

Deals signed for nine tourism projects

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism signed nine usufruct agreements to set up small and medium tourism projects on government land plots owned by the ministry. The projects are: a 3-star hotel, a 2-star hotel and a resthouse in Dhofar; a 3-star resort and a 1-star hotel in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar; a 3-star hotel in the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid and a resort in the Wilayat of Bidiya; a tourism camp in the Wilayat of Ibri and a tourism camp in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan. **See P2**

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CORNET OUSTS CHAMPION RADUCANU



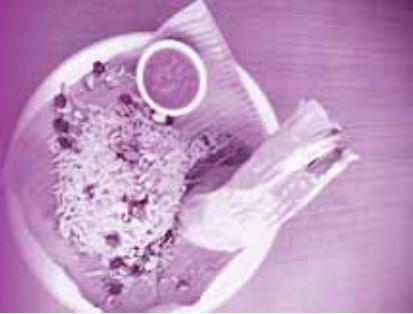
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PATHWAY TO GCC ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION



P20

SERVING ARABIAN DISHES WITH FRANKINCENSE



MUSCAT

HM GREET'S UZBEK, SLOVAK LEADERS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the occasion of his country's Independence Day anniversary. His Majesty expressed his best wishes of good health and wellbeing to President Mirziyoyev, and wished the people of Uzbekistan further progress and prosperity. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has also sent a cable of greetings to President Zuzana Caputova of the Slovak Republic on her country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his best wishes to President Caputova and the people of her country. — ONA



Unique project to use silt accumulated in dams

100 SMES TO LIST WITH AMAZON

To make SMEs products visible globally, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority is encouraging them to list with major e-commerce platforms. The department is aiming at listing some 100 SMEs on Amazon, as it is one of the most powerful e-commerce platforms in the world. The authority organised a workshop to register enterprises and projects with Amazon. The Authority seeks to create electronic marketing outlets for the products and services of entrepreneurs in the local, regional and global markets. **P2**

KHASAB: Silt enters as a core material in a variety of industries, such as fertilisers, textiles and ceramics. Recently, Arkan, a research establishment, launched an initiative code-named "Ardak" or (your land/soil) to convert silt into an industrial product.

Accordingly, Arkan signed an agreement to the tune of RO 7 million with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources to utilise silt sediments deposited in the lakes of five dams in Oman, as a first stage of the project.

The first phase of the project was launched in April 2022 by

GOVERNMENT SEEKS TO ENSURE THAT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THE ELDERLY GET FAIR LIVING OPPORTUNITIES AND HAVE FREE ACCESS TO SERVICES MADE AVAILABLE VIA DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) on Wednesday said all government departments and public and private firms should know about the National Digital Access Policy.

The ministry said that people with disabilities and the elderly must get fair living opportunities

GOVT CALLS FOR DIGITAL ACCESS TO ALL



and have free access to services made available via digital platforms and called upon the government and private parties to provide easy access for the disabled and the elderly to transfer their digital services propagated in electronic sites, applications, and mobile phones.

All public and private establishments must upgrade their websites on par with global digital accessibility criteria and standards.

The National Digital Access Policy in the Sultanate of Oman offers electronic access to all segments and individuals of society to enable them to benefit from all opportunities on ICT platforms.

It may be noted that the Sultanate of Oman has charted an ambitious course toward a knowledge-based economy and achieving digital society and e-governance through national strategy. **TURN TO P3**



EXPANSION OF ROUNDABOUT

Following the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to implement an additional package of development projects in the Governorate of Muscat during the five-year plan (2021-2025), Muscat Municipality begins the implementation of the project to expand the roundabout located near the Sayyidah Maizoon Mosque in the southern Al Mawaleh and transform the existing roundabout into a traffic intersection with signals. **SEE P3**

EU restricts travel rules for Russians

BRUSSELS: EU foreign ministers have agreed to suspend a 2007 visa facilitation agreement with Russia over the country's war in Ukraine, top EU diplomat Josep Borrell announced on Wednesday.

The move is designed to prevent "visa shopping" by Russian applicants seeking easier entry to the European Union through member states with laxer rules, the EU foreign policy

chief said in a press conference in Prague.

The suspension comes after weeks of pressure from EU countries bordering Russia to crack down on Russian nationals travelling to the bloc on Schengen visas issued by some EU member states.

Such a move would make the EU visa process more complicated, more expensive and more bureaucratic, as well as increasing waiting times for approval, according to European Commission guidelines.

For example, the suspension drops a basic application fee of \$35.10, ends a standard application period of 10 days, and widens the tighter rules to all Russian applicants.

— dpa

OMAN FM 90.4

MUSCAT CANDID

WEEKDAYS 12-3PM HOSTED BY ASMA AL RIYAMI







Tourism Ministry inks 9 usufruct pacts



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Wednesday signed nine usufruct agreements to set up small and medium tourism projects on government land plots owned by the ministry.

The projects are distributed in different governorates as the following: a 3-star hotel, a 2-star hotel and a resthouse in Dhofar, a 3-star resort and a 1-star hotel in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, a 3-star hotel in the Wilayat of Wadi Bani Khalid and a resort in the Wilayat of Bidiya in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah, a tourism

camp in the Wilayat of Ibri in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah and a tourism camp in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah.

Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, signed the usufruct agreements with investors representing the companies executing the projects. The agreements come within the framework of the ministry's efforts to boost investments and to attract RO 3 billion of private investments in the tourism sector and to empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs). —ONA

Around 100 SMEs to list with Amazon

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

There is a move to provide marketing support to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). To make their products visible globally, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority is encouraging them to list with major e-commerce platforms.

The department is aiming at listing some 100 SMEs on Amazon, as it is one of the most powerful e-commerce platforms in the world.

The authority organised a workshop to register enterprises and projects with Amazon. More than 56 entrepreneurs participated in the workshop.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority seeks to create electronic marketing outlets for the products and services of entrepreneurs in the local, regional and global markets.



The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority is encouraging SMEs to list with major e-commerce platforms to make their products visible globally

This initiative is part of the authority's vision to implement the government's digital transformation programme to create a befitting business environment to ensure sustainable development by introducing the best technical and innovative solutions with the latest solutions based on innovation, artificial intelligence and advanced

technologies. It aims to provide all available electronic channels to provide services developing sustainable systems based on integration with relevant institutions and entities.

