

HM gets message from Saudi King

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, pertaining to fraternal coordination and cooperation between the two countries. The message was received by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, when he received Abdullah Saud al Anzi, Saudi Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. – ONA



Oman, Tanzania to promote bilateral ties

HIS MAJESTY, TANZANIAN PRESIDENT HELD OFFICIAL TALKS IN THE SPIRIT OF KINSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP

SATISFACTION OVER THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE OIA THROUGH EXISTING PROJECTS IN TANZANIA

ROLE OF MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM IN RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL SITES IN ZANZIBAR



President Samia Suluhu Hassan concluded her official 3-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The Tanzania President was seen off at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, and others. – ONA

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania reaffirmed their firm and sincere desire to strengthen bilateral relations and push them to broader horizons in all spheres. This was stated today in a joint

statement between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania on the occasion of the visit of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman. The text of the joint statement reads as follows.

Stemming from the friendly and historical ties between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania, and in response to the gracious invitation from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultan of

His Majesty hosts private dinner

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted a private dinner at Al Baraka Palace on Monday evening in honour of President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania, on the occasion of her visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

The dinner was attended by a number of Their Highnesses and the members of the delegation accompanying the Tanzanian President.

His Majesty the Sultan bid farewell to the Tanzanian President wishing her a nice stay for the remainder of her visit and a happy return to her home country and wishing the friendly Republic of Tanzania more progress and prosperity.

The Tanzanian President expressed her utmost thanks and appreciation for the generous hospitality extended to her and her delegation during their stay and wishing His Majesty good health, happiness and long life and the Omani people more progress and development under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — ONA

Oman, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania paid an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman along with a high-level delegation for a period of three days, starting from Sunday, Dhul Qa'ada 12, 1443 AH,

corresponding to June 12, 2022, until Tuesday, Dhul Qa'ada 14, 1443 AH, corresponding to June 14. His Majesty the Sultan and the Tanzanian President held official talks in the spirit of kinship and friendship.

Mutual investment fund to boost economic and business projects

MUSCAT: A mutual investment fund between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania will be established.

The fund will be established within the framework of the visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and the directives of the two countries' leaderships in boosting economic, business and investment relations.

The investment fund will invest in projects of value in various sectors, including agriculture, fishing and mining.

The Foreign Ministry pointed out that an initial agreement was signed between the governments of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania on the avoidance of double taxation, in addition to combating income tax evasion.

FREE ZONES

President Samia Suluhu Hassan was earlier briefed on the investment potentials enjoyed by the economic and free zones, Port of Sohar and its industrial zone around the port. A presentation given by the Public Authority for

Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) at Al Alam palace guesthouse.

Ahmed Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ, said that the meeting responded to inquiries related to investing in those zones and means of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of port services, free zones and economic zones. He also pointed out that there is a Tanzanian investment which is considered the start of several other projects underway between the two countries.

SEE ALSO P2

■ PRESERVING OMAN'S BEAUTY



Important events stay only for a moment and the only way to preserve a special moment and make it last forever is to preserve it as photographs. This is what photographer Abdulmajeed al Shuaibi has been doing, creatively documenting life events so that they can be preserved for future generations. **DETAILS ON P20**



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Tanzanian President receives Grand Mufti

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania received at her place of residence in Al Alam Palace here on Tuesday His Eminence Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Khalili, the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman. The Tanzanian President and the Grand Mufti of Oman exchanged cordial talks and reviewed matters of common interest. The meeting was attended

by Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania. It was also attended from the Tanzanian side by Dr Pindi Chana, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr Khalid Salum Mohamed, Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, and Ambassador Mbarouk Nassoro Mbarouk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation. — ONA

Tanzanian President concludes visit

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania concluded her official three-day visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The Tanzania President was seen off on Tuesday afternoon at the Royal Airport by His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Head of the Mission of Honour), Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania, Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and members of



the embassy. The President of Tanzania was accompanied during her visit by an official delegation comprising January Yusuf Makamba, Minister of Energy, Dr Pindi Chana, Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism, Dr Khalid Salum Mohamed, Minister of Works, Transport and Communications, Ambassador Mbarouk Nassoro Mbarouk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Fatma Rajab, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman, and some Tanzanian officials. — ONA

Focus on investment potentials of economic and free zones

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania was briefed on the investment potentials enjoyed by the economic and free zones, Port of Sohar and its industrial zone around the port. A presentation given by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) at Al Alam palace guesthouse. Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of OPAZ, said that the meeting



responded to inquiries related to investing in those zones and means of cooperation between the two countries in the fields of port services, free zones and economic zones. He also pointed out that there is a Tanzanian investment which is considered the start of several

other projects underway between the two countries. The meeting was attended by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Head of the Mission of Honour), Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania, Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Ambassador of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman and some officials from both sides. — ONA



Role of women in development highlighted

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania met in Al Alam Palace on Tuesday with female managers and CEOs from the public and private sectors of Oman and Tanzania. The meeting was held to discuss the importance of enhancing relations of cooperation in various fields. It also explored the role of women in development, as well as in boosting trade and investment exchange. The meeting also covered a spectrum of topics, particularly empowering women at the international level and at the level of leadership positions in fields of business, economy and policy. It also touched on topics related to joint cooperation between Oman and Tanzania. The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Head of the Mission of Honour), Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion and Saud bin Hilal al Shaithani, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Republic of Tanzania. — ONA



(CLOCKWISE) President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania visited the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Tuesday. During the visit, the Tanzanian guest was briefed on the ROHM, its facilities and shows, as well as its programmes and the latest equipment used in the world music shows. Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received in his office here on Tuesday January Yusuf Makamba, Energy

Minister of Tanzania, within the framework of the official visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan. Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, received here on Tuesday Ambassador Mbarouk Nassoro Mbarouk, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation of Tanzania, within the framework of the visit of President Samia Suluhu Hassan.

Tanzanian President views logistic solutions of Asyad

MUSCAT: President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania visited Asyad Group's Fulfilment Centre on Tuesday to get familiarised with the competitive advantages and logistic services provided by the Group to enhance trade and economic activities between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania. The Tanzanian President was briefed on the services provided by Asyad Group in ports, free zones, shipping, dry dock and

its competitive logistic solutions. Those solutions include direct lines for container transportation, freight forwarding, cold chain, e-commerce and last mile express delivery services. The guest was acquainted with the centre's operations as an ideal model in supporting supply chain activities across various local and global markets. The President of Tanzania was also briefed on the partnership between Asyad Group, represented



by Oman Post and Asyad Express, and the Tanzanian Posts Corporation. As per this partnership, the two sides exchange expertise and knowledge on the latest technologies and innovative solutions in the fields of e-commerce and postal services to implement best practices and experiences between the two countries. She was also familiarised with the joint postage stamp initiative that documents the historical and cultural ties between

Oman and Tanzania. At the conclusion of her visit, President Samia Suluhu lauded the efforts exerted by Asyad Group in providing competitive and international logistic services, as well as in solidifying the business and economic relations between the two countries. This visit underscores the strategic importance of the existing cooperation between Asyad Group and the Tanzanian Posts Corporation through logistic operations. — ONA



OMAN, TANZANIA TO PROMOTE BILATERAL TIES

FROM P1
The two parties reiterated their mutual firm and sincere desire to strengthen bilateral relations and encourage them to broader horizons in all fields and levels in a way that serves the mutual benefit of the two countries and their friendly peoples. During the talks, issues regarding bilateral relations and ways to develop them were discussed, especially those related to economic cooperation in its various fields.
The two parties expressed their satisfaction of the outcomes reached as a result of the joint committee for cooperation between the two countries in

various fields. The two parties also affirmed their keenness to hold the meetings of the committee on a regular basis, leading to the follow-up and development of the relations.
The two sides expressed their satisfaction with the role played by the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) through the existing projects in Tanzania, as well as the role of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism through the restoration of historical and archaeological sites in Zanzibar and the advanced stages that these works have reached.
The two sides stressed the positive and fruitful role played

by the private sector in the two countries, within the context of increasing the partnership between the two sides. The two sides also expressed their hope that these activities lead to an increase in the volume of investments and trade and economic exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania.
During the talks, views were exchanged on a number of regional and international issues of common interest. Emphasis was laid on the importance of increasing efforts to ensure the continuity of security and stability in the world based on collective cooperation. The two sides also underscored

the importance of combating all forms and types of terrorism. They also advocated for continuation of cooperation and development, as well as the rejection of violence and extremism.
The two sides approved the establishment of a joint investment fund which aims to invest in feasible projects across several sectors. The agreement on the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of tax evasion with respect to income taxes agreement was initiated between the Governments of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Republic of Tanzania.
The two countries also

signed various memoranda of understanding in fields such as energy, higher education and training, tourism and natural resources, industry and trade, promotion of investment, food investments, airport management, oil services, national museums, live animals and meat.
Both sides also welcomed the strategic partnership memorandum signed between Oman Post, Asyad Express and Tanzania Post to cooperate in the fields of e-commerce solutions and logistical services that include enabling entrepreneurs to increase trade exchange activities between the Sultanate of Oman and

United Republic of Tanzania and strengthening their presence in the African market, in addition to issuing joint postage stamps documenting the historical and cultural ties between the two countries.
At the conclusion of the visit, President Samia Suluhu Hassan of the United Republic of Tanzania expressed her gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Government and people of the Sultanate of Oman for the warm reception and generous hospitality accorded to her and her delegation.
This statement was issued in Muscat on June 14. — ONA

Oman, UK seek to enhance military cooperation



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received here on Tuesday Maj Gen Joi Martin Simpson, Senior Defence Adviser of the United Kingdom (UK) for the Middle East Affairs.
The two sides discussed latest developments of some regional and international issues. They also reviewed relations of

cooperation between Oman and the UK and explored means of enhancing coordination.
Also on Tuesday, Gen Al Numani received Maj Gen Gwyn Jenkins, Commander of the British Special Forces.
The two sides reviewed areas of military cooperation between the two countries. They also exchanged views on several



matters of common interest.
The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman. Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), also received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa Maj Gen Joi Martin Simpson, UK Senior Defence Adviser for the

Middle East Affairs. The two sides reviewed aspects of military cooperation between the two countries and exchanged views on several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Mantheri, Assistant SAF Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning.
— ONA

ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES KUWAIT'S AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received here on Tuesday Dr Sulaiman Abdullah al Harbi, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty as his country's ambassador to Oman.
During the meeting, the ambassador commended the advanced relations binding the

two countries. He expressed his appreciation for the cooperation he enjoyed during his duty in the Sultanate of Oman.
On his turn, the Minister of the Royal Office thanked the ambassador for his efforts in enhancing the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, wishing him continuous success.
— ONA



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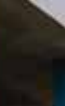


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Investment Opportunity

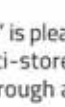
The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Mada'ayn" is pleased to announce the below investment and Public-Private Partnership opportunity for a multi-storey car park building on an area size of (14,863 sqm) located at **Knowledge Oasis Muscat**, through adopting the approach of:



Design



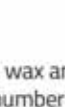
Build



Own



Operate



Transfer

Bid Number	Project Name	Last date to purchase bidding document	Site visit date	Last date for submission of offers	Document Fees in OMR Non-refundable
1/2022	KOM Multi-storey car park building	28/06/2022	04/07/2022	04/08/2022	500

- Interested local and international real estate development companies may collect the bid documents from the Finance Department of Mada'ayn (KOM 1) in **Knowledge Oasis Muscat** during official working hours.
- Bids should be submitted in sealed envelopes with red wax and addressed to (The Head of the Higher Investment Committee) and should be labeled with the number and name of the bid, without mentioning or referring to the name of the bidder.
- All bids shall be deposited in the Tender Box in **Knowledge Oasis Muscat** (KOM 1) on the ground floor.
- Bids that do not meet the requirements mentioned in the bidding document will not be considered.



Ministry of Health marks World Blood Donor Day

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Ministry of Health, represented by the Department of Blood Banks Services, on Tuesday marked the World Blood Donor Day, which falls on June 14 each year. This year's theme was 'Donating blood is an act of solidarity. Join the effort and save lives.'

His Highness Sayyid Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Assistant Secretary-General of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Cabinet Affairs, attended the event, with the presence of a number of MoH senior officials at the Royal Opera House Muscat.



This year slogan tends to draw attention to the roles that blood donations play in saving lives and enhancing solidarity within communities. The day offers an opportunity to thank blood donors for their humanitarian deed and create wider public awareness of the need for regular, voluntary blood donation to maintain sustainable blood supply.



As part of the observance, a blood donation campaign was held from 9 am until 5 pm, which was well attended by citizens and residents. Despite the Covid pandemic, up to 14 per cent increase in blood units was registered during 2021 compared

to 2020 according to Central Blood Bank Statistics, affirming community awareness in this regard. The initial indicators for the first five months of 2022 also showed an increase in the number of blood units collected by the CBB by up to 16 per cent compared to previous year.

Moreover, the number of blood units collected by MoH's blood banks has reached 70,555 blood units in 2021, and the percentage of voluntary blood donation reached 93 per cent. Omani blood donors reached 82 per cent, while donors who donate for the first time were 40 per cent.

Tender of treasury bills worth RO 7.2m issued

MUSCAT: A tender of government treasury bills, issue number 162, worth RO 7.2 million was issued this week.

Treasury bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

The results of the said issue are as follows: The total value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to RO 7.2 million, for a maturity period of 182 days, from 15 June, 2022 until 14 December, 2022. — ONA

Al Hajar clouds activate rains in Al Dhahirah governorate

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Cloud activity over Al Hajar Mountains on Monday afternoon brought scattered rain in parts of Al Dhahirah Governorate. In play also is downward winds accompanying thunderstorms and rain over Al Hajar Mountains and neighbouring areas.

Scattered rain is also forecast over the mountains and coasts of Dhofar Governorate. There has also been a spread of low clouds and fog on parts of the coast of the Sea of Oman and on parts of the governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

Along the coastal areas of the Oman Sea, winds are expected to be southeasterly light to moderate during the

On Wednesday, partly cloudy skies are expected with isolated rain along the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains

day, and it will be southeasterly light during the night. Over most of the governorates it will be south to southeasterly light to moderate and over Arabian Sea coasts winds will be southwesterly moderate and occasionally fresh.

Moderate to rough is what sea conditions are expected along the coastal areas of the Arabian Sea with maximum

wave height of 3.0 metres and slight to moderate along the rest of the coasts with maximum wave height of 1.5 metres.

According to the Met officials, horizontal visibility may reduce during situations such as fog, dust rising and rainfall.

On Wednesday, partly cloudy skies are expected with isolated rain along the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains. Mainly clear skies are expected over the rest of the governorates with chances of cloud development with isolated rains and occasionally thundershowers over Al Hajar Mountains towards afternoon. Chance of late night to early morning low-level clouds or fog patches are forecast over Oman Sea coasts, South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates.

