or Customization

Contact: Guruprasad +968 79248644, 98753781
Email: guru.prasad@asiasolutions.net
ASIA SOLUTIONS

https://www.asiasolutions.net

Tally FOR VAT
TallyPrime

SUNDAY	MAY 15, 2022	SHAWWAL 14, 1443 AH		
Observer Classified Section	Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230 m.alrahd186@yahoo.com	Ali al Maashari: 99639264 ali.almashari@omandaily.om	Saada al Rashdi 95919344	94501166 24649593 24649595

Generator & Marine Engine Sell & Repair

9351 0868

Husqvarna
FOREST & GARDEN TOOLS

POWERFUL. RELIABLE. TRUSTED BY EXPERTS.

OMAN'S BEST SELLING LANDSCAPE AND GARDEN TOOLS
Chainsaws Hedge trimmer Brush cutters Lawnmowers Blowers Ride on mowers Cultivators

CALL: 99631272 | EMAIL: gdsoman@gdsoman.com

Authorized Exclusive Distributors for Oman:
الشركة العامة لخدمات التنمية ش.م.م
GDS General Development Services L.L.C.

SIT VACANT

Urgent requirement - Civil engineer.
Reputed maintenance company requires 5-10 years Oman experienced, English speaking, BTEch/diploma holder with Fit out/maintenance experience. Suitable candidate may forward CV to: directrecruit2022@gmail.com

BIN Management supervisor

1. Can handle team of 30 employee.
2. IT knowledge.
3. Knowledge of Telemetry system.
4. with 4 years of experience.
Please send the updated CV to the following e-mail IDs: Ahmed.Aliasee@imdaadab.om, HR@imdaadab.om

FOR RENT

FLATS, 2BHK and 1 BHK in Mumtaz ☎99341138/ 90991079.

FLATS, 2BHK in Ghubra near Indian School.
☎99341138/ 90991079.

SIT. WANTED

SMART Indian male, 16 years Oman experience seeks Project Coordination/ CEO & Chairman Office/Administration/ Operations. Call: 99283938

CARE taker for old lady over 90 years. Contact: 91724525.

LOOKING job as a cook. Bangladeshi, 50 years old. Indian, Chinese, Arabic & Continental food. 8 years Le Meridien 5 stars hotel in Dubai, 8 years Hyatt Regency 5 stars hotel in KSA & 10 years Omani house cook Muscat. Contact: 92943422.

INDIAN male (MBA Finance) having 7 years experience in Oman in accounts, looking for suitable position. Currently in Oman. Contact 77220864.

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact 79256679.

SERVICES

A LEGAL translation office needs **Marketters.** Contact E-mail: oman4n@gmail.com

AUTOCAD/REVIT ARCH MEP, part/full-time. Contact WhatsApp: 79037728.

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

SITUATION WANTED
Mechanical Engineer with Master Degree from UK having 7.5 years work experience in Oman. Looking for a suitable Project Manager job role.
Contact: 91162085

FOR RENT

♦ **1, 2 & 3 BHK FLATS** in Central Ruwi

♦ **2 BHK FLAT** in Madinat Qaboos (Next To Brazilian Embassy)
Tel No.: 99643760 & 99346546

♦ **SUBSTANTIAL VILLA** in Hay Al Shatti Near Grand Hyaat 3 Floors with 40 Rooms, 22 Bathrooms, which is suitable for Embassy/Clinic/School/Multi purpose Office/Residential Premises
Tel No.: 99643760 / 24704994

AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

INDIA • BANGLADESH
NEPAL • SRI LANKA • INDONESIA
PHILIPPINES • AFRICA • EUROPE
USA • ALL GCC

TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766
www.alnamanicargo.com

95587410, 9988 1554, 99638698, 94940231, 98523631
Branches : Ruwi, Hamraiyah, Dhaka, Seeb, Barka, Sohar, Sohar

FREE PICK UP 24/7

د. نورا بركات
أخصائية في الأمراض الجلدية والعلاجات التجميلية

DR. NORA BARAKAT MD, MS
DERMATOLOGY AND AESTHETICS
MEDICINE SPECIALIST

CONSULTATION AVAILABLE
SAT TO WED 10AM TO 6PM
THU 9AM TO 2PM

CONTACT US
☎ +968 24451726 • +968 79235354
AL MAHARA TRADING TRADING CENTRAL - SUCCURATE OF OMAN
E: ALSALAMADAM@GMAIL.COM

EMERGENCY NO
☎ +968 94502100

JOB SEEKING

Sales & Operations supervisor in Shipping & logistics and freight warehouse industry 8 years experience with Oman driving license
Contact: +968 71917998

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.