The number of SMEs remarkably increased, and by July, the increase stood at 46.8 per cent to reach 81,460. This gave the authority a background to launch

an e-commerce programme and include some 100 small and medium enterprises on Amazon in an effort to deliver Omani SME products and services to the world.

The programme includes guidance on how to use the platforms, practical training, live broadcast sessions with experts in the field, and illustrative videos.

E-marketing is one of the most important modern marketing tools, as it relies on digital technology to market products and services.

The launch of e-services portals for entrepreneurs reflects the authority's keenness to facilitate the provision of its electronic services to entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs. It is to keep pace with electronic systems and accelerating technologies and provide services more intuitively and smoothly, which constitutes a new step in providing more facilities in line with the digital transformation programme of the government.

Prices of some back-to-school items high: CPA

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The Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has admitted that prices of some 'back-to-school' items in the market were high owing to many reasons.

"Prices of some items are high," said Sulayem bin Salim al Hakmani, Chairman of the CPA.

This surge in prices of some items, according to him, is due to the hike in transportation that many of the sourcing countries are imposing owing to fuel price hike and demurrage, and the like.

"This hike in some items required for 'back to school' is due to the increased charges of transportation and allied expenses in bringing them from different countries," Al Hakmani said.

There have been complaints from parents that retailers are charging

high just as the new school year is about to begin. Social media was abuzz with the messages that the high prices of stationery and school supplies should be controlled and demanded that the Consumer Protection Authority should intervene.

"Items required for school are priced high and it's gone nearly double for many items compared to pre-corona rates," a parent said.

PRICES MONITORED

However, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has said the prices of school essentials are continuously being monitored and any unjustifiable price hike of any product will be taken seriously.

"We are constantly monitoring the prices of essentials and any undue price hike is taken into account."

There has been a high demand for children's stationery, paper products



and the like as schools went gradually full-fledged after two academic years of online classes this year.

Leading suppliers of stationery, school bags and other items too have their own side of the story where they have to pay three times freight charges and other expenses to get some items from the supplying countries to the Sultanate of Oman.

"The price hike in some items is due to the huge increase on freight charges," said Zubair Mahin of al Rajaa Global Supply Company Associated Limited, a leading supplier of school materials in the country.

"The normal freight charges of a 40-feet container used to be \$900 to \$1,000 maximum whereas we paid up to \$9,700 to bring school materials needed for back to school. However, there's reason for hope as the freight is dropping down now and touched like \$4,000 approximately," he added.

SAI PARTICIPATES IN GCC MEETING



RIYADH: The State Audit Institution (SAI) took part in the 25th meeting of committee of specialists in GCC integrity protection and anti-corruption agencies, held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General in Riyadh on Wednesday. The meeting covered a spectrum of topics, namely drafting an action plan to activate cooperation and coordination among GCC integrity protection and anti-corruption agencies and the project of drafting a guide for enhancing integrity in government dealings in GCC states, among other topics. — ONA

Falling Walls Lab contest registration extended till Sept 5

MUSCAT: The Falling Walls Lab Oman 2022 competition, organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in collaboration with Falling Walls Foundation in Germany, has extended its registration date until September 5.

The extension aims to give more time for registrations in light of the various applications and inquires which the competition's organisers received.

The idea of the Falling Walls Lab Oman competition, which is organised in the Sultanate of Oman for the seventh consecutive year, is to present an idea of a research project, entrepreneurial or social initiative that is relevant to the world of today in just 3 minutes on the competition's stage. The presentation should convince the high-level competition jury that comprises experts from academic



fields, research institutions and businesspersons.

This year's competition will take place on September 19. The winner of the competition will participate in the Lab Finale in Berlin, Germany, on November 8, and the winner is awarded a ticket for the international Falling Walls Conference on November 9.

Students, entrepreneurs, early-career researchers and academics of all disciplines can apply through the competition's website: <https://falling-walls.com/lab/apply/oman-2/>. — ONA



Muscat Municipality implementing projects to ease traffic

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Following the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to implement an additional package of development projects in the Governorate of Muscat during the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), Muscat Municipality begins the implementation of the project to expand the roundabout located near the Sayyidah Maizoon Mosque in the southern Al Mawaleh and transform the existing roundabout into a traffic intersection with signals.

It will construct a network of water drainage channels to raise

traffic efficiency and improve the flow of traffic in various areas.

The project includes converting Al Jamea Roundabout into a four-way intersection with traffic lights to accommodate the current and future traffic in the area, and expanding the intersection by adding new traffic lanes in both directions of the intersection.

It includes water canals passing next to the current roundabout with a width of 40 metres with fences on both sides of the stream, expansion of the water drainage holes below Mazoon and Al Shabab streets to have 12 openings, with a width of 3 metres, and a height of two metres.

The project aims to improve traffic movement at all times, which will enhance commercial and developmental movement and facilities.

The implementation of the project will start during the last quarter of this year to be completed in 12 months.

The Royal directives had approved the implementation of development projects and those approved in the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

Valued at RO 650 million, these projects will be implemented during the remaining years of the current five-year plan in various development sectors.

Student Supporting Fund extends a helping hand

MUSCAT: The Student Supporting Fund set up by the University of Nizwa is stepping forward in Oman's Vision 2040 by providing a diverse funding source for sustainable education. The Fund provides full and partial scholarships, with partial funding for services such as accommodation, transportation and nourishment as well as the Isnad programme.

The University of Nizwa established the supporting fund (Ma'en) in 2004. It started with an ambitious initiative with a greater goal of providing help to financially distressed students until it becomes the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of the services and the support it offers on the level of academic institutions.

Isnad is a paid training programme where students are assigned tasks to complete under the supervision of a university employee. There are different categories of Isnad, Administrative, Technical, Academic and Research. All of these categories are trained in university facilities.

Administrative Isnad is trained in the university library, departments and deanships. Technical Isnad is trained in labs, the Natural and Medical Sciences Research Centre, and the IT department. Academic Isnad is trained in the learning and enhancement centre. Research Isnad is trained in Unesco Chair on Aflaj Studies and DARIS Centre for Scientific Research and Technology Development.