Summer programme 'Learn and Create' under way in Nizwa



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 14

The Centre for Science and Technology at the Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has started a one-month summer programme for school students under the theme, 'Learn and Create'.

The programme aims at providing an environment of science and technology for students to help them hone their skills, update knowledge and familiarise with modern trends.

In all, 544 students from 3rd to 11th grades of all levels and interests are participating in this year's programme.



The Ministry of Education, through this programme, tries to fulfil the broad vision of combining modern technologies, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, innovation, practical application and educational entertainment.

Saif al Hashimi, Director of the Information Technology Department at the Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said: "The summer programme stems from the centre's keenness to instil positive values and concepts that constitute a social legacy such as belonging, loyalty, and pride in the homeland as well as enabling participants to develop their skills in using modern technologies that serve the country in line with the future vision of the Sultanate of Oman, which is a primary goal. And there are other objectives that the programme seeks to confirm through a series of workshops, from which the student chooses what suits him."

Al Hashimi pointed out: "One of the goals is to raise awareness about the importance of time and using leisure time in beneficial activities, besides helping the student to discover and develop his talents and abilities."

The programme includes

13 workshops in various fields including cybersecurity.

To encourage innovation, a workshop for drawing robots and drones will be organised. Another workshop is on artificial intelligence.

Workshops focus on educational robotics, including two seminars on robot programming and another on advanced robotics. Another area covered is artificial intelligence, which includes the Internet of Things workshop and Arduino programming.

Renewable energy, nanotechnology and 3D printing also form part of the month-long programme.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)
FOR PROVISION OF SOFTWARE
AUDITING AND CERTIFICATION
FOR OMAN ELECTRICITY MARKET
MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP), a member of Nama Group, is responsible for procuring new capacity for power and water in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with the requirements of the law for the regulation and privatisation of the electricity and related water sector promulgated by Royal Decree 78/2004 as amended and the OPWP license.

Tender Description	OPWP has developed a wholesale electricity spot market for the electricity sector in Oman known as the Oman Electricity Market. To operate the Oman Electricity Market, OPWP has developed an IT system called Market Management System (MMS). OPWP seeks a proposal from interested Bidders to provide auditing and certification services for the MMS.
Tender Number	OPWP/2022/021
Tender Purchase Period	Starting from 8 th June 2022 until – 27 th June 2022
Tender Fee	50 OMR /free of charge for (SME) with a valid Riyada card.
Submission date	24 July 2022 Before 11:30 AM (Gulf Standard Time).
Collection & Payment Methods	The tender documents are available for purchase in an electronic format through OPWP website (https://www.omanpwp.om/new/Default.aspx). The payment is done electronically through OPWP website. In case of any queries, please send an email to: procurement.officer@Omanpwp.nama.om .
Bank Guarantee	A Bid Bond of not less than 1% of the tender value, to be valid for a period of 120 days from the submission deadline date referred to above is required to be enclosed as part of the Bid. If the Bidder is a small and medium enterprise (SME) with a valid Riyada card issued by Public Authority for SME Development, then the Bidder is not required to submit a Bid Bond.

Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC (OPWP)
5th Floor, Building 5, Muscat Grand Mall, Tilal Complex (Office)
Tel.: +968 24508400 | Fax: +968 24399946 | www.omanpwp.com

جامعة التقنية والعلوم التطبيقية
University of Technology and Applied Sciences
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DECLARATION OF TENDER

UTAS invites Tenders Contractor firms for the:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are Entitled to Participate	Tender's Price	Last Date for Buying Tender Papers	The Deadline for Submission of Bids
01/2022	Renting a restaurant for preparing, processing and providing meals for employees, male and female students and Renting a corner for selling snacks and sandwiches at CAS-Ibri	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(25/000 R.O) Twenty Five Rial Omani	04/07/2022	24/07/2022
2/2022	Renting and running a food shop in girls hostel in College of Applied Sciences Ibri	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(25/000 R.O) Twenty Five Rial Omani	04/07/2022	24/07/2022
3/2022	Renting a book shop at Ibri College of Applied Sciences to provide transcription services, photography, packaging and binding	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(25/000 R.O) Twenty Five Rial Omani	04/07/2022	24/07/2022
4/2022	Renting and oprating a coffee corner at CAS-Ibri	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(25/000 R.O) Twenty Five Rial Omani	04/07/2022	24/07/2022

Tender Documents may be collected from Administration & finance Affairs at COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI, during normal working hours starting from **Wednesday 15/06/2022**.

All companies must include with its bid a temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a certified check from a bank operating in the Sultanate of Oman of an amount of at least (1%) of the tender value which is entitled on behalf of Dr. / Chairman of the sub-committee of tender.

Submitted bids must be signed and sealed with red wax and addressed on behalf of the Chairman of the Tender Committee of Interior and written from the outside the number and the merits of the practice not to write on the envelope the name of the bidder or what it refers.

Offers must be placed in the tender box in the department referred to above, before ten o'clock in the morning scheduled above; and will not be accept bids submitted after that date regardless of the reasons for the delay, and a representative of the company may attend the bids opening.

The University is not bound to accept the highest or any other tender.

**Chairman of the sub-committee of tender
COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI**



UN seeks \$426 m to avert ‘starvation’ in South Sudan

GENEVA: The UN’s World Food Programme on Tuesday appealed for \$426 million to stave off famine in South Sudan, where conflict and floods have placed millions at risk.

“We are already in a crisis, but we need to restore food assistance... to prevent people from falling into starvation and famine. To do so, we urgently require \$426 million for the next six months”, WFP’s programme officer for South Sudan, Adeyinka Badejo, told reporters.

“South Sudan is facing its hungriest year since independence”, Badejo warned from the capital Juba.

The reasons, she said, were accumulative — “continuing sub-national conflict, climate crisis of three consecutive years of floods and severe economic shocks exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and now the war in Ukraine.”

The youngest country in the world, South Sudan has experienced chronic instability since becoming independent from Sudan in 2011.

A civil war between 2013-2018 left nearly 400,000 dead and millions displaced.

A peace accord provided for a power-sharing arrangement in a



The UN’s World Food Programme has appealed for \$426 million to stave off famine in South Sudan.

unity government gathering the two rivals, President Salva Kiir and Vice-President Riek Machar.

But many articles of the accord are still to be implemented and armed clashes between the two sides have resumed. Amplifying

the impact from violence has been flooding. The impoverished landlocked country is bracing for a fourth successive year of floods that could force 600,000 people from their homes, said Badejo. Last year a million people were

displaced. “More than two-thirds of the population are experiencing a serious humanitarian and protection crisis and require humanitarian assistance to survive”, she said. “Of these, we estimate that 8.3 million people,

including internally displaced persons and refugees, will endure severe acute hunger during the lean season.

This also includes two million women and children at risk of acute malnutrition in 2022.”



We need to restore food assistance to prevent people from falling into starvation and famine

ADEYINKA BADEJO,
WFP’s programme officer for South Sudan

This year, the WFP had planned to provide food assistance to 6.2 million people.

But mounting demands and insufficient funds meant that the agency in April had to suspend help for 1.7 million of these — people deemed to be in relatively lower categories of food insecurity.

— AFP

Take holiday to grow food, Lankan government tells civil servants

COLOMBO: Crisis-hit Sri Lanka is asking civil servants to take an extra day off each week to grow crops in their backyards in a bid to forestall a looming food shortage.

The island nation’s unprecedented economic downturn has left several staple foods in short supply, along with petrol and medicines, and rampant inflation is ravaging household budgets.

“It seems appropriate to grant government officials leave for one working day of the week and provide them with the necessary facilities to engage in agricultural activities in their backyards”, a cabinet statement here said on Tuesday.

The extra day off would be a “solution to the food shortage that is expected to occur in the future”, the statement read, adding that cutting down on civil servant commutes would also help reduce fuel consumption.

Last week the United Nations warned Sri Lanka was facing a “dire humanitarian crisis”, and



Motorists queue to buy fuel at the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation fuel station in Colombo. — AFP

Public employees will have every Friday off for the next three months without a pay cut

said four out of five people in the nation of 22 million were forced to skip meals.

Motorists, meanwhile,

have suffered through months of chronic petrol and diesel shortages and long queues of vehicles outside filling stations are a regular sight around the country.

Public employees will have every Friday off for the next three months without a pay cut, according to the cabinet decision, but the arrangement will not apply to essential services staff.

The government also said any members of the 1.5 million-strong public sector who wanted to travel abroad to find work would be given up to five years of unpaid leave without affecting their seniority or pensions.

The move is aimed at encouraging more people to get foreign jobs and send money back to the island, which is labouring under a critical shortage of foreign currency to buy imports.

Sri Lanka has defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt and is in talks with the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.

Public protests have demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over mismanagement of the country’s economy and the severe hardships facing its people.

Rajapaksa introduced sweeping tax cuts soon after coming to power in November that have been blamed for leaving the island without the means to pay for essential imports.

— AFP

Biden to visit Mideast from July 13 to 16

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will make history next month with a direct flight between Israel and Saudi Arabia where he will meet Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The White House ended weeks of speculation on Tuesday, announcing that Biden will travel to Israel, the Palestinian West Bank and Saudi Arabia from July 13-16.

This will be Biden’s first trip to the Middle East as president and in addition to meetings with individual leaders in all three places, he will attend a regional Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Saudi Arabia.

Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre emphasised that “this visit to the Middle East region culminates months of diplomacy.”

Biden will engage with nearly a dozen leaders during the brief yet intense journey, demonstrating “the return of American leadership”, a senior US official told reporters.

The tour starts with meeting Prime Minister Naftali Bennett



in Israel, a country Biden first visited nearly 50 years ago as a young senator.

There will be emphasis on the lavish US support for Israel’s armed forces, including the Iron Dome anti-missile defence system.

Biden will meet Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, likely in Bethlehem, the US official said.

Biden will stress “his lifelong commitment to a two state solution” for Palestinians and Israelis and restore US ties with Palestinians that were “nearly severed” under his predecessor Donald Trump.

— AFP

TEHRAN

Dozens hospitalised after Iran chemical leak

More than 130 people were hospitalised with breathing difficulties following a chemical leak at a factory in southern Iran, state media reported.

An investigation has been launched into the cause of the leak of nitrogen gas from a soda ash production plant in the city of Firuzabad, the official IRNA news agency said.

“The injured mostly suffered from respiratory problems caused by nitrogen gas, which is not dangerous”, the crisis man-



agement director for Fars province, Khalil Abdollahi, was quoted as saying.

No one was killed and most of those hospitalised have since been discharged. — AFP

GENEVA

Crowdfunding to avert oil tanker spill off Yemen

The United Nations is resorting to public crowdfunding to save a 45-year-old oil tanker off the coast of Yemen, where an environmental disaster is looming.

A recent UN donor conference failed to raise the amount needed for the rescue of the stricken ‘FSO Safer’ tanker, which experts say could break apart or explode at any moment.

According to the UN, around \$80 million is needed to start the salvage operation.



UN emergency relief coordinator for Yemen David Gressly hopes the new crowdfunding campaign can raise \$5 million from private individuals. — dpa

KHARTOUM

Death toll from fighting in Darfur tops 125

The death toll from recent clashes in Sudan’s restive Darfur region has exceeded 125, the United Nations said.

The latest fighting between the Arab Rizeigat and non-Arab Gimir tribes broke out on June 6 in Kolbus district, about 160 kilometres north of the West Darfur state capital, El Geneina. It started as a land dispute between two individuals, one from the Rizeigat and the other from the Gimir, before escalating into broader violence involving



other members of the two tribes. Between June 6-11, “over 125 people were killed, and many injured due to the conflict”, said a UN report for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. — AFP



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7

In brief

■ OUAGADOUGOU



79 DEAD IN BURKINA FASO TOWN ATTACK

The confirmed death toll after a weekend attack on the town of Seytenga in northern Burkina Faso stands at 79 as of Tuesday, according to official figures from the West African country. Fifty bodies had already been recovered. Since then, 29 more bodies were found, the government in Ouagadougou announced on Tuesday. Armed groups attacked the village at the weekend. Witnesses initially put the death toll at 100.

The government in Burkina Faso assumes that it was a terrorist attack. The search for the dead will continue, but their work is being hampered by booby traps left in the area by the attackers. Many people fled to a community 47 kilometres away after the attack, according to the government. — dpa

■ BEIRUT



LEBANON MAKES NEW MARITIME BORDER OFFER

Lebanon made a new offer to a visiting US mediator over a maritime border deal with Israel, holding back on demands for territory where Israel plans to imminently extract gas, an official said. Beirut's proposal however included a claim for all of a separate field that it had initially only sought part of, the official close to the negotiations said. The new offer was made during meetings between Lebanon's top leaders and US envoy Amos Hochstein, who landed in Beirut on Monday to relaunch indirect negotiations between Lebanon and Israel after a year-long pause. — AFP

■ MADRID



SPAIN ROASTS IN EARLY HEATWAVE

Spain was grappling with a second unusually early heatwave in less than a month as temperatures hit levels normally seen in July and August, while France began preparing for similar conditions. Temperatures passed 40 degrees Celsius in large parts of Spain, significantly higher than normal for this time of year.

Officials advised people to drink plenty of fluids and stay indoors or in the shade as much as possible. "This early, record-breaking heatwave, coming on top of another heatwave less than a month ago... is extraordinarily worrying", said Spain's Minister for Ecological Transition, Teresa Ribera. — AFP

Ukraine plant evacuations planned today

MOSCOW: The Russian army said it would establish a humanitarian corridor on Wednesday to evacuate hundreds of civilians from the Azot chemical plant in the city of Severodonetsk. "Guided by the principles of humanity, the Russian armed forces and the formations of the Lugansk People's Republic are ready to organise a humanitarian operation to evacuate civilians", the Russian defence ministry said on Tuesday.

The humanitarian corridor will be in place between 8 am and 8 pm Moscow time on Wednesday, the defence ministry said, adding the evacuees would be transported to the city of Svatovo in the separatist-held region of Lugansk.

Moscow also urged "militants of nationalist battalions and foreign mercenaries" at the plant to "stop senseless resistance" and lay down their arms.

Authorities in Ukraine have said that there are over 500 civilians hiding inside Azot, adding that it was difficult to support them but there were some reserves inside the plant.

A representative of the separatist authorities in Lugansk, Vitaly Kiselyov, estimated that some 2,500 Ukrainian and foreign fighters could be holed up at the Azot plant. Moscow has laid siege for weeks to the cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, the last areas in the eastern Ukrainian region of Lugansk still under Kyiv control.

The Russian army said that Ukrainian authorities requested that civilians from the Azot plant be transported to Kyiv-controlled Lysychansk but said that the evacuation there was not possible because the last bridge linking the cities had been destroyed.