○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts.
☎972494490.

LUXURIOUS
Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat.
Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

VIGAS CARGO
WORLD WIDE DOOR TO DOOR

Transportation, Packing & Cargo Services

♦ CARGO SERVICES BY AIR & SEA WORLD WIDE

♦ DOOR TO DOOR DELIVERY IN INDIA, INDONESIA & UK

♦ PROFESSIONAL PACKERS & MOVERS

♦ MUSCAT - DUBAI - MUSCAT REGULAR TRANSPORT

H.O. Ruwi
99851366
92495068

Ghubrah : 93571703
Falaj : 93571704
Store : 93571823
Misfa : 98119561
93260956
vigas.cargo@yahoo.com

M M T CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR SERVICE

MUSCAT: 95605353, 95605454
BARKA: 95893242, 93743308
SOHAR: 96773031, 95347988
FALAJ: 94002341, 95136067
SALALAH: 94575905, 97858656
DUQUIM: 97218831, 94002341

GTC Building, Near Badr Al Sama Hospital, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: mmtcargo@yahoo.com
Customer Care: 96773031 / 97695454

Sea Cargo **800 Bz/Kg** Express Cargo to Kerala 5 to 7 days*

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

Quality Comes First

Tower Cranes & Passenger Lifts:

- Sales and Rental Services
- Installation
- Maintenance Service
- Breakdown Service
- Spare Parts Supply
- Hoist & Lowering
- Support Fixation
- Dismantling

Steel Fabrication Works

NEW MANARA TECHNICAL SERVICES LLC
Mobile: +968 9853 1975, 9853 1970
E-mail: info@newmanara.com / newmanaratechnical@gmail.com
Website: www.newmanara.com

SITUATION VACANT
Required for Ras Al Hamra Recreation Centre (PDO Club)

SWIMMING POOL LIFEGUARDS/ATTENDANTS (Male & Female) OMANIS ONLY

Qualification & Skills: Accomplished swimmer with recognized Life Saving and First Aid qualifications and certifications.
Must be fluent in written & spoken English.

Experience: 2 years working as Life Guard & Pool Attendant.

Job Responsibilities: Supervise swimming activities, children and other weak swimmers and ensure pool and safety guidelines are followed.
Must be willing to work shift duties and on weekends.

Note: A swimming test will be conducted to test the candidates swimming and rescue skills
Please email CV to: oceanint@omantel.net.om

VAT REGISTRATION, RETURN FILING, TAX CONSULTANCY
Contact: 9246 9602 / 9723 0025

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

JOB SEEKING
Indian Male. 16 years working experience in senior position in finance and accounts in Oman. Able to work independently upto finalization, banking, tax matters etc...
GSM: 95392251
Mail ID : regi.lukose@gmail.com

Driving School
Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)
Contact No: 99074072

AL KHOORY EQUIPMENT EST.
P.O. Box 545, P.C. 117, Al Wadi Al Kabir Area, Sultanate of Oman

Official distributor of **Schneider Electric**

Stockist & Wholesaler of Low Voltage Switchgear Products and a One Stop Solution for all Switchgear Products and Assembly

Tel: +968 24832474, +968 79474556
E-mail: alkhooory@omantel.net.om • www.alkhoooryoman.com

Al Eman Dental Clinic
Flat 22, Floor 2
Abu Zaki Trading Building
Opp. Al Nahda Hospital
Sultan Qaboos Street

☎ : +968 24834113
☎ : +968 97454854
☎ : +968 96438854

Our Mission: To preserve your teeth and smile for a lifetime

DEYYAR INTERNATIONAL LLC

JOB VACANCY
Requirement of Painting Supervisor/ Forman:
A well reputed Contracting Company looking for the following position immediately

Position: Painting Supervisor/ Forman.
Minimum Experience: preferably 3 to 5 years in marine or oil & gas.