The payment earned is used to cover the students' financial dues to the university, such as accommodation, transportation, or percentage of study fees. The student would be contributing to the payment of the fees side along with gaining experience to meet the requirement of the labour market.

Isnad programme is enhancing the quality of students' outcomes. Fatima al Rawahi, an administrative Isnad student at the Media and



The University of Nizwa established the supporting fund (Ma'en) in 2004. It started with an ambitious initiative with a greater goal of providing help to financially distressed students until it becomes the first of its kind in Oman in terms of the services and the support it offers on the level of academic institutions

Marketing Department, said.

"I have joined the Isnad programme to help in the payment of my study fees. I have gained personally from the training programme as I have discovered my abilities and become more confident."

Intisar al Toubi, an administrative Isnad student at the awareness programme, said, "I wanted to help my family in paying my study fees, therefore, I joined Isnad programme. I have been in this Isnad for two years now and I have learned how important it is to be punctual and responsible of handing out my tasks.

Student Supporting Fund has been giving back to the university community over the past 18 years. The fund's support in the year 2004-2005 was more than RO 730,000, and reached by the end of the year 2020 more than one million, which is an accurate indicator of the development and support the Fund provides to the university students.

It includes all related aspects and components - from building human capacities, developing the required infrastructure, implementing an e-government approach to building trust and drafting the framework and legislation.

The government digital transformation programme 2021-2025 aims to build a sustainable

knowledge society and raise the productivity and efficiency of the public sector by building national capacity, enhancing infrastructure, developing the IT industry, and improving the quality of government services and its delivery modes in accordance with the standards and a time span, ensuring its full compatibility with the objectives of

simplifying procedures of services for citizens, the business sector and government institutions.

According to official sources, the process includes transforming business activities and processes to take full advantage of the opportunities of digital technologies to improve efficiency or manage risks, discover new opportunities and do things

digitally.

The Sultanate of Oman seeks to develop a prosperous digital economy that contributes to the national economy. The National Digital Economy Programme outlines a set of pillars, executive programmes and action plans, in addition to medium and long-term targets aligned to Oman Vision 2040.

Government calls for digital access to all

■ FROM P1

Al Fara'a village: The nature's bounty

TEXT& PHOTOS BY: YAHYA ALSALMANI

The village of Al Fara'a, located on the banks of Wadi al Sahtan near Al Rustaq, is a beautiful place to visit. The village is situated on the edge of Jabal Shams and enjoys a mild climate in summer. Water flows from the tops of the tall mountains, forming an exceptional panoramic view.

Because of its moderate climate, it has abundance of fresh water. The village has cultivation of palm, lemon, mango, quince, banana and many types of vegetables such as onion and garlic. All these agricultural products are marketed in local markets.

The residents of this village are famous for their skills in handicraft and beekeeping. They produce all kinds of bee honey due to the presence of natural pastures, especially Sidr and Samar trees. Some residents are also interested in raising livestock that produce meat and dairy products.

People also practise some handicrafts, such as weaving, manufacture of swords and daggers, and palm fronds. This indicates that these traditional crafts have not disappeared despite modern developments.

It has unique traditional architecture. Their homes are built on very high areas between the slopes of the mountains, and the village houses are climbed through stone-built stairs for long distances that give them another aesthetic.

Those who wish to explore



this beautiful village must follow the mountain path that starts from the entrance to the village. Practising walking/hiking on this path requires high physical fitness, and those who wish to explore this village must be patient and have strong determination.

The water channels (aflaj) constitute the main source of water. In the village, there are two

aflaj that were built on the edge of the mountains on the eastern and western sides. These water channels that transfer water over long distances represent a major source of agricultural development in the village.

There are water basins to avoid drought and continuous flow of water to vegetable and fruit plants.

Along the mountain path, that

is, after a 3-km walk, there are archaeological sites. These sites are located on the heights of the mountains. They include ancient walls, houses and tombs built with stones and mud.

"These archaeological sites occupy a large area, but they began to disappear due to natural erosion and climatic changes, so most of the walls were destroyed and many burials disappeared, and what we see today are scenes that confirm human settlement of this village thousands of years ago," locals told the Observer.

The disappearance of these archaeological sites is of great concern to citizens. "We hope that the official authorities will look into it seriously to preserve this historical heritage through maintenance operations, and a fence must be erected to protect this site from the tampering of tourists and visitors to the village," locals added.

Previously, this village was not known, but after the spread of social media, the village became an important tourist attraction in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. Today, dozens of tourists of different nationalities flock the village, and this is in the interest of tourism development in the Sultanate of Oman.

Local people advise visitors to adopt best practices and respect local sensitivities. They are also advised not to swim in the aflaj and water ponds because they are the only source of drinking and farming for the villagers.



1 NO POVERTY

2 ZERO HUNGER

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL BEING

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

5 GENDER EQUALITY

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



KABEER YOUSUF
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For every project or new initiative, the buzzword is ‘sustainability’. Corporates and government entities underline the mantra of sustainability to ensure the protection of nature from adverse impacts and the project’s continuity for a longer time.

The United Nations has set forth 17 interrelated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); each of them has other special goals, which in total represent about 169 goals, and cover a wide range of social and economic development issues aimed at eliminating challenges facing the world.

Sustainability is nothing but a goal set by society aimed at perfect harmony and coexistence of humans along with the environment and creatures on the Earth.

Sustainable development implies achieving human goals vis-a-vis sustaining the ability of natural systems to provide the natural resources and ecosystem services on

which the economy and society depend over time. It envisages development that aims to pay attention to a reciprocal relationship between man and his natural surroundings and society and its capabilities.

Globally, sustainable development goals are meant to eliminate the world’s challenges, especially those related to poverty and inequality, protect the planet from the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

The Sultanate of Oman, along with other countries, approved the 2030 SDGs at the UN Summit in September 2015 and has become one of the member states to work actively to achieve these goals. The main pillars of Oman’s 9th Five-Year Plan have been incorporated into them, including the first voluntary national report.

The country observes Oman Sustainability Week from March 12 to 16 as a national platform that aims to highlight

the country’s commitment to sustainability leadership through innovative strategies aligned with SDGs and engage the national development stakeholders to present Oman as a new model for sustainable development.

These sustainable development goals are distinguished by their comprehensiveness as the key to achieving one goal is closely linked to the other goals. It includes everyone without discrimination, as well as requires solidarity and cooperation between countries to achieve sustainability in the world.