Meanwhile, Russian forces on



An aerial view shows destroyed houses after strike in the town of Pryvillya at the eastern Ukrainian region of Donbas. — AFP

Tuesday stepped up efforts to cut off Ukrainian troops in the key industrial city of Severodonetsk in the east of the country despite Ukrainians insisting they were holding on.

Moscow has laid siege for weeks to the cities of Severodonetsk and Lysychansk, which are separated by a river, as the last areas in the eastern Donbas region of Lugansk still under Ukrainian control.

The head of Severodonetsk's administration said "massive

Moscow urges 'militants and foreign mercenaries' at the plant to 'stop senseless resistance' and lay down their arms

shelling" had destroyed a third bridge linking the twin cities, but insisted his city was "not isolated".

"There are communication channels even if they are quite

complicated", Oleksandr Stryuk told Ukrainian television. Ukraine's "continue to defend the city" but that the situation on the ground "changes every hour", he added.

On Monday, Sergiy Gaiday, Governor of Lugansk, told Radio Free Europe that Russian forces had "destroyed all the bridges and getting into the city is no longer possible. Evacuation is also not possible".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr

Zelensky has branded the human cost of the battle for east "simply terrifying", urging Western allies to speed arms deliveries to shore up Ukraine's ability to reclaim territory. "We just need enough weapons to ensure all of this. Our partners have them."

His presidential adviser, Mikheylo Podolyak, has listed hundreds of howitzers, tanks and armoured vehicles as among items needed by the Ukrainian army.

— AFP

Britain defends Rwanda migrant deportation policy

LONDON: The UK government on Tuesday defended its controversial policy to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, even as the entire senior leadership of the Church of England branded it shameful and immoral.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss insisted the first flight to Kigali would take off no matter how many people were on board.

According to the charity Care4Calais, only seven migrants are expected to be deported on Tuesday night, well down on the up to 130 expected by the authorities.

"We're expecting to send the flight later today", she told Sky News but said she was unable to confirm the numbers due to be on board.

"There will be people on the flights and if they're not on this flight, they will be on the next flight", she added.

Truss said the policy, which the UN refugee agency has criticised as "all wrong", was vital to break up human-trafficking gangs exploiting vulnerable migrants.

Record numbers of migrants have made the perilous Channel crossing from northern France, heaping pressure on the government in London to act after it promised to tighten borders after Brexit.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson chairs a cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street in London which discussed the migrant issue. — AFP

Foreign Secy Truss insisted the first flight to Kigali would take-off no matter how many people were on board

In a sign of the scale of the issue, Britain's domestic Press Association news agency said some 260 people attempting the crossing in small boats were brought ashore at the Channel port of Dover by 1200 GMT on Tuesday.

A series of legal challenges in recent days has failed to stop the deportations, which the two senior-most clerics in the Church

of England and 23 bishops said were "immoral" and "shames Britain".

"They (migrants) are the vulnerable that the Old Testament calls us to value", Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby and Archbishop of York Stephen Cottrell wrote in a letter to 'The Times'.

"We cannot offer asylum to everyone, but we must not outsource our ethical responsibilities, or discard international law — which protects the right to claim asylum."

At the weekend, it was reported that Queen Elizabeth II's heir, Prince Charles, had privately described the government's plan as "appalling". — AFP

Industry trends, challenges facing FMCG



Dr Anchan C K

The writer is an adviser on business, economy and investments

There is an increasing focus on serving customers through DTC — direct-to-consumer channels, on operational resiliency throughout FMCG supply chains, and on satisfying consumer desires for ethical and sustainable shopping. Additionally, companies are furthering their investments in creating experiences for their customers, along with use of the Internet of Packaging throughout their supply chain process. The last two years have been a roller coaster for consumer goods businesses. Shoppers demand more convenience and innovation but continue to be frustrated by higher prices and product shortages. The Great Resignation added more turbulence to an already

fraught labour market. Add the ongoing supply chain crisis, and it's pretty clear that this wild ride isn't ending anytime soon. The dramatic uptick in DTC demand has created a need within the fast-moving consumer goods industry to innovate to accommodate this channel shift. In fact, DTC is going to continue to grow as more consumers experience its benefits. The world has become more global. Companies across industries have applied cost-saving tactics such as shipping overseas, typically in concentrated areas, to lower their labour and warehousing costs. However, cost-saving strategies have also created avoidable risk towards supply

COST-SAVING STRATEGIES HAVE CREATED AVOIDABLE RISK TOWARDS SUPPLY CHAINS AND THEIR OVERALL OPERATIONS DUE TO VOLATILE INPUT COSTS

chains and their overall operations due to volatile input costs. Natural resource shortages will continue to pose a major threat to businesses because of company-

wide shutdowns or evacuations of facilities. Health and wider well-being have emerged as continued major topics in FMCG Gurus latest top ten consumer trends studies on shopper behaviour, prevention over cure assesses how health goals are shifting towards a focus on disease management and proactive approaches to well-being — meaning there is an interest in functional products that address health problems, even if people are not suffering from specific symptoms. Approximately 80 per cent of consumers are more likely to buy from brands that tailor experiences to customer preferences. The financial rewards are rich:

Companies that get it right see a 50 per cent increase in customer loyalty and increase in average order value. But to deliver on the promise of personalisation, companies need to build their first-party information infrastructure. That's why 80 per cent of brand leaders are focused on gathering data like consumer email addresses, purchase history and payment preferences. Even the world's fastest roller coaster cannot compete with the thrills of these once-in-a-generation market conditions. That might mean companies have to buckle up and work harder than ever before. But by keeping a weather eye on these trends, they can win the hearts and the wallets of consumers for years to come.

How coffee is saving a unique Mozambican forest

CAMILLE LAFFONT

From a distance, Mount Gorongosa looks pockmarked. The slopes of this Mozambican landmark were once covered with verdant rain forest. Now, they are scarred by deep holes — the result of clearcutting that exposed the soil and parched it, leaving only shrubs and grasses. But in recent years, the forest has been growing back, thanks to a previously foreign crop: Coffee. As Juliasse Samuel Sabao walks through the plantation, at an altitude of some 1,000 metres, he points out the obvious progress. One side of the track resembles a desert. On the other, a dense forest shelters carefully placed coffee plants. “Before, this was completely empty. Today, you see the result. “Coffee needs shade to grow. So, for every coffee plant, we plant a tree as well”, he said. Sabao, who works for Gorongosa National Park, fled to Zimbabwe to escape Mozambique’s civil war. There, he discovered coffee culture. He brought that knowledge back with him to help restore the mountain, which was largely cut off from the world for decades. Mozambique fought a bloody war for freedom from Portugal, but after independence in 1975, a civil war ravaged the country until 1992. A smaller conflict later erupted in 2013, ending with a peace treaty in 2019. During the conflicts, Renamo rebels who used the mountain range as a war-time base and stronghold, exploited the park’s natural resources to the brink of environmental collapse. Pedro Muagara, a trained agronomist and the park’s director, had planted a few seedlings, until the conflict shattered his coffee dreams. As the war dragged into its final years, besieged rebels camped on the mountain slopes with their families. They cleared the forest to grow crops to survive. Now he’s back, teaching communities new ways of farming. “These people depended on subsistence farming, because they can’t afford machinery like tractors. That turned them into agricultural nomads”, he said. “So, they’d clear a few areas, and then deforestation stripped nutrients from the soil. The land got depleted, and when that happened, they’d go clear another patch.” The peace treaty didn’t solve the problems of communities on the mountain. “They didn’t have the training or the means to transition from being itinerant farming to conservation farming”, Muagara said. “We had to explain to them that when they lose a tree, they lose their livelihood with it.”— AFP



Helene Cooper

The writer is a Pentagon correspondent for *The New York Times*

Military clears crew of plane that took flight as Afghans fell to their deaths

The Air Force has cleared the crew of a US military C-17 cargo plane that took off from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul last August with people hanging onto the wings, during the frenzied days of the Afghanistan evacuation. Twin reviews of the harrowing incident, in which human body parts were later discovered in the wheel well of the plane, concluded that the aircrew was “in compliance with applicable rules of engagement”, Ann Stefanek, an Air Force spokesperson, said in a statement on Monday. The reviews were conducted by the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command and US Central Command. It remains unclear exactly how many people died in the episode on August 16, 2021, as a crowd of Afghans, desperate to escape the country after their government collapsed under the Taliban, climbed onto the outside of the plane and fell from it after the flight took off. Video of the horrific scene, recorded by the Afghan news media, circulated around the world. “This was a tragic event and our hearts go out to the families of the deceased”, Stefanek said in the statement. Pentagon officials said traumatised members of the aircrew were later sent for consultations with mental health professionals and chaplains. Stefanek said that the crew “acted appropriately and exercised sound judgement in their decision to get airborne as quickly as possible when faced with an unprecedented and rapidly deteriorating security situation.” During the panic at the airport in the days after the fall of the Afghan government, US pilots and troops were forced to make difficult, on-the-spot decisions. Hours before the transport plane left Kabul, another C-17 had taken off with 640 people crowded on board — more than double the number planned for — after hundreds of Afghans who had been cleared by the State Department for evacuation surged onto the loading ramps, military officials said. The pilots decided that the immense aircraft could handle the load and took off, officials said. That plane landed at

THE CREW ‘EXERCISED SOUND JUDGEMENT TO GET AIRBORNE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WHEN FACED WITH AN UNPRECEDENTED AND RAPIDLY DETERIORATING SECURITY SITUATION’

its destination safely. Early the next morning, a gray Air Force plane — call sign REACH885 — descended onto the runway. The lumbering jet was carrying equipment and supplies for the US Marines and soldiers who were securing the airport in Kabul and helping with the evacuation of thousands of Americans and Afghans. Minutes after the plane had touched down, rolled to a stop and lowered its rear ramp, hundreds, perhaps

thousands, of Afghans rushed forward. The crew members jumped back up into the plane and pulled up the loading ramp before they had finished unloading, officials said. By then, throngs of Afghans had climbed aboard the wings and, unbeknown to the crew, into the wheel well the landing gear would fold into after take-off, officials said. The crew contacted air traffic control, which was operated by US military personnel, and the plane was cleared for take-off. The pilots taxied slowly at first. Military Humvees rushed alongside, trying to chase people away from and off the plane. Two Apache helicopter gunships flew low, seeking to scare some people away from the plane or push them off with their powerful rotor wash. REACH885 accelerated and was airborne. Minutes later, however, the pilot and co-pilot found that the landing gear would not fully retract. They sent a crew member down to peer through a porthole. It was then that the crew saw the remains of a still undetermined number of Afghans who had stowed away in the wheel well, apparently crushed by the landing gear. Scenes captured in videos of the flight showed other people plunging to their death. — *New York Times*



People wait outside Hamid Karzai International Airport as a military transport plane takes off behind them in Kabul.

US Senate gun measures gain support

PAUL HANDLEY

Two horrific massacres in recent weeks have succeeded in bringing Democrats and Republicans close to the most significant federal legislation addressing US gun violence in three decades.

Twenty senators — 10 from each party — reached a deal on Sunday to put through legislation that would tighten some rules on gun sales and put more resources toward mental health treatment.

The 10 Republicans are just enough to ensure that the legislation could overcome Senate rules that have allowed the party since the 1990s to block almost every single measure aimed at controlling the flood of personal firearms on the US market.

Their agreement comes less than a month after two shocking mass shootings: first, when 10 African Americans were killed on May 14 at a supermarket in Buffalo, New York, and then less than two weeks later when 19 children and two teachers were shot and killed at an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Those tragedies also brought into focus smaller, but more frequent instances of gun violence across the United States. Chris Coons, a Senate Democrat who led the chamber's bipartisan effort, said the legislation could be introduced within days and possibly passed in early July.

“In the wake of the horrifying recent shootings in Buffalo, Uvalde, and across the country,

THE 10 REPUBLICANS ARE JUST ENOUGH TO ENSURE THAT THE LEGISLATION COULD OVERCOME SENATE RULES THAT HAVE ALLOWED THE PARTY SINCE THE 1990S TO BLOCK ALMOST EVERY SINGLE MEASURE AIMED AT CONTROLLING THE FLOOD OF PERSONAL FIREARMS ON THE US MARKET

Americans have demanded that the Senate take meaningful steps forward on this issue,” said Coons.

“This framework will save lives. If it becomes law, it will lower the risks of mass shootings, of lethal domestic violence incidents, of violence we see too frequently on our streets.”

The senators’ agreed measures are modest, and far short of what US President Joe Biden called for following last month’s tragic killings. They include: Enhanced background checks for people under 21 buying a gun,

allowing a review of juvenile crime and mental health records; Funding and incentives for states to pass “red flag” laws to keep guns out of the hands of people deemed a danger to themselves or society, and perpetrators of domestic abuse; Tougher penalties for “straw purchasers” of guns for others that feed illegal firearms trafficking; Closing loopholes on gun dealer regulations; and Federal support for state investments in school security and mental health programmes.

But they did not approach demands from gun control advocates, including an outright ban on assault rifles, as was in place from 1994 to 2004, a ban on gun sales to people under 21, mandatory waiting periods in all gun purchases, and bans on high-capacity magazines.

Both the Buffalo and Uvalde shootings were by 18-year-olds using high-powered AR-15-style semi-automatic rifles.

Moreover, whatever gains that come with the legislation could be dealt a setback by a Supreme Court ruling due this month that could overturn state restrictions on carrying guns in public.

Even so, gun control advocates cheered the measures, recognising the potential for a significant shift towards breaking the gun industry’s stranglehold.

“We applaud this historic step forward for gun violence prevention — one born out of the recognition that this nation needs change and action to save American lives from preventable gun violence,” said Kris Brown, president of the Brady: United Against Gun Violence group.

“We’re breaking the logjam in Congress and proving that gun safety isn’t just good policy — it’s good politics,” said Shannon Watts, founder of the group Moms Demand Action.

Yet supporters were not fully confident the measures will pass, knowing that the legislation could be blocked if fewer than 10 of the Senate’s 50 Republicans support it.

Working in their favour is that none of the 10 Republicans who agreed to the deal on Sunday are standing for re-election in November. — AFP



RISE OF THE SUPERMOON

The full moon rises as ‘Strawberry Supermoon’ in Singapore on Tuesday. – AFP

We can end neglected tropical diseases



Samia Suluhu Hassan

The writer is President of the United Republic of Tanzania

Earlier this year, world leaders began the process of committing to and endorsing the Kigali Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases. The declaration is a high-level statement meant to mobilise the necessary political will, community commitment, financial resources and individual action to end NTDs. The Kigali Declaration will be launched at the Kigali Summit on Malaria and NTDs, held on the sidelines of this month’s 26th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Rwanda.

NTDs are a group of 20 diseases that include leprosy, elephantiasis, rabies, river blindness, and trachoma, and more than 1.7 billion people worldwide — 35 per cent of whom live in Africa — suffer from them. But although these diseases debilitate, disfigure, and can kill, they receive far less attention than other diseases, in part because they primarily affect the world’s poorest people.