Skills: hands on experience in surface preparation, inspection, paint mixing, leading a team of blasters & painters, Good written and verbal communication in English. Well versed in computer skills, MS Office package & internet.

Job location: Duqm

Interested candidates may send your CV
Email: operations@deyyarint.com

OMAN DAILY Observer

For Advertisements
Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office
Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd186@yahoo.com

Salalah Office
Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office
Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office
Musalam Al Sadi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com



Consider these wadis for your summer wadi hike

During summer, wadi hikes top the list of fun activities to do in the Sultanate of Oman. Each wadi is different which makes hike experiences not the same. Depending on your stamina and level of adventurism, there is always a wadi that would suit what you're looking for. Explore these three wadis this summer... **P20**

It was this big! Cambodian fishermen hook giant endangered stingray

CAMBODIAN FISHERMEN on the Mekong River got a shock when they inadvertently hooked an endangered giant freshwater stingray four metres long and weighing 180 kilos, scientists said on Wednesday.

The female leviathan, one of Southeast Asia's largest and rarest species of fish, was caught by accident last week in Stung Treng province when it swallowed a small-

er fish that had taken a baited hook.

An international team of experts on the US-funded Wonders of the Mekong project worked with the fishermen to unhook the ray before weighing and measuring it and returning it unharmed to the river.

The giant Mekong is a crucial habitat for a vast array of species large and small, but project leader Zeb Hogan, a fish biologist

from the University of Nevada, said the river's underwater ecosystem was poorly understood.

"They are unseen worlds, underappreciated and out of sight," he said in a statement issued by his university.

More than 1,000 fish species call the Mekong home and the stingray is not the only giant lurking in the muddy waters — the giant catfish and giant barb also reach up to three metres long and 270 kilos in weight.

The study group said in the statement that the remote location where the ray was caught has pools up to 80 metres deep and could harbour even bigger specimens.

But they also warned that underwater video footage showed plastic waste even in the deepest stretches of the Mekong, along with "ghost nets" — abandoned by fishermen but still able to snare fish.

Environmentalists have long voiced concerns about dam building along the Mekong River that will destroy fish stocks.

The famous waterway starts in China and twists south through parts of Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam, feeding 60 million people through its basin and tributaries. — **AFP**



READ

INSIDE REPORTING

BY TIM HARROWER

No other textbook offers a more engaging and accessible approach to newswriting than *Inside Reporting*. While emphasising the basics, this new edition offers a wealth of information on digital reporting and packaging stories in modern, interactive ways.



AUCTION

This photograph taken on May 11, 2022 shows "The Red Cross Diamond" a historic 205.07 carats fancy intense yellow, cushion-shaped diamond associated for more than a century with the Red Cross, displayed prior to Christie's auctions entitled 'Magnificent Jewels' sales in Geneva. Part of the proceeds of the sale of the diamond will benefit the International Committee of the Red Cross. — **AFP**



FASHION

A model walks the runway for Louis Vuitton's Cruise 2023 Fashion Show at the Salk Institute in San Diego, California. — **AFP**





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

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



AROUND THE WORLD

MUSIC

Tokyo's stylish toilets inspire director Wim Wenders



FROM AMERICAN road trips to modern dance and the pope, German Director Wim Wenders' films are nothing if not eclectic, and his latest inspiration is Tokyo's public toilets.

The giant of European cinema is making a film about an urban renewal project in which top architects are transforming 17 dingy downtown loos into works of art.

They include one toilet with colourful see-through cubicles that turn opaque when the door is locked, and another with wooden panels by Olympic Stadium designer Kengo Kuma.

All of the eye-catching new facilities in the capital's Shibuya district are free, wheelchair-accessible and kept sparklingly clean by a team of maintenance workers.

"There is something very Japanese about the idea, about the whole setting. And I almost think it's a utopian idea", Wenders said at a press conference on Wednesday.

"Because a toilet is a place where everybody is the same. There's no rich and poor, no old and young, everybody's part of humanity."