“The current situation demands the need to pay attention to the implementation and dissemination of sustainable development goals in our societies, especially in education, then education, and then education,” says Abdel Ghaffar, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Regional Network for Social Responsibility.

He added that this is

allowing for the transformation of education programmes from theory to the practical application so that graduates are ready for the labour market in a way that is happy to reduce the number of job-seekers.

“The importance of sustainability is inexplicable,” said Engineer Mohammed al Gharibi, Director of External Affairs and Communications at Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

He stressed that the field of application of the foundations of sustainable development is wide, and we need to fully understand the experiences and ideas and visions in a way that bridges a gap in the field of coordination and integration of efforts among the GCC countries that share religion, language and destiny.

As for Oman, there is a promising opportunity to harness the momentum in following the SDGs to stimulate various development sectors, especially the private sector, to support the national economy in the country, along with other countries in the GCC.





Iraqi court adjourns session on dissolving parliament

BAGHDAD: Iraq's Federal Court on Wednesday adjourned a session scheduled to look into the dissolution of parliament, following this week's deadly violence in Baghdad over the country's prolonged political stalemate.

The Sadrist movement, affiliated with Moqtada al Sadr, filed a lawsuit demanding early elections after the dissolution of the current legislature.

Iraqi media reported that the session was postponed until Thursday.

At least 25 were killed and hundreds injured during clashes, which erupted when Al Sadr's loyalists stormed government offices in the Green Zone area on Monday.

Parliamentary Speaker Mohammed al Halbusi announced a three-day mourning period on Wednesday.

Since the October parliamentary elections, political forces have failed to agree on nominees for the positions of prime minister and president.

Al Sadr's bloc won the largest number of seats but lacked the majority needed to form a government.

While he has been calling for early elections, his rivals want to form a government.

The Coordination Framework political alliance had a nominee few weeks ago, but Al Sadr rejected him because of his links to the rival and ex-prime minister, Nuri al Maliki.

The Coordination Framework alliance reject Al Sadr's attempts to get a court decision to dissolve parliament, saying that the constitution stipulates that only



A street in the Iraqi capital Baghdad as calm returns after around 24 hours of deadly violence in Iraq. — AFP



lawmakers can vote to do that.

"Sadr is looking to become the most powerful political player in Iraq," Renad Mansour of British think tank Chatham House said.

"That is his agenda, and part of achieving that requires destabilising not just the political system as such, but particularly the house and building it back up with him at the centre of it."

Since the aftermath of the

US-led war in 2003 that toppled longtime ruler Saddam Hussein, Iraq has been governed under a sectarian power-sharing system.

Tensions escalated sharply on Monday when Sadr loyalists stormed the government palace inside the Green Zone after he announced he was quitting politics.

But Sadr's supporters then left the Green Zone on Tuesday afternoon when he appealed for them to withdraw within the hour — a demonstration of the cult-like following that earned him his kingmaker status.

At least 30 Sadr supporters had been shot dead and nearly 600 wounded in nearly 24 hours of fighting between rival factions.

— dpa/AFP

Spain violated rights of Catalan ex-ministers, says UN committee

GENEVA: Spain violated the political rights of former members of the Catalan government and parliament, the UN's Human Rights Committee found on Wednesday.

The committee reviewed a complaint from four senior politicians who were convicted of sedition for their role in a controversial Catalan independence bid in 2017.

The committee found that Spain violated their rights when they were suspended from office having been charged with a particular offence -- in a decision not based on reasonable and objective grounds.

Catalonia in northeast Spain has for several years been at the centre of a political crisis between separatists, who control the executive and the regional parliament, and the central government in Madrid.

The Human Rights Committee comprises 18 independent experts who monitor how countries are implementing their civil and political rights obligations under an international covenant.

The committee reviewed a complaint filed by the former deputy head of the Catalan government Oriol Junqueras, and three former ministers: Josep Rull, Raul Romeva and Jordi Turull.

They were prosecuted and sentenced for their participation in the independence referendum and later events that led to the Catalan parliament declaring independence in October 2017.

Junqueras and the three ministers were prosecuted for the crime of rebellion, which entails a call for a violent uprising against the constitutional order, said the committee.

In July 2018, they were suspended from their functions as members of parliament in accordance with an act which only allows the suspension of officials when they are charged with rebellion.

They claimed that their suspension from public duties, prior to any conviction, violated their political rights under the international covenant monitored by the committee. — AFP



SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NOTICE

(Auction No.2/2022)

The Ministry of Health would like to invite sealed bids for the Lease for Cafeteria of Catering Services to all the Students and Staff at Oman College of Health Sciences in Al-Wattiyah, in Muscat Governorate. Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect the documents and specifications of this Auction from the Directorate of Purchase & Tenders at General Directorate of Financial Affairs at Ministry's Headquarters in Al Khuwair for Fee (25 O.R) between 8.30am and 12.30 pm during official working hours on or before 04/September/2022.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1%) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bond will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to H.E. the Chairperson of the Tender Committee providing the title of the auction Viz: "Auction No. 02/2022. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder's name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited at Purchase and Tender in Directorate of Financial Affairs by on or before 9:00 am on Thursday, the 08/September/2022. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids.

Iran says it wants stronger guarantees for nuclear deal

MOSCOW: Iran wants stronger guarantees included in a text put forward by the EU aiming to salvage Tehran's landmark 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Wednesday.

"We are thinking about how to reach a strong text on the issue of the guarantee, and to obtain stronger guarantees," he told a joint news conference in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

"My colleagues are carefully examining the text of the American side," Amir-Abdollahian said of Washington's response to Tehran's suggestions on the EU text that was submitted on August 8.

"We want to reinforce in the text the idea that the International Atomic Energy Agency concentrates on its technical task and moves away from its political role," he said.

The United States had been adamant that Tehran cooperate with the IAEA to clear up suspicions about earlier work at three undeclared sites.

In June, the IAEA's board of governors adopted a resolution censuring Iran for failing to adequately explain the previous discovery of traces of enriched uranium at three sites not declared by Tehran as having hosted nuclear activities.

On Monday, President Ebrahim Raisi said reviving the atomic deal would be pointless unless the UN nuclear watchdog put an end to its probe of three undeclared sites in the Islamic republic.