Tanzania is among the countries hardest hit by NTDs. Nearly half of the country’s population — more than 29 million people — requires treatment for at least one NTD, including 19 million children at risk of intestinal worms.

The effects of NTDs are devastating, and they fall disproportionately on women and girls, because high-risk activities such as washing clothes in rivers are a typical part of their daily routine, making them more likely to fall ill. When they do, they cannot attend school, go to work, or take care of themselves or their families.

Even if women and girls manage to avoid getting sick themselves, they may be expected to give up a job or leave school to care for a relative with an NTD. This can compound social stigma, isolation, and mental-health issues for women and girls. Scaling up NTD programmes thus can help to achieve the Sustainable

DISEASES LIKE LEPROSY, RIVER BLINDNESS AND TRACHOMA ARE RARE IN MUCH OF THE WORLD, BUT THEY REMAIN RAMPANT IN MANY OF THE POOREST COUNTRIES, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE LARGELY PREVENTABLE. A NEW INITIATIVE AIMS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT DISEASES THAT AFFECT MORE THAN 1.7 BILLION PEOPLE – AND MOTIVATE A GLOBAL PUSH TO ERADICATE THEM

Development Goals’ targets for gender equality.

That is why I am especially pleased that the first goal of the Kigali Declaration is to “ensure that people affected by NTDs — particularly women and girls, persons with disabilities, and minority and underrepresented groups — are at the centre of NTD programmes and decision-making processes.” Only through this inclusive process will we be able to make progress toward equitable access to quality essential healthcare for all.

At the same time, the impact of

NTDs extends beyond stigmatisation and psycho-social health. In countries where NTDs are endemic, the economic impact can trap communities in cycles of poverty. Billions of dollars are spent on treating NTDs, while income is lost as people cannot work because they are sick or must care for someone who is.

Ensuring long-term access to essential health services and adequate monitoring to combat NTDs requires significant financial investment. But limited resources and competing priorities have hindered efforts to combat NTDs and slowed movement toward their eradication, elimination and control.

Despite these challenges, Tanzania made progress in the fight against NTDs. The number of districts in the country that require preventive treatments for lymphatic filariasis, commonly known as elephantiasis, shrank from 119 in 2004 to eight in 2021. And the number of districts that require preventive treatments for trachoma — the leading infectious cause of preventable blindness — was reduced from 71 in 2012 to nine in 2021. The number of people who need surgical interventions for trachoma declined from 167,000 to 27,000 in the same time period. These are remarkable achievements, and they have put Tanzania on track to eradicate both diseases.

Tanzania’s success in the fight against NTDs echoes a pattern of progress globally. Forty-six countries have eradicated at least one NTD so far, and 600 million people no longer require treatment for NTDs. The infection rates of diseases that have plagued humanity for centuries, such as leprosy, sleeping sickness, and Guinea worm disease, are at an all-time low.

But while such trends show that ending NTDs is possible, there is still much work to be done. In particular, national leaders must take ownership of the process, throw their weight behind this mission, and invest the political and financial capital that will be required to see it through.

The Kigali Declaration on NTDs is a powerful tool to help achieve this mission, and Tanzania is proud to have endorsed it. In Tanzania, we are demonstrating that we are fully committed to ending NTDs. Other countries in Africa and elsewhere where NTDs are endemic should follow suit and endorse the Declaration at the Kigali Summit, unlocking the potential for countries to end both NTDs and malaria.

Eradicating NTDs will transform the lives of millions of people around the world. Global leaders now have the statement of purpose they need to motivate and guide efforts to ensure that the next generation is free of these diseases.

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Tanzania is among the countries hardest hit by NTDs.

sport

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Warriors on brink of NBA title as Wiggins punishes Celtics

SAN FRANCISCO: Andrew Wiggins scored 26 points as the Golden State Warriors battled past the Boston Celtics 104-94 to move within one win of a seventh NBA championship crown on Monday.

With Stephen Curry having a rare off-night after his 43-point game four heroics, Wiggins seized control to lead a balanced Golden State offensive effort which leaves the Warriors 3-2 up in the best-of-seven series.

Wiggins delivered a huge performance at both ends of the Warriors' Chase Center court, shooting 12-of-23 while hauling in 13 rebounds with two steals and a block.

The Warriors can clinch the championship when the series heads back to Boston for game six on Thursday.

"We have two cracks at getting one win, but we also know how difficult it's going to be", Warriors coach Steve Kerr said.

"Nobody's celebrating but we are excited to be in this spot and we want to take advantage of it."

Kerr led the tributes for Wiggins, the Canadian former No 1 draft pick who has steadily become an integral part of the Warriors set-up since joining the franchise two years ago.

"He loves the challenge. He loves the competition. And he's found such a crucial role on our team, and I think that empowers

him", Kerr said. "He knows how much we need him, so he's been fantastic."

Wiggins led the Warriors scorers while Klay Thompson provided support with 21 points including five three-pointers. Gary Payton II (15 points) and Jordan Poole (14) both made double-digits from the bench.

Curry, the Warriors' talisman and front-runner for NBA Finals MVP, chipped in with 16 points but shot only 7-of-22 from the field, going 0/9 from three-point distance.

It was the first time in Curry's play-off career he has failed to score a three-pointer and the first time he has drawn a blank from beyond the arc in any NBA game since 2018.

"I think Steph was probably due for a game like this", Kerr said. "But we've got a lot of talent and a lot of depth that can make up for that, and the guys did a good job of that tonight."

Warriors star Draymond Green, who had an improved performance despite fouling out in the fourth quarter, said Curry's

display was good news for Golden State.

"He's going to be livid going into game six, and that's exactly what we need", Green said.

Costly turnovers

Jayson Tatum led Boston's scorers with 27 points while Marcus Smart added 20 and Jaylen Brown 18.

But the Celtics, who effectively marked Curry out of the game for long periods, were left ruining another high turnover count of 18 compared to just six from Golden State.

We have two cracks at getting one win, but we also know how difficult it's going to be. Nobody's celebrating but we are excited to be in this spot and we want to take advantage of it

STEVE KERR
Golden State Warriors coach

the first two quarters.

DEFENSIVE PERFORMANCE

After a superb Golden State defensive performance in the first half, Boston had been restricted to just 39 points to trail 51-39 at the break.

But the Celtics flipped the switch after the interval, erasing Golden State's advantage in a matter of minutes with back-to-back Tatum three-pointers to get within two at 51-49.

Smart drained another three soon afterwards to tie the game at 55-55 before Al Horford rained in another triple — Boston's eighth straight three-pointer — to give the Celtics their first lead of the game at 58-55.

Boston would go on to lead by five points at 66-61 — a 17-point turnaround from half-time — but the Warriors dug deep to respond.

Poole's buzzer-beating three-pointer put the Warriors ahead 75-74 heading into the final period.

The Warriors regrouped in the fourth quarter, Wiggins driving home a layup to launch an unanswered 10-0 run by the home team that gave Golden State a hefty 11-point advantage at 85-74.

From there the Warriors never looked like surrendering the initiative and Wiggins would go on to score 10 points as the Warriors slammed the door to close out a deserved win. — **AFP**



Coach Herrero ready for debut with Oman U-17s



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

It will be the first official assignment for Spanish coach Pablo Herrero Fernandez, head coach of the Oman national U-17 football team, as he will lead the team at the West Asian U-17 Championships which will be held in Jordan from September 21 to 30.

Coach Pablo Herrero Fernandez, who took charge of the team earlier this year, will eye a top show for the team at the West Asian event.

In line with the intensive preparation plan for the West Asian championships,

the team arrived on Tuesday in Kuwait City to have a short preparatory camp ahead of the Asian prestigious championships.

The camp will be for a duration of five days as the team will travel on Sunday to Jordan to take part in the Asian championships.

The final warm-up ahead of the tournament will feature two friendly games against Kuwait team on Thursday and Saturday.

The junior national team ended their domestic warm-up gathering in Muscat on Monday as they had a local friendly match against Al Habsi Football Academy.

The match which was played at the

Coach Pablo Herrero Fernandez, who took charge of the team earlier this year, will eye a top show for the team at the West Asian event

Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex ended 5-1 for the national team. Oman's goals were netted by Taha al Hinai, Al Haitham al Shukaili, Al Harith al Mushaikh (2 goals) and Abdullah al Maqbali. Another preparatory camp took place in May and



witnessed a local match against Muscat U-19 club which finished at 1-1 draw.

The head coach Pablo Herrero Fernandez picked up 23 probables for the Oman squad at Asian event namely: Fernas al Jabri, Helmi al Balushi, Al Harith al Mushaikh, Yasser al Balushi, Momen al Souli, Anas al Ghadani, Tamim a Buraiki, Hamza al Saadi, Jassim al Dhaeen, Marwan al Noobi, Emad al Hadi, Haitham Khareef, Al Hussain al Balushi, Abdullah al Maqbali, Mohammed al Balushi, Abdul Nasser al Hasani, Zaher al Aysari, Abdullah al Rawahi, Adnan al Mushaifri, Taha al Hinai, Al Haitham al Shukaili, Mohammed Ghanim and Syaf Mustafa.

The Asian event in Jordan will feature the attendance of eight teams which will be distributed into two groups. Oman is clubbed in group A besides the defending champion Yemen, Iraq and the hosts Jordan.

The Group B comprises Lebanon, Palestine, Syria and Kuwait. The toppers from each group will advance to the semifinals.

Oman will commence their campaign with a match against the hosts Jordan in the opening day on June 21. Then they will face Iraq on June 23. Oman will take on Yemen in the concluding fixture of the group stage on June 25.

Nadal trains on grass in Mallorca two weeks before Wimbledon

MADRID: Rafael Nadal trained on grass for the first time on Monday morning, with a light session in Mallorca raising hopes he could overcome his foot injury to play at Wimbledon.

Nadal performed some gentle physical activities during a short, closed session at the Mallorca Country Club in Santa Ponca, where the Mallorca Championships begin on Sunday.

The plan is for Nadal to increase the intensity of his training from Tuesday until the end of the week and the 36-year-old will then decide whether to play at Wimbledon, which starts on June 27, depending on how his foot responds.

Nadal said his left foot was "asleep" from injections during his victory over Casper Ruud in the final of the French Open on June 5, a win that secured him a



Spain's Rafael Nadal speaks during the graduation ceremony of the sixth promotion of the Rafa Nadal Academy in Manacor. — AFP

record-extending 22nd Grand Slam title.

Nadal then travelled to Barcelona last week to begin "pulsed radiofrequency stimulation", a treatment aimed at reducing nerve pain.

The treatment means the

nerves around the area of Nadal's injury were "temporarily numb", a spokesman for the Spaniard said.

Nadal has for years suffered from a problem in his foot called Muller-Weiss syndrome, a rare and degenerative condition affecting bones in the feet. — AFP

Karate academy hands out black belt certificates to Omani exponents



Muscat International Karate Academy awarded the black belt to Omani players who have performed in the arts of kata and komnteh. Alisa al Dhamri, Khalid bin Walid al Shukri, Laila bint Saleh al Riyami and Hajar bint Saleh al Riyami were the recipients of the certificates.

Mbappe wanted to know if I would join PSG, says Tchouameni

MADRID: Real Madrid's new signing Aurelien Tchouameni said Kylian Mbappe asked if he would sign for Paris Saint-Germain, as the 22-year-old was unveiled at Madrid's training ground on Tuesday.

Madrid won the race to sign Tchouameni, one of the world's most highly-rated midfielders, from Monaco in a deal worth around 100 million euros.

His arrival comes after Mbappe rejected Real Madrid to sign a three-year contract at PSG. Madrid have also signed Antonio Rudiger this summer, the defender joining from Chelsea on a free transfer.

"Kylian decided to stay at PSG and he already knew I was going to leave Monaco at the end of the season," Tchouameni said in a press conference, after being introduced by Real Madrid president Florentino Perez.

"He wanted to know if I would go to PSG but I told him Real Madrid was my first choice and he understood that completely, he was very happy for me."

Tchouameni has signed a six-year contract at Real Madrid after being linked with several of Europe's biggest clubs, including Liverpool and Chelsea in the Premier League.

"As soon as Madrid arrived, I didn't hesitate," he said. "I want to leave my mark on football and the best club for this is Real Madrid. It's the best decision for me."

He said Real Madrid's sensational comebacks in the Champions League against PSG, Chelsea and Manchester City helped him make up his mind.

Madrid beat Liverpool in



French midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni addresses a press conference. — AFP

the final to win the club's 14th European Cup.

"It's true that when I watched those games I wrote to my agent and told him, 'please do everything possible to get me to Real Madrid,'" Tchouameni said.

After breaking into the first team at Bordeaux, Tchouameni joined Monaco in 2020 and was a key player last season as they finished third in Ligue 1, behind PSG and Marseille. He was also named Young Player of the Season at the end of the 2020/21 season.

With 12 caps for France, Tchouameni will be hoping to secure his place in the starting line-up for the World Cup in Qatar in November and he said

former Real Madrid star and coach Zinedine Zidane as one of his idols.

Madrid have long-relied on Luka Modric, Toni Kroos and Casemiro in midfield but all three are now in their thirties, with Tchouameni viewed as a possible successor to Casemiro.

"Since I was little I have played with two midfielders and in a 4-3-3 my position would be as a number six, but I can play as an eight as well, I can play in both positions," he said.

Perez said Tchouameni is "one of the best midfielders in the world". He added: "At 22 years old you were able to choose your club and you have chosen this one."

STOKES, BAIRSTOW

KEEP ENGLAND IN HUNT AT NOTTINGHAM

NOTTINGHAM, UK: Jonny Bairstow and Ben Stokes stitched together a 46-run unbeaten partnership for the fifth wicket as England chased a stiff 299 for victory against New Zealand in the second Test, here on Tuesday.

Bairstow was on 43 and Stokes on 25 and hold all the aces if England are to mount a successful chase against an aggressive New Zealand bowling attack.

ROOT GOES EARLY

England were in deep trouble at 56-3 after Joe Root was dismissed cheaply.

Root is England's man of the moment after successive centuries, including a match-winning 115 not out that guided Ben Stokes's team to victory in the first Test at Lord's.

But the batsman, who made 176 in the first innings at Trent Bridge, was unable to repeat those heroics as he fell for only three, caught and bowled by Trent Boult after facing just four balls.

The former England captain's exit came early in the afternoon session, just moments after Ollie Pope was caught behind off Matt



Henry for 18.

With Zak Crawley having been removed for a duck by Boult before lunch, England's hopes of making history with the highest successful run chase in a Trent

Bridge Test were hanging in the balance.

Alex Lees and Jonny Bairstow were at the crease as England tried to clinch the three-Test series with a match still to play.