Wenders, 76, has built a cult following with his arthouse films including "Wings of Desire", "Buena Vista Social Club" and "Paris, Texas".

The director said he was approached by the organisers of the renovation project, called "The Tokyo Toilet", who inspired him to make the film featuring four short stories and starring actor Koji Yakusho as a cleaner.

"I love architecture. In another life, I'd certainly want to be an architect", Wenders said.

He said he is particularly happy to be working with renowned architect Tadao Ando, 80, whose gleaming circular toilet has thin slats that let in fresh air as people wash their hands.

"I was so glad when I saw his toilet the other day, and saw how he worked with the light... I thought, 'this is a precious place.'"

It is not Wenders' first time in Japan: His 1985 film "Tokyo-Ga" is a homage to the city of cinematic master Yasujiro Ozu, and he made a documentary in the late 1980s about fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto.

So far, 12 of Tokyo's 17 new toilets have been finished and are in use, mostly in parks and next to stations.

Ando told reporters that in many countries, "public toilets are not considered something beautiful."

"So, I thought that these magnificent toilets could convey a sense of Japan's beauty to people from around the world." — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Cannes unfurls blood-red carpet for gory films



THE CANNES FILM Festival has a strong stomach.

Having handed its top prize, the Palme d'Or, to the blood-soaked "Titane" last year, there is more horror on the slate for the 75th edition that kicks off on May 17.

Among the most anticipated entries is the return of body-horror maestro David Cronenberg with "Crimes of the Future".

The new tale from the twisted genius behind "The Fly", "Crash" and "Videodrome" is set in a future world where people undergo disgusting surgical alterations for the sake of art and sexual pleasure, starring Lea Seydoux and Viggo Mortensen.

The festival's opening film is also an ode to the horror genre, though this time with a tongue firmly in its cheek — "Final Cut" is a pastiche of zombie films from the makers of Oscar-winning silent movie "The Artist".

It is not a one-off. Cannes opened with another zombie comedy, Jim Jarmusch's "The Dead Don't Die", in 2019.

'PUSHING BOUNDARIES'

Such veneration for genre films is much less common in Hollywood.

Only six horror films have ever been nominated for a best picture Oscar — "The Exorcist", "Jaws", "The Silence of the Lambs", "The Sixth Sense", "Black Swan" and "Get Out".

But festivals have been increasingly open to gore.

"Film festivals like Cannes are renowned for exhibiting boundary-pushing cinema... and horror movies offer some of the most unique, inventive and challenging films", Kate Robertson, a New York-based expert on cinema, told AFP.

That is certainly the case with "Men" from "Ex Machina" director Alex Garland and starring Jessie Buckley, which premieres in the Director's Fortnight section at Cannes next week.

It uses horror tropes — home invasion, an inescapable village full of monsters and various revolting bodily mutilations — but deploys them for an ingenious and very contemporary story about a woman dealing with the trauma of a manipulative ex-husband.

"Horror is not just about entertainment. It can allow us to experience and resolve emotions, offer catharsis, consider our relationships and even our place in the world", said Robertson.

'OUR DEEPEST FEARS'

Cannes has often sought entries to shake up its attendees.

The vomit and excrement of 1973's "The Big Feast", in which the protagonists attempt to eat themselves to death, disgusted jury president Ingrid Bergman.

The explicit rape scene in Gaspard Noe's 2002 film "Irreversible", praised and criticised in equal measure,

was another horribly memorable moment in Cannes lore.

As was the sight of Charlotte Gainsbourg taking a pair of rusty scissors to her genitals in 2009's "Antichrist", which was met with boos and shocked laughter at the premiere, and earned director Lars Von Trier an "anti-prize" for "most misogynist movie".

The victory of "Titane" last year, however, marked a new level of respect for the horror genre.

The film features a heroine whose body is infested by a mass of metal which grows in her belly, while she sweats and bleeds motor oil.

"I've always wanted to bring genre cinema or outlandish films to mainstream festivals so this part of French movie production would stop being ostracised", Director Julia Ducournau told AFP at the festival.