The 2015 accord between Iran and six world powers — Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States — gave Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme. — AFP

OMAN AIR (S.A.O.C.)

Muscat International Airport, P.O. Box 58, P.C. 111, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Air is looking for a qualified and experienced Suppliers to participate on the following tenders. Complete details will be provided to the interested bidders upon payment of RO 500 towards the tender fee.

SN	Tender Title	Tender Number	Closing Date	Tender Fee
1	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Dairy Requirement	SCM/2022/4227	14 September 2022	RO 500/-
2	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Fruits and Vegetables Requirement	SCM/2022/4226	14 September 2022	RO 500/-
3	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Frozen Requirement	SCM/2022/4225	14 September 2022	RO 500/-

Interested parties are requested to complete the online vendor registration through the Oman Air website (<http://www.omanair.com>) → Useful links → E-procurement or through URL (<https://e-procurement.omanair.com/Pages/LoginPage.aspx>).

Please note that you should complete the online vendor registration to receive the tender documents and submit your proposal online. Alternatively, the bidder may submit the proposal in a sealed envelope to Oman Air Supply Chain Management Office located at Block-300 near the old airport.

The last day for submitting proposals is April 14 September 2022, before 12:00 pm

For any query, please send an email to:
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www.omanair.com

الطيران العماني
OMAN AIR



Death toll creeps up amid flooding in Pakistan



Local residents use a temporary cradle service to cross the river Swat after heavy rains in Bahrain town of Swat valley in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. – AFP

ISLAMABAD: The death toll of Pakistan's catastrophic flooding was rising steadily on Wednesday as the cash-strapped country struggles to rescue and care for millions of people displaced by surging waters.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said that 1,162 people, including 384 children and 231 women, had died due to flooding since mid-June. The numbers are expected to further increase in the coming days. More than

33 million people in some 116 of Pakistan's 160 administrative districts have been affected by the floods, with at least 72 districts being declared disaster areas.

Hundreds of thousands of people are currently living without food, clean water, shelter and basic medicines. The floods inundated over 2 million acres of agricultural land, destroying crops of cotton, rice, dates, tomatoes, chilli peppers and other vegetables.

In addition, more than 730,000 cattle have also been killed so far by the raging floods. Livestock is a lifeline for the rural population and a source of income for more than eight million people.

The water has damaged more than one million houses, over 5,000 kilometres of roads, and 243 bridges, according to the latest reports.

Food and vegetable prices in the country have skyrocketed after crops on thousands of

hectares of land were lost in recent weeks.

The situation prompted the government to consider lifting a ban on trade with India and allowing the import of vegetables and other foodstuffs, but officials fell short of taking any decision.

On Wednesday, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail said international agencies had approached the government seeking permission to bring food items from India through the land border. — **dpa**

Indonesia calls for more G20 action on climate change

BALI: Bali, Group of 20 chair Indonesia warned environment officials from the world's leading economies on Wednesday they must act together to combat a warming planet or risk plunging it into "uncharted territory".

The call came at a one-day meeting on the resort island of Bali, at the end of a month in which more than 1,000 people died in Pakistan from flooding blamed on climate change and a crippling drought exacerbated by a record heat wave spread across half of China.

In opening remarks, Indonesian Minister of Environment and Forestry Siti Nurbaya Bakar told delegates "global environmental problems require global solutions", otherwise the planet could end up in a situation "where no future will be sustainable".

"We cannot hide from the fact that the world is facing increasingly compounding challenges," she said, referencing energy price spikes and global food shortages.

"We know that climate change

could become an amplifier and multiplier of the crises. We cannot solve those global environmental problems on our own."

She added that climate change "would not only wipe out all development progress that has been achieved over past decades, particularly in emerging economies, but it would also propel us over an environmental tipping point into uncharted territory where no future will be sustainable".

Some of the world's top economies and emerging nations are being increasingly hit by record heat, flash floods and droughts — phenomena that scientists say will only become more frequent and intense due to climate change.

In attendance at the meeting were US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry, Britain's Climate Minister Alok Sharma and officials from India, Australia, Italy, Brazil, Japan, South Korea and the European Union among others. A joint communique was expected to be agreed at the talks. — **AFP**



Japanese Environment Minister Akihiro Nishimura with Dutch Minister for the Environment Vivianne Heijnen at the G20 Joint Environment and Climate Ministers' Meeting in Nusa Dua, Indonesia's Bali island. — AFP

Taliban mark anniversary of foreign troop exit with military parade

KABUL: The Taliban celebrated the first anniversary of the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan on Wednesday with victory chants and a military parade showcasing equipment left behind by US-led forces.

Afghanistan's new rulers — not formally recognised by any other nation — have reimposed their harsh version of Islamic law on the impoverished country, with women squeezed out of public life.

Despite the restrictions, and a deepening humanitarian crisis, many Afghans say they are glad the foreign forces that prompted the

Taliban insurgency left after a brutal 20-year war.

"We are happy that Allah got rid of the infidels from our country, and the Emirate has been established," said Zalmai, a resident of Kabul. In a statement, the government said the day marked "the country's freedom from American occupation".

"So many fighters were wounded, so many children orphaned, and so many women became widows."

The authorities held an official celebration that included a military parade at Bagram Airbase, the nerve centre of US operations during the war.



Children hold Taliban flags as they travel in a car as people celebrate the first anniversary of the withdrawal of US-led troops from Afghanistan near the US embassy in Kabul. — AFP

Groups of Taliban fighters — dressed in traditional shalwar kameez and carrying rocket-propelled grenades — marched as helicopters flew by, video footage aired by state television showed.

Minutes later, dozens of military vehicles including humvees and artillery tanks, seized in the war or left behind by US forces during their chaotic withdrawal, were paraded. Foreign media outlets were not given access to the event. Celebrations were also held in several provinces, with locals reading poems and verses from the holy Quran. Banners celebrating

victories against three empires — the former Soviet Union and Britain also lost wars in Afghanistan — flew in Kabul.

Hundreds of white Taliban flags bearing the proclamation of faith flew from lamp posts and government buildings, while squares in the capital were decorated with lights.