Test world champions New Zealand needed seven more wickets to level the series, with their mission complicated by the back injury that has deprived them of the services of pace bowler Kyle

SCOREBOARD

New Zealand first innings: 553	
England first innings: 539	
New Zealand second innings (0/n: 224/7)	
T Latham b Anderson.....	4
W Young (run out).....	56
D Conway c Bairstow b Leach.....	52
H Nicholls c Lees b Potts.....	3
D Mitchell (not out).....	62
T Blundell c Stokes b Broad.....	24
M Bracewell c Broad b Potts.....	25
T Southee (run out).....	0
M Henry c Foakes b Broad.....	18
K Jamieson c Foakes b Broad.....	1
T Boult c Stokes b Anderson.....	17
Extras (B-9, LB-5, NB-6, W-2).....	22
Total (all out, 84.4 overs).....	284
Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-104, 3-115, 4-131, 5-176, 6-204, 7-213, 8-245, 9-249	
Bowling: J Anderson 8.4-1-20-2, S Broad 20.4-70-3, M Potts 15-6-32-2, J Leach 24-5-86-1, B Stokes 17-3-62-0	
England second innings:	
A Lees c Blundell b Southee.....	44
Z Crawley c Southee b Boult.....	0
O Pope c Blundell b Henry.....	18
J Root c & b Boult.....	3
J Bairstow (not out).....	43
B Stokes (not out).....	25
Extras (B-4, LB-2).....	6
Total (for 4 wks, 34 overs).....	139
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-53, 3-56, 4-93	
Bowling: T Southee 8-0-45-1, T Boult 11-1-40-2, M Henry 10-3-23-1, M Bracewell 5-0-25-0	

MITCHELL SHINES

In-form Daryl Mitchell earlier made 62 not out as New Zealand were dismissed for 284 after resuming on 224-7.

Mitchell, on 32 overnight, and Trent Boult put on 35 for the last wicket to leave the match delicately balanced.

A win for Ben Stokes' team requires the highest successful Test run chase at Trent Bridge.

The existing record is England's 284-6 against New Zealand in 2004.

Test world champions New Zealand are painfully aware that England have already knocked off the 277 required to beat them in the final innings of the first Test at Lord's.

England must score at above four an over to win, although New Zealand will be without the services of injured pace bowler Kyle Jamieson.

The home side are aiming for a first Test series victory since January 2021 as Stokes and new coach Brendon McCullum look to start their reign in style after a gloomy period for the national team. — AFP

Media giants buy IPL cricket rights for \$6.2 billion for five years

"IPL is now the 2nd most valued sporting league in the world in terms of per match value!" tweeted Jay Shah, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary, announcing the results of a hotly contested three-day online auction

MUMBAI: India's cricket board said on Tuesday it has sold the broadcast rights of the IPL tournament for the next five seasons to global media giants for an eye-popping \$6.2 billion.

"IPL is now the 2nd most valued sporting league in the world in terms of per match value!" tweeted Jay Shah, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) secretary, announcing the results of a hotly contested three-day online auction.

The amount paid for the rights to one of the world's most watched sports contests dwarfs the \$2.55 billion that Star India paid in 2017 for the previous five seasons to 2022.

Star, owned by US behemoth Disney, retained the domestic TV rights for the coming five seasons of the annual two-month competition from 2023 to 2027 for \$3.01 billion, the BCCI said.

But the digital rights were auctioned off for even more —



\$3.04 billion — reflecting the expectation that more people in India and abroad will watch the matches on digital devices.

The buyer was Viacom18, a joint venture between Reliance — owned by Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani — and US group Paramount Global as well as an investment group reportedly backed by James Murdoch.

"So digital turned out to be bigger than linear TV this season in #IPLMediaRights," BCCI treasurer Arun Dhimal wrote on Twitter.

"I would like to thank all the participants for their interest in the best 'Made in India' sports property!"

Also sold were the international broadcast rights, split between Viacom18 and the international arm of India's Times Group.

Big salaries

Attracting some of world cricket's top stars with bumper salaries, the pioneering IPL helped

make Twenty20 — a shorter format of the sport — hugely popular, attracting hundreds of millions of viewers and spawning copycat events worldwide.

Last season it expanded to include 10 franchises battling it out in 74 matches, climaxing in a final in the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad in front of 105,000 fans — and millions more watching on television and smartphones. Also in the auction for the rights was Japan's Sony, which televised the IPL for the first 10 years after its inception in 2008.

Jeff Bezos's Amazon, which has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on rights for European soccer and American football, had earlier reportedly shown interest in the IPL but pulled out.

ASIA'S RICHEST

The deal is a major win for Ambani, Asia's richest man with a net worth according to Forbes of \$97.6 billion who is reputedly a confidante of Prime Minister



Narendra Modi.

Reliance's multi-billion-dollar fortune was made in oil and petrochemicals businesses, but it has diversified into new areas including telecoms, retail and renewable energy in recent years.

Reliance shook up the Indian telecom sector with the launch of Jio in 2016 with ultra-cheap data and calls, forcing several competitors to throw in the towel after years of losses.

Major global players such as Google, Facebook, Intel have invested billions of dollars into Reliance's digital unit, Jio Platforms, in recent years.

Ambani's wife Nita Ambani owns the Mumbai Indians franchise in the IPL, the richest and most successful side in IPL history with five titles to their name. "Mr Ambani is all set to redefine the contours of OTT (over-the-top streaming services)," Sandeep Goyal, managing director at advertising agency Rediffusion, said.

"But it could well be redefining not just OTT, but entertainment, cricket consumption, customer connectivity, e-commerce and a lot of other stuff, which is interconnected to this whole game of having such massive viewerships in your control." — AFP



Serena says she is set for a comeback at Wimbledon

LONDON: Serena Williams is set to make her comeback at Wimbledon a year after her last match in any competition, writing on Instagram on Tuesday: "See you there."

The 23-time Grand Slam singles champion, who suffered an injury during her first-round match at the All England Club 12 months ago, posted an image of her white trainers on grass along with the caption: "SW and SW19. It's a date. 2022, see you there."

The 40-year-old also tagged Eastbourne in her post, indicating she could potentially play in next week's grasscourt tournament on England's south coast.

It is unclear whether Williams, now ranked a lowly 1,208th in the world, is intending to play singles or doubles at Wimbledon.

The American could have entered using a protected ranking reserved for players who have been sidelined through a long-

term injury but did not do so and will therefore need a wild card.

The initial batch of wild cards for singles and doubles at the tournament, which starts on June 27, will be announced on Wednesday.

Williams won the last of her seven Wimbledon singles titles in 2016 but reached the final in 2018 and 2019 after returning from having a baby.

She made a tearful exit last year after retiring during the first set against Aliaksandra Sasnovich due to a leg injury and doubts had been growing about whether she would return to the sport.

Her long-time coach, Patrick Mouratoglou, revealed in April that he had taken on a new role with Simona Halep.

Wimbledon is widely considered Williams's best chance of claiming a 24th Grand Slam singles crown to equal Margaret Court's all-time record. — AFP

business

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Oman plans Smart Cities in Suhar, Nizwa and Salalah

SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT:
International consultants sought to masterplan and design sustainable cities in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and also UN SDG goals

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has kicked off an ambitious initiative to support the development of 'Smart Cities' in three major locations of the Sultanate of Oman: Suhar, Nizwa and Salalah.

To this end, the Ministry has invited international urban engineering consultancy firms to bid for a trio of contracts for the development of designs and masterplans linked to the establishment of Smart Cities in the three locations.

The initiative stems from a landmark Oman National Spatial Strategy (ONSS) first unveiled by the Ministry in March 2021. Billed as "the essential enabler for the implementation of Oman Vision 2040", the Spatial Strategy sets out a broad framework for urban growth in the country over the next 20 years.

It also seeks to ensure that key national cities remain competitive and their growth aligned with



the UN Goals for Sustainable Development 2030.

One of the many national-level and governorate-level priorities set out in the Spatial Strategy calls for the establishment of "smart, sustainable and vibrant cities" suitably designed to sustain a high quality of life, work and leisure.

These Smart Cities will be underpinned by "diversified and easily accessible means of transport, integrated with sound and targeted urban planning and sustainable world-class infrastructure".

In conceptualising and master-planning the new Smart Cities,

the selected consultants will take inspiration from, among other resources,

The Smart City Platform launched by authorities last year. Besides stressing the need for physical infrastructure in the form of roads and utilities, the Platform also emphasises the importance

of digital infrastructure, such as broadband penetration and communication networks.

This is seen as key to supporting business, academia and innovators, while also providing a key attraction to foreign investors looking to tap into the potential of these cities.

While the Smart Cities proposed at Suhar, Nizwa and Salalah are essentially national-level endeavours, some small-scale and pilot Smart City ventures have already been initiated in the Sultanate of Oman.

Notable is the example of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), which had signed an agreement last year with an Omani firm specialising in the Internet of Things (IoT), to implement a Smart City pilot at its Ras Al Hamra residential and leisure community in Muscat.

The initiative aims to reduce the environmental footprint and improve the quality of living of its inhabitants. Tital Al Irfan, constituting the first phase of Madinat Al Irfan — the Sultanate of Oman's City of the Future' in Muscat Governorate — is proposed to be the country's first truly smart city.

Promoted by Majid Al Futtaim Communities, Tital Al Irfan is envisioned as a thriving commercial and residential destination that will accommodate as many as 50,000 residents living in 11,000 contemporary homes and apartments. Services and amenities will include a business park, education facilities, healthcare and community recreation centres, a central market town square and an entertainment and hospitality precinct.

Al Mazunah Dry Port receives delegation from shipping giant MSC

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

A team of executives from leading global container shipping giant Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) visited the 'dry port' of Al Mazunah Free Zone in Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday.

The guests were briefed about the facilities of Al Mazunah Dry Port and its one-stop shop, as well as the benefits and advantages available to international shipping lines that choose to ship their goods directly to the inland port, which has obtained its own international port code 'OMAMZ'.

The meeting was attended by Eng Ali al Maashani, General Manager of Al Mazunah Free Zone, Mohammed Tariq Khan — General Manager of MSC Oman and other officials. Al Mazunah Dry Port is by well-known Omani firm Al Madina Logistics Company within the free zone.

The Dry Port commenced operations in June 2020, providing a range of services including the handling of containers, refrigerated containers and incoming and outgoing consignments which are re-exported through the free zone. Inspection, clearance, handling and release operations are also undertaken at assigned inspection areas at the dry port. A full-fledged Customs Office is also located within the dry port.



Risk management: Move to protect the rights of policyholders and to ensure sustainable performance

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has announced the adoption of a new approach in calculating the solvency margin of insurance companies, which reflects the ability of insurers to discharge their obligations towards policyholders.

The risk-based approach for calculation of solvency margin measures the amount of the insurance company's capital to support its business in light of the risk exposure, which varies from one company to another.

Previously the calculation of the solvency margin was measured according to the adequacy of assets compared to the liabilities.

Decision 18/2022 amends certain provisions of the Executive



Regulations of the Insurance Companies Law published in the Official Gazette 1428 on February 6, 2022, which includes the necessary amendments for calculation of the risk-based solvency margin.

This move comes after consideration of the most appropriate approaches used in calculating the solvency margin of insurance companies in order to develop methods, processes and basis for risk management in the sector companies in the Sultanate of Oman, and to adopt the regulatory process and offsite audit of their performance.

The solvency margin calculation approach focusing on risk based capital adequacy to cover the various risk factors is one of the best internationally applicable practices in recent years recommended by the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

The CMA emphasises that the risk based calculation of solvency margin approach contributes to achieving a number of objects such as enhancing the capital of insurance companies, the possibility of identifying the risks to which each company is exposed according to the nature and size of

its business.

It determines the appropriate methods for management of such risks, as well as its importance in protecting the rights of insurance policyholders, shareholders, related parties and developing sound management practices in insurance companies, which will clearly reflect in enhancing investor confidence in the insurance sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Capital Market Authority calls on all insurance companies to adjust their situations during the current year in accordance with the requirements of the new solvency calculation approach in preparation for the actual implementation on the audited financial statements for the financial year that ends in December 2022 as the first financial statements to which the new approach will be applied for calculating the solvency.

The CMA also emphasises its steady endeavours to adopt the latest and best regulatory and supervisory practices on all the regulated companies.

ahlibank launches Tamkeen crowdfunding initiative to empower SME growth

MUSCAT: As part of its endeavour to support Oman's Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and bolster the national economy, ahlibank has launched its first-of-its-kind 'Tamkeen' crowdfunding initiative, at a press conference held yesterday.

This pioneering initiative comes after signing a strategic partnership agreement between ahlibank and Beehive to offer this unique online financial lending solution specifically for Oman's SMEs to support their business endeavours and create a sustainable ecosystem that allows the country's economic diversification efforts to flourish.

Commenting on this partnership, Taher al Balushi - DGM-Head of Strategy & Transformation, said, "We are pleased to announce the launch of our 'Tamkeen' crowdfunding initiative, which is the first-of-its-kind, in an exclusive collaboration with Beehive."

"SMEs form the backbone of any economy, and their role has continued to become significant,



aligning with the Sultanate of Oman's efforts towards diversifying a more inclusive economy as part of the Oman Vision 2040 objective."

Elaborating on the importance of such initiatives Al Balushi added, "Through Tamkeen ahlibank

hopes to contribute towards a more inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem that allows SMEs to prosper. In particular, we think this will benefit micro SMEs (MSMEs) become key players in both nation's economic progress and contributing to the local

human resource talent pool by creating high-quality traineeships and jobs with the funding they receive."

Tamkeen aims to narrow the funding gap by offering quick and seamless access to financing for SMEs and will allow them to

avail financial packages ranging between RO 20,000 and RO 80,000, and provide benefits such as competitive pricing, streamlined procedures, and simple repayment terms without the need to provide any security or collateral.

Such offerings will work to financially empower local businesses in order to augment their growth and provide them with wider national economic benefits. Beehive's peer-to-peer fintech platform will allow ahlibank to reach local businesses through the provision of cutting-edge digital lending solutions that are accessible, cost-effective, provide enhanced security, and encourage sustainable financial inclusion.

Capital Market Authority's recent framework for equity crowdfunding will also enhance financial inclusion, ensure improved access to unsecured finance and mitigate cash flow barriers that are generally affecting the sustained growth of SMEs in the country.

Tethys Oil produces 308,597 barrels of oil in May

MUSCAT: Tethys Oil's share of the production, before government take, from Blocks 3&4 onshore the Sultanate of Oman, in May 2022 amounted to 308,597 barrels of oil, corresponding to 9,955 barrels of oil per day.

The Official Selling Price (OSP) for Oman Export Blend Crude Oil for the month of May 2022 was \$110.96 per barrel.

The OSP, as published by Sultanate of Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals, is the benchmark price for Tethys Oil's monthly oil sales excluding trading and quality adjustments.