"People need to understand that genre cinema is a way to talk about individual people and about our deepest fears and desires in a profound, raw and direct way."

It remains to be seen if "Titane" sets a precedent or remains an exception.

"The lack of consideration for this kind of film is reflected in the prizes", said Robertson.

"Ducorneau's win for Titane last year was a thrilling surprise for many and hopefully points to wider industry changes." — AFP

DISCOVERY

Scientists successfully grow plants in soil from the Moon



THAT'S ONE small pot of soil, one giant leap for man's knowledge of space agriculture: Scientists have for the first time grown plants in lunar soil brought back by astronauts in the Apollo programme.

The ground-breaking experiment, detailed in the journal Communications Biology on Thursday, has given researchers hope that it may be possible to one day grow plants directly on the Moon.

That would save future space missions much hassle and expense, facilitating longer and farther trips.

However, according to the study's University of Florida authors, much remains to be studied on the topic, and they intend to leave no stone unturned.

"This research is critical to NASA's long-term human exploration goals", said Bill Nelson, the head of the US space agency. "We'll need to use resources found on the Moon and Mars to develop food sources for future astronauts living and operating in deep space."

For their experiment, the researchers used just 12 grams (a few teaspoons) of lunar soil collected from various spots on the Moon during the Apollo 11, 12, and 17 missions.

In tiny thimble-sized pots, they placed about a gram of soil (called "regolith") and added water, then the seeds. They also fed the plants a nutrient solution every day.

The researchers chose to plant arabidopsis thaliana, a relative of mustard greens, because it grows easily and, most importantly, has been studied extensively. Its genet-

ic code and responses to hostile environments — even in space — are well-known.

As a control group, seeds were also planted in soil from Earth as well as samples imitating lunar and Martian soil.

The result: After two days, everything sprouted, including the lunar samples.

"Every plant — whether in a lunar sample or in a control — looked the same up until about day six", Anna-Lisa Paul, lead author of the paper, said in a statement.

But after that, differences started to appear: The plants in the lunar samples grew more slowly and had stunted roots.

After 20 days, the scientists harvested all the plants, and ran studies on their DNA.

Their analysis showed that the lunar plants had reacted similarly to those grown in hostile environments, such as soil with too much salt, or heavy metals.

In the future, scientists want to understand how this environment could be made more hospitable.

Nasa is preparing to return to the Moon as part of the Artemis programme, with a long-term goal of establishing a lasting human presence on its surface.