Kabul residents chose to stay indoors after the authorities declared a national holiday, but hundreds of Taliban fighters gathered at Massoud Square, next to the now shut US embassy." — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

JAKARTA

Truck crash outside Indonesia school kills 10

At least ten people, including four young children, were killed and more than 20 injured when a truck ploughed into a bus stop outside a school in a city adjacent to Indonesia's capital, police said. The truck was transporting iron bars in Bekasi, West Java, at around 10 am when the driver lost control and the vehicle crashed into a bus shelter where a group of students were gathering.

"Ten people died in the accident, four of them were children and six others were adults," Latif



Usman, the head of Jakarta's police traffic unit, said.

At least 23 others, including 14 primary school students, were injured and taken to two nearby hospitals for treatment, Usman said.

COLOMBO

Sri Lanka says IMF bailout talks in 'final stage'

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka's president announced further tax hikes and sweeping reforms saying that bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund were in the "final stage". The country of 22 million people has suffered months of dire shortages and protests culminating in the ouster of Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month.

Presenting a new budget, his successor Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Tuesday that Value Added Tax (VAT) would rise from 12 to 15 per cent for all goods



and services from Thursday. He said a dedicated debt management agency was being set up to restructure borrowings. In April, Colombo defaulted on its \$51 billion external debt.

MANILA

Cambodian psychiatrist wins 'Asia's Nobel Prize'

A Cambodian psychiatrist treating victims of the Khmer Rouge and a French environmentalist cleaning up Indonesian rivers were among the winners on Wednesday of the 2022 Ramon Magsaysay Award — considered Asia's Nobel Prize. The annual award, established in 1957 and named after a Philippines president who died in a plane crash, honours those who have performed "selfless service to the peoples of Asia".

The foundation that runs the



award announced four winners in an online announcement.

Among them was Sotheara Chhim, 54, a psychiatrist and survivor of the, ultra-Maoist Khmer Rouge regime.



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In brief

■ SOUTH LONDON



JOHNSON DEFENDS RECORD ON CRIME REDUCTION AS PM

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson appeared to defend the police from accusations of being “too woke” as he used his final days in office to stress his record on tackling crime. Johnson, who leaves office when the Conservative Party’s search for a new leader concludes next week, defended his government’s track record on policing and claimed that his premiership had cracked downward on neighbourhood crime.

Johnson was speaking to broadcasters as he attended a raid with specialist officers near Lewisham, south London.

— dpa

■ BUNOL



SPAIN’S TOMATO FOOD FIGHT FIESTA RETURNS

Thousands of revellers splattered each other with tomatoes on Wednesday in the Spanish town of Bunol celebrating the return of the annual “Tomatina” food fight after a two-year absence due to the Covid pandemic. A convoy of six trucks carrying 130 tonnes of ripe tomatoes rolled through the eastern town’s narrow streets, as teams on board distributed the load among the baying crowd for an hour-long frenzy.

The festival — billed as “the world’s biggest food fight” — has become a major draw for foreigners, in particular from Australia, Britain, Japan and the United States. But this year only 15,000 of the 20,000 available tickets sold as fewer people from Asia made the trip due to lingering Covid-19 travel restrictions, local officials said.

■ LONDON



US SENATOR BERNIE BACKS UK STRIKERS

The independent US senator Bernie Sanders gave his backing to striking British railway workers, adding an international dimension to the growing push for higher wages in the UK. The influential progressive lawmaker was slated to join members of the RMT union at a rally for transport workers in London on Wednesday night. The rally, outside the headquarters of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), coincides with strike action by postal workers, telecoms staff as well as journalists. “People are tired of being ignored while the rich get richer,” Sanders, 80, told The Guardian in an interview.

— AFP

IAEA inspection team arrives in Zaporizhzhya

KIEV: Experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) headed for an embattled nuclear power plant in Russian-occupied southern Ukraine arrived in the city of Zaporizhzhya on Wednesday.

Ukrainian nuclear power plant operator Enerhoatom published a video of the team’s arrival after a nearly nine-hour drive from Kiev on Wednesday afternoon.

The 14-member team headed by IAEA chief and head of mission Rafael Grossi left the Ukrainian capital Kiev early on Wednesday morning enroute to the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant.

“We will be spending a few days there,” Grossi said before their departure. He said he and 13 experts were there to stabilise the situation as much as they could.

It was initially unclear when the mission would continue to the Russian-occupied nuclear power plant, which is in in Enerhodar.

The IAEA chief hopes to hold talks with the power plant’s Ukrainian staff during the visit.

Grossi stressed that his team had received all the necessary safe passage guarantees for the long journey to the war zone, some 450 kilometres from Kiev.

“We are going into occupied territory and this requires the explicit guarantees, not only from the Russian side, but also from the Republic of Ukraine,” he stressed



IAEA chief Rafael Grossi talks to the press after the arrival of the IAEA inspection mission to Zaporizhzhia. — AFP

before setting off in a convoy of 10 white SUVs with UN markings.

The Zaporizhzhya nuclear power plant is the largest in Europe. It has a net output of 9,500 megawatts and boasted over 10,000 employees before the war began. The plant was occupied by Russian troops shortly after the attack on Ukraine began at the end of February.

In recent weeks, the power plant has come under frequent fire, for which Kiev and Moscow blame each other, triggering international concern about a possible nuclear disaster.

As Ukraine continues a counteroffensive in southern Ukraine, Russia claims to have

inflicted heavy losses on the neighbouring country’s troops.

More than 1,700 Ukrainian soldiers have already been killed, the Defence Ministry said in Moscow on Wednesday.

In addition, according to army spokesman Igor Konashenkov, Russian troops destroyed 63 tanks, 48 armoured vehicles and four fighter planes. This information could not be independently verified.

In London, the British Ministry of Defence said Ukrainian armoured forces continued to assault Russia’s Southern Grouping of Forces on several axes across the south of the country since Monday. — dpa

New air strike hits capital of Ethiopia’s Tigray

ADDIS ABABA: The capital of northern Ethiopia’s Tigray region was hit by an air strike around midnight on Tuesday, Tigray rebels and hospital officials said, the latest such attack reported in just a few days.

The bombing came after fighting on the ground resumed between government forces and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) last week.

The clashes have shattered a five-month-old truce and dimmed efforts to end the nearly two-year conflict in Africa’s second most populous country.