Tethys Oil AB, through its wholly owned subsidiary Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Ltd, has a 30 per cent interest in Blocks 3&4. Partners are Mitsui E&P Middle East B V with 20 per cent and the operator CC Energy Development S A L (Oman branch) holding the remaining 50 per cent.

Muzn holds first Shari'a supervisory board meeting

MUSCAT: Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, recently held its First Shari'a Supervisory Board meeting. Board members Shaikh Saleh al Kharousi and HH Sayyid Dr Adham bin Turki al Said were joined by newly appointed members Shaikh Dr Muhammad Zubair Usmani and Shaikh Dr Abdulrahman bin Abdullah al Saadi.

During the meeting, the board discussed its responsibilities, which include ensuring all



products, services, activities, investments, operations and transactions are compliant with the principles of Shari'a.

Salima al Marzouqi (pictured),

Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, "Our Shari'a Supervisory Board meetings ensure Muzn continues to be ready to meet the growing demand from customers for Islamic financial products and services which are aligned with their values."

Adding to our highly qualified Shari'a Board, our new members bring extensive experience and a deep understanding from diverse Islamic banking markets. This will be of great benefit to Muzn as we continue to increase our market

share and create new investment opportunities to benefit the bank and enrich the lives of our customers and the community."

Muzn is Oman's first Islamic banking window that offers innovative, competitive and quality financial services and Shari'a compliant banking solutions with the values of Shari'a at the core.

To find out more about Muzn Islamic Banking's range of products, please call 24770001 or visit www.muzn.om.

Enormous benefits to Maisarah gold, titanium credit card holders

MUSCAT: Maisarah Islamic Banking Services - BankDhofar's Islamic Banking window - has launched a new campaign to promote the diverse bundle of benefits offered to its Gold and Titanium credit card holders.

Mohammed bin Ahmed al Maashani - Head of Distribution Network at Maisarah - noted: "Our credit cards are based on the concept of Qard Hassan where the principle of Ujrah is utilised for providing certain services with a fixed monthly fee."



With applicable Mastercard terms and conditions, customers have the option to acquire Gold Credit Card or Titanium Credit Card. These cards allow customers to enjoy exclusive offers and promotions, as well as discounted rates on certain products and services, along with free airport lounge access, global emergency assistance and global ATM network."

Gold Credit Card users are given a complementary airport lounge access in Muscat International Airport (MCT), Salalah International Airport (SLI) & Bangkok International Airport (BKK - Suvarnabhumi).

Additionally, cardholders get to enjoy 10 per cent money back on Booking.com, 10 per cent off on Rentalcars.com, up to 10 per cent off on AVIS car rental, buy-one-get-one-free offer at Priceless Special app, 2-month free subscription and 30 per cent off on monthly subscription at LingoKids.

This also comes with up to 30 per cent off on top trending Udemy courses, plus up to 50 per cent off per month on one course, and up to 25 per cent off on Fiit first subscription.

For Titanium Credit Card, benefits include complementary access to airport lounges (Marhaba Lounge at Dubai

International Airport, Premier Lounge in Kuwait Airport, First Class Lounge in Cairo Airport and the Royal Orchid Lounge at Bangkok International Airport and Oman Air Lounge at Muscat & Salalah airports, to Abu Dhabi International Airport, Queen Alia International Airport, Abdul Aziz International, Al Maktoum International Airports).

Other features include 20 per cent off on 3 Careem rides, up to 15 per cent off on AVIS car rental, up to 10 per cent off on Hotels.com, Mastercard buy-1-get-1-free offer, up to 15 per cent off on Halalbooking.com, 10 per cent money back on Booking.com, 10 per cent off on Rentalcars.com, up to 20 per cent off twice a month on Talabat (T&C apply), 10 per cent off on Farfetch.com outlet, buy-one-get-one-free offer at Priceless Special app, 2-month free subscription and 30 per cent off on monthly subscription at LingoKids, up to 30 per cent off on top trending Udemy courses, plus up to 50 per cent off per month on one course, up to 25 per cent off on Fiit first subscription along with MyUS premium shipping discounts (Free premium membership for 2 years/ free account setup/ 30 per cent off shipping for first month following registration/ 20 per cent off shipping for remainder of 2 year membership).

Bank Muscat offers guaranteed cash prizes for successful Asalah referrals

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced guaranteed cash prizes worth up to RO 2,000 for successful Asalah referrals in line with its strategy of offering maximum benefits to its customers.

All that existing Asalah Priority Banking Customers have to do is to successfully refer new customers to Bank Muscat's Asalah Priority Banking during the promotional period which runs till 31 December 2022.

A reward of RO 100 per successful referral will be paid out for each referral once the referred customer meets all eligibility criteria for a minimum of three months after opening an Asalah account with the bank.

To provide referrals, the referral form available on the bank's website should be filled up and e-mailed to AsalahReferral@bankmuscat.com. The salary/ deposit transfer of the referral should be credited within a maximum of 30 days from the date of referral, for the referral to be eligible for participation in the



scheme.

Cash rewards of RO 100 each will be credited directly to both the referrer's and referee's account for maintaining the eligibility criteria during the 3-month review period. Customers having a monthly salary of RO 5,000 or those who maintain a savings deposit of RO 30,000 are eligible for Asalah Priority Banking.

Existing customers can win up to RO 2,000 by making up to 20 successful referrals during the year. Asalah customers enjoy a range of unrivalled benefits including access to a team of dedicated Relationship Managers, 39 Asalah Centres across Oman and a dedicated 24/7 Asalah Call Centre.

Exclusive lifestyle benefits

include the Asalah Entertainer App, which has more than 3,500 "Buy 1, Get 1 Free" offers in Oman and at international destinations as well as rewards of indulgence and merchant discounts across fine dining, entertainment, leisure, and the beauty and wellness segments.

The Asalah Debit Card offers access to 50 lounges worldwide and has a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 1,000. Asalah VISA Signature credit cardholders can enjoy airport lounge access at more than 1,000 lounges worldwide, and a 24/7 global concierge service.

The Credit Card also offers 1 per cent cashback on purchases as well as free multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their

direct family members.

Cardholders can also enjoy complimentary chauffeur service to and from the Muscat International Airport. Asalah customers also enjoy access to an integrated wealth management platform that allows them to invest in global asset classes through a single touchpoint.

They also get the latest updates and reports on local and international investment opportunities. Asalah Priority Banking reflects the bank's commitment for continued leadership of Oman's banking sector. As a prolific innovator in the financial sector, Bank Muscat has won a number of international and local awards including the Signature Luxury 100 award.

The bank was also listed by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 50 Banks in the region as well as one of the Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East in 2021. Please go to <https://www.bankmuscat.com/en/premierbanking/Pages/details.aspx#asalah> for more details.

MENA energy investments set to reach \$879 billion in 5 years

STRONG GROWTH: MENA
region set to add 33 GW of renewables by 2026, 80 per cent of which are in solar PV

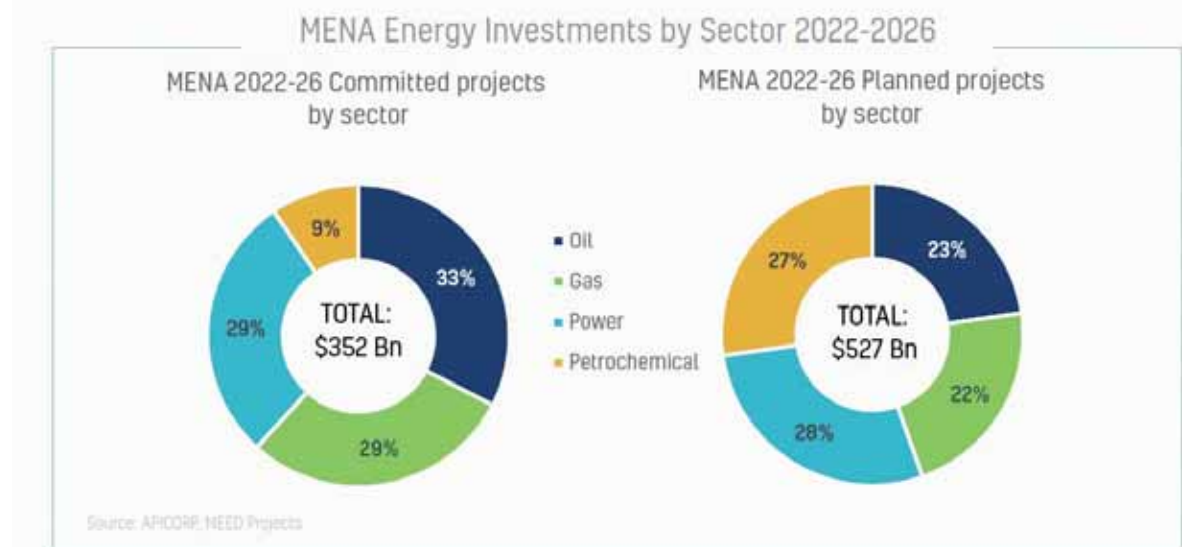
BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 14

The Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (APICORP), a multilateral financial institution, launched on Tuesday its MENA Energy Investment Outlook 2022-2026, forecasting that the total planned and committed investments in the MENA region are expected to increase by 9 per cent to exceed US\$879 bn over the next five years – a \$74 bn increase from the \$805 bn estimate in last year's five-year outlook.

The report notes that the Russia-Ukraine war has led to contrasting impacts on the region's energy landscape, with net-energy exporters spearheading the increase in project expenditure thanks to the windfall of oil and gas revenues caused by the spike in prices driven by the war.

However, global geopolitical volatility and macro headwinds are not curtailing oil, gas, power and petrochemicals investment growth in MENA for the upcoming 5 years.

In the GCC, committed projects comprise around 45 per cent of total energy investments – 50 per cent higher than the MENA-wide average of 30 per cent. For net-energy importers in the North Africa and Levant regions, their relative vulnerability to geopolitical risks stemming from the war compounded by the economic strains of inflation



and debt burdens are beginning to show and impact energy investments.

Ramy al Ashmawy, Senior Energy Specialist at APICORP, said, "Our latest MENA Energy Investment Outlook shows that the region continues to progress in its unique energy transition path.

Namely, MENA countries shoulder the largest share of global investments in oil and gas going forward to ensure global energy security and avoid an impending super cycle that may severely hamper the world economy.

At the same time, the region continues to invest in decarbonisation, renewables and clean energy as part of the long-term strategic vision for a low-carbon future underpinned by a greener, more balanced, and sustainable energy mix."

Blue and green hydrogen.

APICORP's analysis shows that right across the region, blue and green hydrogen will dominate the emerging hydrogen markets in the near term.

The report forecasts that hydrogen markets will start scaling

up as the market foundations are established, and for the MENA region – GCC and North Africa specifically – the focus will be on exporting low-carbon hydrogen to demand centres in Europe and SE Asia via ammonia shipments.

Suhail Shatila, Senior Energy Specialist at APICORP, said: "In the medium term, blue hydrogen proves to be a more attractive option to the MENA region. Blue hydrogen can be produced at a relatively low cost, and it will only slightly disrupt the IOC and NOC's existing business models.

This is a central metric in the energy transition journey since hydrocarbon producers will play a key role in decarbonising the upstream oil and gas sector and help reach net-zero targets by mid-century."

Energy Diversification

Energy diversification is at the top of the agenda, with several MENA countries integrating renewables in their generation mix as part of a shared policy objective to diversify the power mix with low-cost, low-carbon energy sources and bolster power

supply security.

For hydrocarbon net-importing countries with robust renewables potential, the aim is to reduce dependence on conventional fuel imports and integrate low-cost renewables into domestic grids.

Over the coming years, the priority for hydrocarbon net exporters is to free up export volumes of conventional fuels to maximise revenues at healthy price environments to fund socioeconomic development and support the decarbonisation initiatives of their respective net-zero targets.

Although few MENA countries have already pledged their net-zero targets (the UAE by 2050 and Saudi Arabia and Bahrain by 2060), electrification via renewable energy sources will be a key driver to reach those targets.

However, due to the intermittency of renewable energy sources and the lack of utility-scale grid storage solutions to date, conventional fuels and nuclear will remain essential in the power supply mix.

UK unemployment edges higher as inflation slams wages

LONDON: Britain's unemployment rate has risen slightly, while soaring inflation is causing the value of wages to fall at the fastest pace in more than a decade, official data showed on Tuesday.

Unemployment rose to 3.8 per cent in the three months to the end of April, but remained close to a 50-year low as Britain sees record-high vacancies. That compared with an unemployment rate of 3.7 per cent in the first quarter of the year, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

ONS Head of Economic Statistics, Sam Beckett, meanwhile noted that "pay in real terms is falling at its fastest rate in over a decade," with UK inflation at a 40-year high.

The jobs data follows official figures on Monday showing British economic output declined for a second month in a row in April, weighed down by runaway consumer prices.

"It is possible that this is the very first signs that the weakening in economic activity since the start of the year is filtering through into a less tight labour market," Paul Dales, chief UK economist at Capital Economics, said on Tuesday.

However, "that won't be anywhere near enough to prevent the Bank (of England) from raising interest rates on

UK ANNUAL INFLATION RATE HAS SOARED TO NINE PER CENT, CAUSING A COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS FOR MILLIONS OF BRITONS.

Thursday", he added.

The BoE is expected to raise its main interest rate for a fifth time in a row to cool the pace of price rises.

UK annual inflation rate has soared to nine per cent, causing a cost-of-living crisis for millions of Britons.

"With inflation hurtling towards double digit territory, many workers are increasingly finding that their wages are not stretching wide enough to meet the bumper cost of seemingly everything from food to petrol," said Myron Jobson, senior personal finance analyst at Interactive Investor.

The Bank of England is widely expected to raise its key interest rate this week by a quarter-point to 1.25 per cent, while some are forecasting a half-point jump.

In the United States, Friday's forecast-beating inflation print has triggered expectations that the Federal Reserve will ramp up the pace of its interest rate increases, heightening fears of a recession. — AFP

Pakistan's currency plunges to historic low

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's currency plunged to an all-time low against the dollar on Tuesday, amid uncertainty about the fate of a stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan as the country struggles to bridge deepening current account and fiscal deficits.

The rupee depreciated to more than 205 for

one dollar in the interbank market.

That continued a week long loosening spree, after the IMF warned that the fiscal consolidation measures Pakistan's government announced in last week's annual budget were not enough to revive the loan.

Pakistan secured the \$6 billion bailout

package from the global lender in 2019, but the programme stalled after the payout of three tranches, as Islamabad could not meet the fund's requirements.

The country might face a default on its liabilities if the IMF package isn't revived, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said. — dpa



Lorry driver passes a sign on the side of his vehicle advertising for jobs as he makes a delivery, in London. — AFP

WTO floats fund to help net sustainable fishing deal

GENEVA: The WTO tried to net a long-sought deal on curbing harmful fishing subsidies by promising on Tuesday an implementation fund it hopes will reel in wavering developing countries.