— AFP



art & life

Local Scene

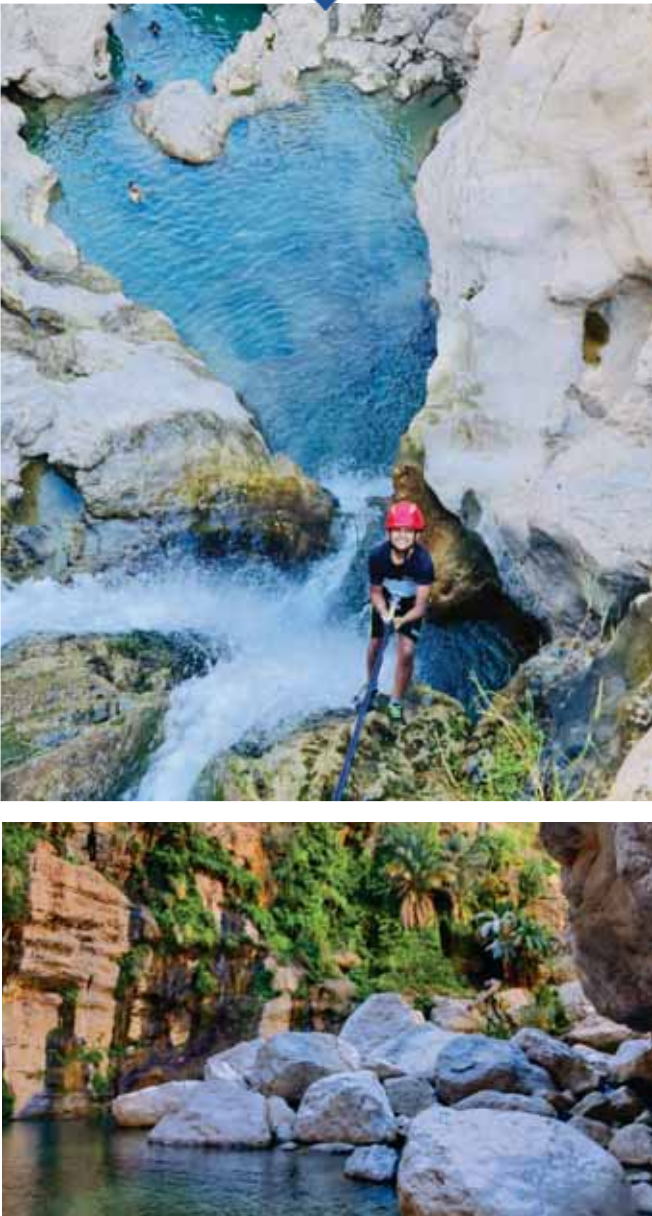
f t i y @omanobserver

SUNDAY | MAY 15 | 2022

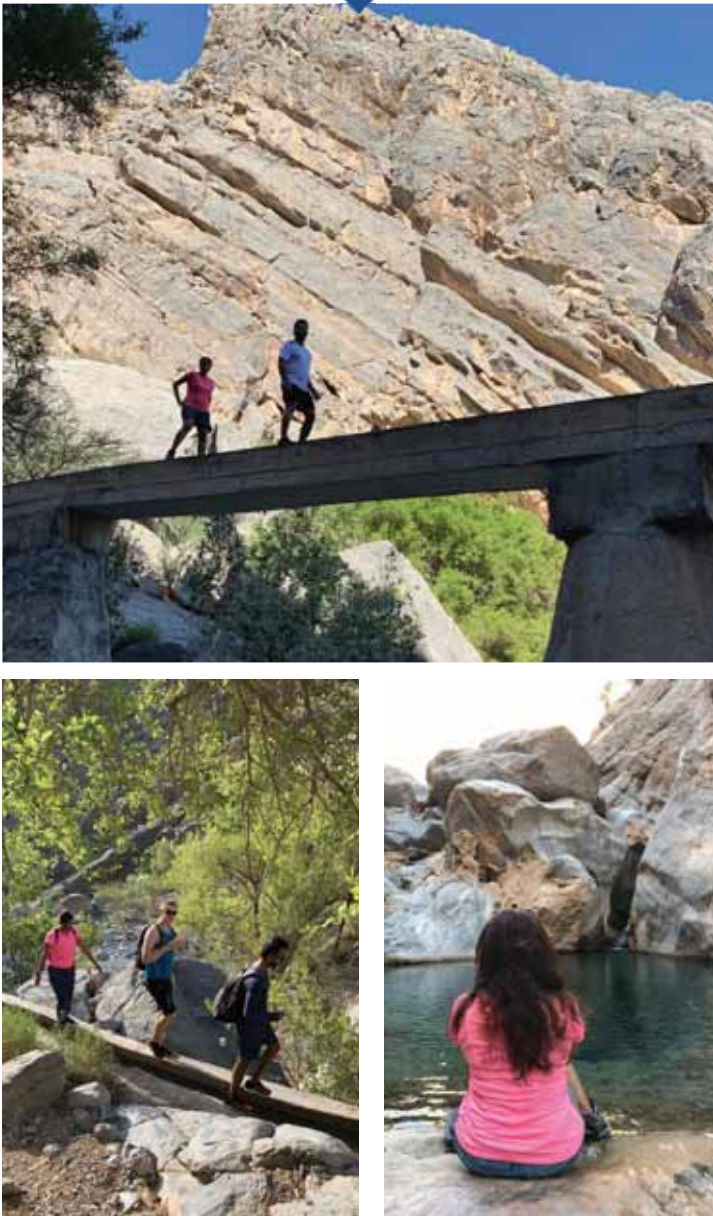
Wadi Hawir



Wadi Mibam



Wadi Qurai



Consider these wadis for your summer wadi hike

By Rumpa Mitra
Instagram: @rumpa_mitra

Oman is famous for its emerald and turquoise natural water pools. However, these pools are not easily accessible and many travellers still can't believe that a desert country can hide beautiful secrets like those found in the country.