“Night time drone attack in Mekele. No conceivable military targets!” TPLF spokesman Getachew Reda said on Twitter. “Mekele



Hospital among the targets and at least three bombs dropped.”

Kibrom Gebreselassie, chief clinical director at Mekele’s Ayder Referral Hospital, also said on Twitter there had been a drone attack “close to midnight” near Mekele general hospital.

“Casualties are arriving to Ayder Hospital,” he said, without giving details.

A humanitarian source

confirmed the strike but did not elaborate further.

Government officials did not comment on the latest strike, but on Wednesday accused the rebels of opening a front towards Ethiopia’s western border with Sudan, a week after fighting erupted near southeastern Tigray.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s government and the TPLF have each blamed the other for the clashes, which have sparked international concern.

At least four people including children were killed on Friday in the first air strike on Mekele in many months. The attack was condemned by the UN children’s agency Unicef, which said the raid “hit a kindergarten”. — AFP

New launch attempt for Nasa’s Moon rocket

KENNEDY SPACE CENTRE: Nasa will make a second attempt to launch its powerful new Moon rocket on Saturday, after scrubbing a test flight earlier in the week, an official said on Tuesday.

The highly anticipated uncrewed mission — dubbed Artemis 1 — will bring the United States a step closer to returning astronauts to the Moon five decades after humans last walked on the lunar surface.

Mission manager Mike Sarafin said the Nasa team “agreed to move our launch date to Saturday, September the third.”

Blastoff had been planned for Monday morning but was cancelled because a test to get one of the rocket’s four RS-25 engines to the proper temperature range for launch was not successful.

Sarafin announced the date for the new launch attempt during a media briefing on Tuesday, and Nasa later tweeted that the two-hour launch window on Saturday would begin at 2:17 pm. Launch weather officer Mark Burger said there is a 60-per cent chance of rain or thunderstorms on the day of the launch, but added that there is still a “pretty good opportunity weather-wise to launch on Saturday.”

The goal of Artemis 1, named after the twin sister of Apollo, is to test the 322-foot Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew capsule that sits on top.

Mannequins equipped with sensors are standing in for astronauts on the mission and will record acceleration, vibration and radiation levels.

Tens of thousands of people — including US Vice-President Kamala Harris — had gathered to watch the launch, 50 years after Apollo 17 astronauts last set foot on the Moon.

Ahead of the planned Monday launch, operations to fill the orange-and-white rocket with ultra-cold liquid hydrogen and oxygen were briefly delayed by a risk of lightning. A potential leak was detected during the filling of the main stage with hydrogen, causing a pause. After tests, the flow resumed.

Nasa engineers later detected the engine temperature problem and decided to scrub the launch.

“The way the sensor is behaving... doesn’t line up with the physics of the situation,” said John Honeycutt, manager of the Space Launch System program, adding that such issues with sensors were “not terribly unusual.” — AFP



Nasa’s next-generation moon rocket, the Space Launch System rocket with its Orion crew capsule perched on top, as it stands on launch pad 39B in preparation for the unmanned Artemis 1 mission at Florida. — Reuters

Tributes from West as Gorbachev dies at 91

MOSCOW: The death of Mikhail Gorbachev triggered an outpouring of tributes from Western leaders on Wednesday but reaction was muted in Russia, where many blamed the last Soviet leader for the loss of the country’s status as a global superpower.

Gorbachev, who changed the course of history by triggering the demise of the Soviet Union and was one of the great figures of the 20th century, died on Tuesday aged 91. Russian news agency reports said he had died in a central Moscow hospital “after a serious and long illness”.

His life was one of the most influential of his times, and his reforms as Soviet leader transformed his country and allowed Eastern Europe to free itself from Soviet rule.

While the changes he set in motion saw him lionised in the West, they earned him the scorn of many Russians after the country was plunged into economic chaos



Children walk past an emblem of the USSR which was removed from Leninsky avenue after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, displayed at the Modern History Sculpture Museum park in Moscow. — AFP

and saw its international influence decline. President Vladimir Putin, who called the Soviet collapse the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century, has spent

much of his more than 20-year rule reversing parts of Gorbachev’s legacy.

By cracking down on independent media and political

opposition, critics say, Putin has worked to undo Gorbachev’s efforts to bring “glasnost,” or openness, to the Soviet system.

— AFP

Funeral to be held in Moscow on September 3

MOSCOW: The funeral of last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev — who has died at the age of 91 — will take place in Moscow on Saturday, Russian news agencies reported citing Gorbachev’s daughter and his foundation.

The ceremony will be held on September 3 in the Moscow Hall of Columns, historically used for funeral services of high officials, including Joseph Stalin in 1953, the Interfax news agency reported, citing Gorbachev’s daughter Irina. — AFP

Taming your subconscious mind



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician and content creator

It's bedtime and as soon you retire to bed you find your mind drenched with an overflowing pot of thoughts. Not ready at all to leave you and let you sleep peacefully rather hounding you more and more into this sea of mind chatter. Quiet a common condition these days snatching your valuable sleep hours and leaving you weary and inattentive for the next day. The sufferers of this will tell you that how hard they try but nothing so far has been able to save them from getting buried under this never-ending rubble of mind chatter. A beam of thoughts flashing one after the other; what happened today, what happened at the last event; what somebody said to them;

what they could have done instead; future anxieties ready to peep out their ugly heads leaving them stuck and sleeping with this overloaded head is totally out of question. Hence, up till now, you would have made out that mind chatter or mental chatter refers to uncontrollable thoughts, anxieties and that are flooding your mind affecting your focus and attention and eventually your efficiency. Typically, they won't chase you while you are busy running errands throughout the day but as soon you are ready to hit the bed they come along striking like bullets. Often people who are overthinkers or are sensitive are more vulnerable to landing in this vicious cycle. People, who are more

BOOK READING HAS BEEN A TRUSTED AND AGE-OLD REMEDY TO SOOTHE AND CALM DOWN YOUR MIND. DISCONNECT FROM NEGATIVE HOTSPOTS AND INDULGE IN WHAT INTERESTS YOU

affected by day-to-day life events as to what someone thinks of them or what might happen if a particular meeting or presentation didn't turn out well? Demarcating the line between self-talk and mind chatter:

While self-talk is a more conscious and organised form of conversation with yourself where you figure out your issues in a more structured and organised manner anticipating positive outcomes. On the contrary, mind chatter is uncontrollable and negative series of conversations with no defined pattern of thoughts. How to get out of it? The solution is easy though depending on how willing you are to mould your perspective toward life. Your subconscious mind works on how your conscious mind or brain perceives things in real life. Instead of constantly worrying or getting swept in thoughts of a tornado shift your focus to actualising a problem. What you

are thinking about does the issue even exists. Engage your mind in other activities. Book reading has been a trusted and age-old remedy to soothe and calm down your mind. Disconnect from negative hotspots and indulge in what interests you. Not everything works for everyone. Some may find solace in meditation or practicing mindfulness. Others may find convenience in writing or describing their worries which helps them to realise the existence of their problems. In a nutshell, rather than focusing your mind to stop this chatter invent your own ways to keep your mind busy so that your subconscious is at peace.