Negotiations have been going on at the World Trade Organization for more than 20 years towards banning subsidies that threaten the sustainability of the planet's fish stocks by encouraging overfishing.

The global trade body's leader, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, wants to pull off a major coup by finally concluding a deal at the WTO's first ministerial conference in nearly five years, being held in Geneva this week. There are hopes that a financing fund to help developing countries implement the new rules may help soothe lingering concerns.

"We've been discussing

and progressively refining this idea with a sizable group of members on both sides — both potential donors and potential beneficiaries," Okonjo-Iweala explained.

The idea is to provide members with the means to build up their capacities to integrate the new rules, involving adopting systems to manage their fisheries and provide catch data. The fund is targeting around \$20 million in contributions, with a starting amount of around \$10 million — of which \$5 million has already been pledged.

"While work is continuing on the last remaining issues, we have never been so close to concluding," said Colombia's WTO ambassador Santiago Wills, who chairs the fisheries negotiations at the organisation.

However, a Geneva-based diplomat said the financing mechanism was helpful but



World Trade Organization Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala attends a press conference at the start of a four-day WTO Ministerial Conference in Geneva. — AFP

was not a major issue in the negotiations, which still revolve around the carve-outs for certain developing countries and whether they would apply to China and India.

"It's a nice thing to have and will help in the implementation of the agreement but it's not going

to make the deal — sadly," the diplomat said.

"That would be an extraordinary deliverable for this week if we could actually get there," but "right now, people aren't sure we're going to".

Special treatment for the poorest countries is widely

accepted, but demands from some self-identified developing countries for exemption from subsidy constraints, including large fishing nations like India, have met resistance. New Zealand's trade minister Damien O'Connor is facilitating the fisheries talks in Geneva.

He told his counterparts that there was an "historic opportunity for the WTO to do something that will massively benefit the world for many generations to come, and that we simply cannot, and must not, miss this opportunity," WTO spokesman Daniel Pruzin told reporters.

Besides fisheries, the WTO is trying to strike deals on e-commerce, agriculture, food security, Covid-19 vaccine patents and WTO reform. Okonjo-Iweala warned countries against trying to do trade-offs between the different tracks.

Agreements at the WTO are

reached by consensus, meaning objections from any one of the 164 members can stymie talks towards a deal.

Okonjo-Iweala — who turned 68 on Monday — took over as WTO director-general in March 2021, and has staked her reputation on breathing new life into the crippled organisation. "We all have dreams and sometimes not all of those dreams can be fulfilled," she said on Tuesday.

"My own dream for my birthday is to get a successful ministerial. "One or two packages passed... I think that would do." But several diplomats have indicated that India is proving the main obstacle in securing any agreements at the conference.

"India is being obstructive across the piece," said one Geneva-based diplomat. "In no negotiation are they playing a constructive part." — AFP

Keeping China fed as inflation surges brings risk for commodity prices

Bedevilled by high fuel and fertiliser costs, along with a labour crisis driven by Covid-19 restrictions, China risks a smaller autumn harvest that could supercharge demand for commodities just as the world can afford it least.

Global food prices have spiked since Russia's February attack on Ukraine, a major world producer of wheat, corn and sunflower oil, driving costs to record highs.

Moscow stands accused of pushing the globe to the brink of catastrophe by blockading Ukrainian ports and seizing commodity stocks, driving up prices and leaving the world's poorest nations facing hunger.

China is relatively self-reliant, producing more than 95 per cent of its needs in rice, wheat and maize.

But relentless Covid disruptions on top of higher fertiliser and fuel costs and issues with access to equipment, threaten the autumn harvest of key crops such as soybean and corn.

Experts caution even a small rise in demand from the world's most populous nation could drive global commodity costs up sharply.

"The last thing the global market needs right now is for China to become a more active buyer," said Even Pay, an agriculture analyst with consultancy Trivium China.

Corn prices hit a nine-year high in April, while soybean prices traded near a 10-year high this month. China is the last major economy to adhere to a zero-Covid policy.

How that manifests itself in the next harvest is uncertain, but Pay said "last-mile logistics" have been complicated by virus restrictions in rural areas afraid of the spread of the disease.

"Villages have been very resistant to letting outsiders in during Covid-control periods," she added. If China ends up going to the global market to fill any shortfall, there will be "a big impact" on prices, said Darin Friedrichs, co-founder of agriculture research firm Sitonia Consulting.

For now, Beijing is keeping a close eye on the country's wheat harvest.

China has harvested about 80 per cent of its winter wheat crop so far, although Friedrichs cautioned that prices are 25 per cent higher than last year, at about 3,000 yuan (\$450) per tonne.

— AFP



Experts caution even a small rise in demand from the world's most populous nation could drive global commodity costs up sharply.



MAN ON TOP OF BALES

A man gestures while sitting above harvested bales of wheat packed in the back of a pickup truck in a field in the Sidi Thabet region near Ariana north of the capital Tunis in Tunisia. — AFP

London remains top for foreign investment



ANDY JALIL andyj.alil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

LONDON HAS RETAINED ITS TOP SPOT AMONG GLOBAL HUBS AND THAT THE PACE OF JOB MOVES OUT OF THE CAPITAL HAD CONTINUED TO WANE.

Financial and professional services projects in London attracted more financial investment than any of the city's peers last year, according to a new report from the City of London Corporation.

The financial district of the UK capital city accounted for 114 of the 186 deals that came through the UK in 2021, beating Dubai's 104 deals, Singapore's 103 and New York's 54.

The UK as a whole came second only to the United States among countries attracting the most projects. A third of UK projects focused on the fintech sector, the report said, easily topping the 10 per cent of projects in banking and the 10 per cent in private equity or venture capital.

In Europe equity capital markets activity slumped by 77 per cent and by 87 per cent so far in 2022, according to data provider Dealogic, with initial public offering volumes falling by 71 per cent globally to \$67 billion.

The City of London Corporation is the 'square mile's' (financial district) governing body so one would expect its figures to show the financial district in a positive light. However, they add to a growing body of research that suggests the capital has managed to retain much of its financial

services prowess following Brexit.

EY's latest Brexit tracker and Schroder's latest Global City Index, both published in March, show London has retained its top spot among global hubs and that the pace of job moves out of the capital had continued to wane.

Trade deals struck with countries such as Australia, Japan and New Zealand have brought criticism for adding only negligible amounts to the UK economy – nevertheless expanding the trading horizon – but the figures suggest that the City's private sector continues to pull its external interest.

The Lord Mayor of the City of London, Vincent Keaveny, who is also a partner at law firm DLA Piper, described the capital's combination of time zone, language, legal system, global talent and financial services ecosystem as "unique".

He added: "Our position at the crossroads of Europe's biggest financial and tech sectors make us one of the globe's foremost hubs for innovation."

City of London Corporation policy chair Catherine McGuinness said: "Our fundamentals remain strong and the UK's continuing appeal to investors is demonstrated by a robust pipeline of projects both in the capital and other regions. It is vital that we continue to build

on this success.

We must future-proof the sector and make sure we remain globally competitive as we forge a new chapter in our trading history."

Innovation and competition are the government's watchwords for the financial district since Brexit.

It is at present consulting on plans to make regulators at the Bank of England and Financial Conduct Authority to give more weight to London's international standing when they write their rules, as well as "assess compliance with relevant trade agreements", as part of its Future Regulatory Framework Review.

The government has pushed to open up the UK's financial sector to new economies. However, the rest of Europe remains a major source of foreign direct investment in financial and professional services firms, the City of London Corporation's figures suggest – around a third of the projects in the UK were funded by investors in other European countries.

The financial district's contribution and importance to the wider economy was also underscored, with London noted for accounting for nearly two thirds of the investment projects in the study and nearly half the jobs created.

The right way to fight global hunger



ALEXANDER MULLER

The author is managing director at TMG Think Tank for Sustainability.

The global food system is broken. Although it produces more than enough calories to feed everyone, up to 811 million people — more than 10 per cent of the world's population — go to bed hungry each night.

Sadly, effective governance to ensure access to food for all is still lacking. A globally coordinated effort to address both the short- and long-term aspects of the hunger crisis must therefore be the top priority.

Today, all four dimensions of food security — availability, access, stability, and utilisation — are threatened by the combined negative effects of climate change, conflict, Covid-19, and cost. By disrupting global trade and pushing up food prices, these four "Cs" are creating a short-term challenge of increasing hunger.

At the same time, the man-made climate crisis poses a medium to long-term threat.

Climate change has already started to affect the environment in which food can be produced. Exceptional droughts, heat waves, and floods are undermining farming in regions as different as the Horn of Africa and the Midwest of the United States.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recent Sixth Assessment Report leaves no doubt: The climate crisis will have increasingly damaging consequences for food systems around the world.

Russia's war against Ukraine is aggravating this already dire situation. Armed conflicts have long been major causes of hunger, usually at the regional level. But the Ukraine war, involving two of the world's largest producers

of agricultural commodities, is distorting global trade.

As a result, the Food Price Index compiled by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations hit an all-time high in March.

Prices of basic commodities such as flour or vegetable oil have tripled in some regions since the war began.

Food producers also face skyrocketing prices for fossil fuel-based fertilisers, of which Russia is one of the biggest exporters. In severely affected countries, rising food prices may threaten social stability.

When food prices soared in 2008, more than 20 countries reported social unrest and instability.

Then there is Covid-19. According to the UN, the pandemic has caused tens of

millions of people to go hungry.

And lockdowns aimed at combating the virus have disrupted supply chains, adding to the upward pressure on food prices.

Our food systems face further challenges. Over-consumption of cheap calories, enabled by global trade in commodities and fossil fuel-based inputs, has led to widespread obesity and caused severe environmental problems.

But the negative effects of production systems on the environment have often been treated as economic externalities and thus ignored.

More generally, and notwithstanding last September's UN Food Systems Summit, there have been very few holistic approaches to food-system transformation. Industrialised agriculture continues to hold sway.

That means there is much to

be done. But threats to global food security will increase if policymakers trying to stem the immediate hunger crisis continue to ignore the climate and biodiversity crises and delay necessary steps to make food systems more sustainable.

For example, postponing the implementation of the European Union's Farm to Fork Strategy, as some have proposed, will not provide the amount of food needed in the coming months and will further undermine the resilience of European agriculture.

As risks to food security mount, we cannot exclude the possibility that agricultural production from the food, feed, fibre and fuel sectors will be insufficient to meet demand. Scarce supplies and disruptions to global trade will force us to make choices.

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Preserving Oman's beauty and life's special moments through photographs

Abdulmajeed discovered his love and passion for photography when he was in high school. Today, he is one of Oman's prolific content creators composing photographs that not only preserve life's special moments but also, so beautiful and breathtaking that they take a life of their own on social media... **P20**

Seventy Afghan couples marry in Kabul mass wedding

DOZENS OF AFGHAN women concealed in thick green shawls were married off in an austere mass wedding in Kabul on Monday, in a ceremony attended by hundreds of guests and gun-toting Taliban fighters.

Marriage is a costly affair in deeply impoverished Afghanistan, traditionally involving huge dowries, expensive gifts and lavish parties.

Historically, couples from families unable to foot the bill have sometimes opted to pool their resources in low-cost large scale marriages.

Monday's ceremony hitching 70 couples was one of the largest recently witnessed in Afghanistan, currently in economic freefall since the return of the Taliban.

"Today, no young man wants to bear the burden of an expensive wedding," said groom Ebadullah Niazai, who had waited eight years to be married.

"I have no job. We were short of money and so we decided to marry at a mass wedding ceremony," said 22 year-old groom Esmatullah Bashardost, who hails from the minority Shiite Hazara community.



Bashardost, sporting a traditional Afghan cap, said his wedding would likely be the most "happy day" of his life.

However celebrations were dramatically dampened by frigid restrictions the Taliban have imposed on social life.

Before they seized power in August weddings were riotously colourful affairs marked with singing, dancing, and some degree of mingling between men and women in the deeply conservative nation.

On Monday the brides and grooms were kept separate throughout the ceremony.

Guests of opposite sexes were separated by around a dozen Taliban fighters patrolling with weapons, and the only entertainment was poetry recitations and speeches by charity organisers of the event.

Journalists were not allowed to speak to the brides, who wore crisp white gowns under their concealing shawls,

but were permitted to photograph and film them.

A red and white wedding cake was produced for each couple, but was placed in front of the men only, who wore traditional white shalwar kameez.

The event ended as grooms — each sporting a plastic name badge — collected their brides and left the venue in cars decorated with flowers and ribbons.

A single day booking at a Kabul wedding hall costs between \$10,000 and \$20,000 and organiser Sayed Ahmad Selab said some betrothed couples were "waiting for years" because of the expense.

During their first regime between 1996 and 2001 the Taliban barred showy weddings.

After surging back to power on the heels of a hasty US withdrawal, the Islamists have yet to reinstate their previous ban but they have forbidden musical entertainment.

Meanwhile, they have also issued creeping restrictions on women, segregating them from men and rolling back marginal gains they made over the past two decades.

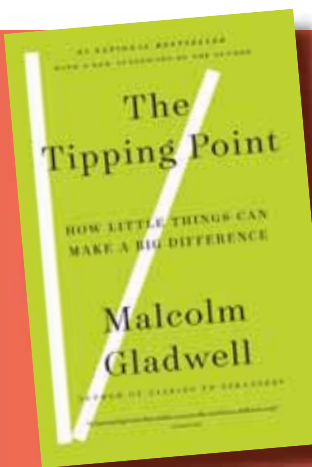
In May women were told to stay at home as much as possible and to conceal themselves completely, including their faces, should they need to step out in public. — **AFP**

READ

THE TIPPING POINT

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

The Tipping Point considers why certain products, diseases, or ideas become viral. Each epidemic shares a few common features that are enough to kickstart a significant rise in sales, diagnoses, or conversations.



WHAT A DIVE!