During summer, wadi hikes top the list of fun activities to do in the Sultanate of Oman. The natural pools come as a reward after a hard hike

inside the mountains.

Each wadi is different which makes hike experiences not the same. Depending on your stamina and level of adventurism, there is always a wadi that would suit what you're looking for. If you're looking for some nice wadi to explore this summer, check out these three recommendations.

WADI QURAI

This gem is hidden in one of the mountains of Samayil, nearly two hours drive from Muscat. This is one of the easiest wadi hikes to take but if

you're afraid of heights, then the earlier point of the wadi can be a bit of a challenge as you will be passing through an elevated falaj that serves as a bridge for you to cross on the opposite side of the wadi. Finding the wadi location is quite easy as all you have to do is punch it in Google map and it will lead you to a mosque and the foot of the village where the hike begins. After crossing the approximately 30 metres in height falaj bridge, the rest of the way is enjoyable and more relaxed. The wadi is also surrounded by walls of mountains which meant it's not as hot as other wadis in Oman. At the end of the hike, you will be rewarded by a waterpool that is welcomed by a beautiful emerald pool. Wadi Qurai is a marked trail and can be done without a guide. This hike takes mostly 2-3 hours to complete.

WADI MIBAM

Technically still part of Wadi Tiwi, located at its mountain point, Wadi Mibam is one of Al Sharqiyah Governorate's best gifts to its people. Going to Mibam requires off-road driving passing through tiny village roads and rocky terrain. Mibam got its name from the village where you start the hike. After walking through nearly a hundred steps of stairs down towards an amazing waterfall, you would have to climb down the side of the mountain to get down. Here, the hike is like exploring a garden filled with different adventures. Once down in the wadi, you have to keep swimming until the far end to reach what is perhaps one of the best paradises on earth. Green is the dominant colour

in this wadi and both sides of the mountain hiding the wadi are filled with plantations. Once you reach the last pool, you can select any rock, rest and enjoy the beauty there. This is indeed a place where anyone can connect with nature and enjoy the sound of the waterfall. There are two ways to exit out of the wadi. One is going through the same trail you entered which required climbing back the rope or taking the longer path by the gardens. Few of the spots are tricky and very slippery so always hike with vigilance. Wadi Mibam can take easily 5-6 hours depending upon how long one would like to get lost in this paradise.

WADI HAWIR

Wadi Hawir is a recent favourite for the hikers in Oman. As this is comparatively less known, the possibility of meeting other hikers on the trail is less. The wadi can take up to 3 hours to finish from beginning to end depending on how fast you are. To get to the end, you have to cross three long natural pools, hike through massive rocks and climb down cliffs. At the end of the hike, apart from the water pools, one can enjoy the natural water slide. Wadi Hawir takes about two hours drive from Muscat and is located after the Mudharib village in Al Sharqiyah. As observed, this wadi is moderately easy but few places the rocks are absolutely slippery and need proper guidance to cross.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

Wadi hikes are always more enter-

taining than the mountains during summer but at times can be more dangerous than mountain hikes. It is always advised to have a guide who is a certified swimmer or hiking expert.

Proper swimming knowledge is a must, however, one can use life jackets to complete all these wadis. It is always better to carry a life jacket even if you consider yourself a pro swimmer.

Carry enough water and light snacks, along with the water bag.

Some spots, you would have to jump off a cliff. If you're taking this more adventurous route, make sure to learn all the proper techniques in jumping into the water. Always make sure as well where the pool you are jumping is safe and there is enough depth so you don't get hurt on the process.

If you are interested in abseiling, Wadi Mibam and Wadi Hawir can be great places for this activity. To do it, you would require however the help of a professional team. Check out different groups that offer abseiling packages.

Remember that these places are home to the villagers that live in the area. Always respect their privacy and observe proper decorum when interacting with the locals. Always ask for permission before taking their photos. Furthermore, the pools on these wadis are used by the villagers for their daily life needs. Make sure to keep the environment clean and bring your trash with you.