Hobby divers can now visit the Britannic — the sister ship of the legendary Titanic — in the Aegean Sea, the Greek government said on Friday. Diving permits for the Britannic and 10 other ships at the bottom of the Aegean will be issued electronically and without bureaucratic hurdles effective immediately, the Culture Ministry promised. — **dpa**



ENTERTAINMENT

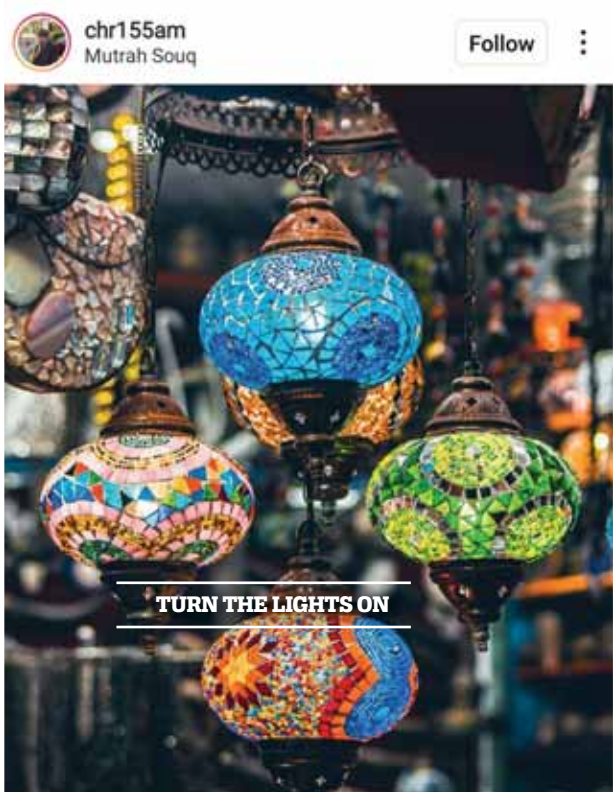
The 2023 Grammy Awards will feature new honours including for the year's best video game soundtrack and Songwriter of the Year, the Recording Academy said on Thursday. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Revisiting trauma with a child-refugee-turned artist



PETRIT HALILAJ knows something about how art can help pull children out of the horror of war — but also the dangers of them being used as a propaganda tool.

As a 13-year-old refugee from the conflict in Kosovo in 1999, his felt-tip pen drawings of soldiers killing civilians were singled out by then-UN secretary-general Kofi Annan as a powerful depiction of the war's impact on young minds.

Halilaj, now 36, has since become a successful artist and has revisited those drawings with a radical show for Britain's Tate and now at the kamel mennour gallery in Paris — pulling his original pictures apart and blowing up elements into huge installations.

In the process, he tried to recall why he had ultimately refused to hand over the drawing he had prepared for Annan.

"At first, I thought this was my chance to stop the war. I was rushing to complete a big drawing before he arrived," Halilaj said.

It was, he thinks, his grandfather who cooled his excitement.

"My grandfather was almost annoyed by my enthusiasm — he couldn't deal with my joy in drawing the picture. He told me (Annan's visit) was just theatre."

When Annan visited the camp in Albania, accompanied by the world's media, and asked if he could take the drawing to a major UN meeting, Halilaj said no.

"Maybe I was thinking about my grandfather's words," said Halilaj. "But maybe I just had a sense that this is my drawing and I wanted to keep it!"

AFRAID OF STRANGERS

The teenage Halilaj made the drawings under the supervision of an Italian child psychologist who was volunteering in the camp.

His experiences have obvious relevance as millions of children are again forced to flee a brutal European war, this time in Ukraine.

"In war, you learn to be afraid of strangers and the other. Only once I was in the camp did I learn to start connecting to strangers again and having art was so important as a way to express ad share," he said.

But his new show emphasises the importance of being guided by a psychological expert.

Its co-curator, Amy Zion, said she was concerned to see pictures by Ukrainian children being used to depict the war in newspapers recently.

"It worried me that it could so easily become a journalistic trope," she said.

"Petrit had a psychologist trained in working in traumatic situations who really understood how to present the situation as therapy first and foremost, and not something to be instrumentalised."

Coming out

That is perhaps why many of the drawings did not feature violence, but rather peaceful scenes of nature and animals.

In revisiting them, Halilaj was fascinated to rediscover elements that suggested other issues stirring in his young mind.

He highlights the huge colourful peacock that now dominates the exhibition space in Paris.

"Clearly, this was also me coming out in silence as a queer teenager. When I see the colours I think: this is a pride march!" he said, laughing.

"I had more going on inside than just the war." — **AFP**

TRAVEL TALES

Turkish hilltop where civilisation began



ON A SUN-BLASTED hillside in southeast Turkey, the world's oldest known religious sanctuary is slowly giving up its secrets.

"When we open a new trench, we never know what to expect," said Lee Clare of the German Archaeology Institute, who has been excavating there since 2013.

"It is always a big surprise."

Gobekli Tepe, which means "Potbelly Hill" in Turkish, is arguably the most important archaeological site on Earth.

"Thousands of our prehistoric ancestors gathered around its highly-decorated T-shaped megalith pillars to worship more 7,000 years before Stonehenge or the earliest Egyptian pyramids.

"Its significance is hard to overstate," Sean Lawrence, assistant professor of history at West Virginia University, said.

Academics believe the history of human settlement began in these hills close to the Syrian border some 12,000 years ago when groups of Stone Age hunter gatherers came together to construct these sites.

Gobekli Tepe — which some experts believe was never actually inhabited — may be part of a vast sacred landscape that encompasses other nearby hill-top sites that archaeologists believe may be even older.

Endless mystery

None of which anyone would have guessed before the German archaeologist and pre-historian Klaus Schmidt began to bring the first discoveries to the surface in 1995.

German and Turkish archaeologists have been labouring in the sun there since, with lengthening queues of tourists now joining them to ponder its many mysteries.

When exactly it all began is

even unclear.

"Exact years are nearly impossible to verify," Lawrence said.

"However, the oldest Egyptian monument, the Pyramid of Djoser at Saqqara, was built around 2700 BCE," more than seven millennia after Gobekli Tepe.

"This was the end of what is often thought of as Stone Age hunter gatherer societies and the beginning of settled societies," Lawrence added.

"There remain endless mysteries surrounding the site, including how labour was organised and how the sites were used," he said.

Gobekli Tepe has even inspired the Netflix sci-fi psychological thriller series "The Gift", which turns on one of the ancient inscriptions on its pillars.

Schmidt — who often wore a white traditional turban on the dig — puzzled over the megaliths carved with the images of foxes, boars, ducks, lizards and a leopard for over two decades until his early death at the age of 61 in 2014.

ZERO POINT IN TIME

The site was initially believed to be purely ritual in nature. But according to Clare, there is now "good evidence" for the beginning of settled life with some buildings similar to those of the same age found in northern Syria.

Turkey — which in the past has not been renowned for making the best of its vast archaeological heritage — has wholeheartedly embraced the discoveries.

The items excavated from Gobekli Tepe are shown in the impressive archaeological museum in the nearest city, Sanliurfa, which is itself so ancient that Abraham is believed to have been born there.

Indeed its new museum built in 2015 boasts "the most extensive collection of the neolithic era in the world," according to its director Celal Uludag. "All of the portable artifacts from Gobekli Tepe are exhibited here."

"This is a journey to civilisation, (to the) zero point in time," said Aydin Aslan, head of Sanliurfa Culture and Tourism Directorate.

"Gobekli Tepe sheds light on pre-history, that's why it's a common heritage of humanity," he said proudly.

GO DEEPER

Last year, Turkey's culture ministry boosted funding for further excavations in the region as a part of its "Stone Hills" project, including cash for the Karahan Tepe hilltop site — around 35 kilometres from Gobekli Tepe — which some suspect is even older.

"We will now go deeper because Gobekli Tepe is not the one and only," Culture Minister Nuri Ersoy said last year.

The extra funding "gives us a fantastic opportunity to compare our results from Gobekli Tepe with new sites in the Sanliurfa region of the same age," Clare said.

Gobekli Tepe has also breathed life back into a poor and long neglected region, which has been further hit by the civil war just across the border. Syrian refugees now make up a quarter of Sanliurfa's population.

Over one million tourists visited Sanliurfa in 2019 and the city expects to reach pre-pandemic levels this year.

"Today Gobekli Tepe has started directly touching the economy of the city," Aslan said, who hopes that its glorious past could be a key part of the city's future. — **AFP**

CULTURE

The rise, fall and return to grace of an African great



AT THE END of an abandoned field in Mali's war-ravaged Mopti region lies the overgrown tomb of Yambo Ouologuem, once a huge star of African literature whose career imploded in scandal after he was accused of plagiarism.

He was all but forgotten until last year when a young Senegalese writer won France's top literary prize for a novel inspired by Ouologuem's strange and tragic life.

Mohamed Mbougar Sarr became the first sub-Saharan African to win the Prix Goncourt in November for "The Most Secret Memory of Men", which recounts the misadventures of an African writer not dissimilar to Ouologuem.

Ouologuem himself had been the first African to win another major French award, the Renaudot Prize, for his 1968 novel "Bound to Violence".

That was in his first life as an urbane and acclaimed writer in France, before a stunning fall from grace led to a second life as a "crazy" and reclusive Islamic fundamentalist in Mali.

Today, Ouologuem's youngest son Ambibe occupies the cinder block house in the town of Sevare where the Malian author lived out his final years until his death in 2017.

Ambibe makes tea before leading visitors to his father's tomb, which, judging by the weeds, has lain unvisited for a long time.

BREAKING UP BARS

His son recalls his father's lost years, full of anger at the West and at the injustice he felt he had suffered.

He said his father would demonstrate alone in front of the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.

Ouologuem would also take his son on a motorbike to raid local bars.

"We would arrive, he would break bottles and tell people they were bad Muslims — then we would leave," Ambibe said with a laugh, proud of a man he said was "right in his ideas".

Ouologuem was "traumatised" by the scandal he suffered in France when he returned to Sevare, family members say.

Born in 1940 when Mali was still colonial French Sudan, the brilliant son of a school inspector moved to Paris to study when he was 20, the same year his country achieved independence.

By 28, Ouologuem had published "Bound to Violence" an acerbic critique of the violence of pre-colonial West African

empires.

It was critically acclaimed and won the Renaudot that year. Then Ouologuem's story began to sour.

First the book was criticised by his African contemporaries — intellectuals like Leopold Sedar Senghor, the longtime president of Senegal. His answer to the horrors of colonialism was to glorify African culture and he accused Ouologuem of "denying his ancestors" to "please the whites."

Then Ouologuem was accused of plagiarising other writers including the British novelist Graham Greene.

He argued that his borrowings were about paying homage, but his Renaudot award was withdrawn and Ouologuem's books disappeared from the shelves.

RAGING AGAINST WHITES

By the end of the 1970s, Ouologuem gave up trying to write and returned home to Mali, where he began a new life.

He embraced Islam, replacing his tailored suit and cigarette with a traditional boubou robe. He no longer wanted to hear about literature and forbade his family from reading.

He would regularly rush onto the soccer field next to his house to interrupt the "white sport".

"He was an old fool," said a local elder, reluctant to say more about a family rumoured to have a lot of land and connections in the neighbourhood.

On a small chair in his courtyard, El Hadj Amadou Yebedie, the imam of the local mosque, said Ouologuem "wanted to know everything about Islam" when he returned to Mali.

"He read a lot," he said. "Above all, he shunned anything to do with white people."

Ouologuem's son Ambibe, who runs a small freight business, did not know about his father's former life until he was 12.

"He didn't say anything," the son said. "I couldn't believe he smoked cigarettes when I saw the photos."

Today there is no trace of Ouologuem or his work in Sevare, where the children who fill the sandy streets at dusk have their heads in TikTok rather than books.

A Malian literary prize in his name was renamed several years ago.

But in 2018, Ouologuem's French publisher, Seuil — with whom he had long fallen out — brought out a 50th anniversary edition of the novel that changed his life. — **AFP**

art & life

Local Scene

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WEDNESDAY | JUNE 15 | 2022

Preserving Oman's beauty and life's special moments through photographs

BY QUSAI AL ABRI

They said that important events only stay for a moment and the only way to preserve a special time and make it last forever is to preserve it in photographs.

This is what photographer Abdulmajeed al Shuaibi has been doing, creatively documenting life events so that they can be preserved for future generations.

Abdulmajeed discovered his love and passion for photography when he was in high school. He started out by using his phone camera as acquiring DSLR and high-end cameras was not yet possible at that time not only because of the financial challenges, but also because of other considerations.

In order to learn mastery of the field of photography, Abdulmajeed connected with friends who share the same passion. It is through his connections that he would be able to learn and educate himself mostly relying also on Youtube and available tutorials on the Internet.

When he finally got the chance to own his very own Canon700D camera in 2016, it's when he decided to become serious in his passion joining photography clubs in college and covering university events.

Because he was already studying Information Technology, it was easy for him to learn the technicalities of operating a camera. Through different courses and classes, he developed his skills further and in the process began to develop his own voice in photography.

"I love documenting life's beautiful moments. I think this is one of the motivations why I am very passionate about learning photography. I wanted to make fleeting moments permanently last," he shared.

He added, "Photographers perform an important role of documenting life events so that memories can be retrieved in either print or digital format. It's the beauty of photography, to be

able to capture a memory so that it can be relived," he added.

As a species, Abdulmajeed believes that we are bound to forget. He thinks that had it been not for ancient writings and documentation, we would have forgotten what the past was like. In essence, he said that pictures allow for a moment to live forever.

Abdulmajeed's talent as a photographer has recently created a stir in social media when a photo he took of Wadi Shab went viral. Other than attracting followers who love his work, Abdulmajeed is also an important personality that helps promote the beauty of the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah.

"Oman is full of beautiful tourist places that are unique to the country. We have a great combination of mountains, valleys and seas and we need to promote these destinations to the world," he shared.

While he has an eye for details, Abdulmajeed is actually more keen on just a few genres of photography.

One of his favourites is aerial photography using drone cameras.

"I like taking photos from unique angles. By taking the bird's eye view, you provide a different context to a scene," he said.

In 2019, he invested in getting a drone camera that he can use to promote different tourist attractions in the country making sure that he takes a unique approach to his photography.

Other than aerial photography, Abdulmajeed also loves portrait photography.

"There is something beautiful about people, how their features tell their stories," he said.

He shared that when you capture a person right, you would be able to showcase his wrinkles, eye colour and other defining feature. As a portrait photographer, he said it is important to be able to compose a photo that not only highlights the subject but captures the person's essence.

He prefers to leave photos as they are without using Photoshop and other correction

programmes. He believes that all features of the face are unique and wrinkles make people prettier.

Abdulmajeed is also drawn to taking photos of children saying that their innocence and compassion as well as their childish expressions make them a very interesting subject to capture.

As of late, Abdulmajeed has been obsessed with cars, including car racing and Formula One events. He said that events like Formula One offers a different challenge which pushes him to be even more creative.

By attending racing events, he gained extra experience about the right moments to photograph a car while racing, and the best moves and was able to produce some marvellous pictures showing people that entertainment has no limit when it comes to formula one activities. He also aimed at sharing some pictures that are like rare pieces of art.

Abdulmajeed aspires to achieve positions in international competitions, as well as obtain titles for photography, such as a FIAP Artist and other distinguished titles.

From his humble beginnings, Abdulmajeed has started to create a name for himself but his learning continues wanting to take the beauty of Oman to a higher level. He also aspires to have the honour to photograph His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and said that his passion for photography will not stop, but will continue until he achieves all his goals.