Conflict in Sudan's south lays bare deep scars

After his family was massacred and home torched, Sudanese farmer Ayoub Haroun sought refuge in a school alongside some of the tens of thousands fleeing recent bitter ethnic conflict. More than a week of bloodshed last month in Sudan's Blue Nile state left at least 105 people dead and scores wounded, as rival groups fought in a complex conflict involving deep-seated grievances, control of land and battles for power. "The gunfire was constant, all daylong every day," said Haroun, now sheltering in the former school in Blue Nile's Damazin city, some 450 kilometres south of the capital Khartoum. But while the violence was the culmination of long-simmering ethnic tensions — between the Hausa people and other rival groups including the Barta — it has further emphasised a wider security breakdown since a military coup last year led by army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan. Since the October coup, regular pro-democracy demonstrations across the country have been met with a crackdown by security forces that has left at least 116 people dead.

Before unrest erupted in Blue Nile, the western region of Darfur had already seen months of ethnic clashes which killed hundreds of people. "We were left no option but to defend our lands," said Al Jaily Abdalla, from the Hamaj people. "Our homes were burnt to the ground, destruction spread everywhere, and there were multiple deaths." Haroun, a Hausa, was left homeless, one of 31,000 people from both sides forced to flee their houses, according to the United Nations. "My brother and nephew were killed and my home was burnt along with the homes of the rest of my family," he said. Each side blames the other for starting the violence — and has accused the government of backing the other. The clashes triggered angry protests across Sudan, with Hausa people demanding justice for those killed.

Other protests called for "unity" and an "end to tribalism" in the impoverished northeast African nation. In late July, senior leaders from rival groups agreed a ceasefire, but a more permanent peace deal and reconciliation is needed. Blue Nile, a region awash with guns bordering South Sudan and Ethiopia, is still struggling to rebuild after decades of civil war. Conflict there raged from the mid-1990s to 2005, then erupted again in 2011, as ethnic minority rebels battled president Omar al Bashir. After the ouster of Bashir in 2019, rebels including from Blue Nile signed a peace deal, the latest in a string of agreements hoped to put an end to conflict. — AFP

A frontline shadow economy: Ukrainian units trade tanks and artillery



Thomas Gibbons-Neff

The writer is the Kabul bureau chief and a former Marine infantryman



Natalia Yermak

The writer is part of the NYT team after the Ukraine war began

The Ukrainian sergeant slid the captured Russian rocket launcher into the centre of a small room. He was pleased. The weapon was practically brand-new. It had been built in 2020, and its thermobaric warhead was deadly against troops and armoured vehicles. But the sergeant, nicknamed Zmei, had no plans to fire it at advancing Russian soldiers or at a tank trying to burst through his unit's front line in eastern Ukraine. Instead, he was going to use it as a bargaining chip. Within the 93rd Mechanized Brigade, Zmei was not just a lowly sergeant. He was the brigade's point man for a wartime bartering system among Ukrainian forces. Prevalent along the front line, the exchange operates like a kind of shadow economy, soldiers say, in which units acquire weapons or equipment and trade them for supplies they need urgently. Most of the bartering involves items captured from Russian troops. Ukrainian soldiers refer to them as "trophies." "Usually, the trades are done really fast," Zmei said last week during an interview in Ukraine's mineral-rich Donbas region, where the 93rd is now stationed. "Let's just call it a simplification of bureaucracy." Despite the influx of Western weapons and equipment in recent months, the Ukrainian military still relies heavily on arms and vehicles captured from their better-equipped Russian foe for the material needed to wage war; much of Ukraine's aging Soviet-era arsenal is either destroyed, worn down or lacks ammunition. That has left Ukrainian soldiers scrounging the battlefield for essentials as their own supply lines are strained. And the relatively small numbers of big-ticket foreign weapons, such as the US-made M777 howitzer, are spread thinly on the sprawling 1,500-mile front. "We have hopes for Kyiv," said Fedir, one of the brigade's supply sergeants and an understudy of Zmei, referring to military commanders in the capital. "But we rely on ourselves. We aren't trying to just sit and wait like idiots

THE UKRAINIAN MILITARY STILL RELIES HEAVILY ON ARMS AND VEHICLES CAPTURED FROM THEIR BETTER-EQUIPPED RUSSIAN FOE FOR THE MATERIAL NEEDED TO WAGE WAR

until Kyiv sends us something." To protect against reprisals, Zmei, Fedir and others interviewed for this article requested that only their given names or nicknames be used. The Ukrainian military did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the equipment exchanges. Capturing Russian items has become increasingly difficult as the war moves into a more static phase, with Russia's grinding artillery war forcing Ukrainians to slowly retreat in the east, while trying to regain territory in the south. That has created even higher demand for items traded on the soldiers' underground exchange. Such was the case in early May, when the 93rd — a renowned unit that

had fought in almost every major battle of the war — was operating around the Russian-occupied city of Izium. Zmei, who before the war owned a small publishing house that specialised in dark fantasy novels, received an innocuous text message from a nearby Ukrainian commander. "Hi," the message read. "Listen, here's the thing, we have a needless tank, a T-72 a bit damaged." "And we'd exchange it for something nice," the commander added. The series of text messages, sent over the messaging application Telegram and reviewed by The New York Times, is just one example of the type of equipment that is unofficially swapping hands. The commander's requests were modest: a transport truck and a couple of sniper rifles in return for the Russian trophy tank. But Zmei told his customer, "This is too few things for a tank, write down what else you need." The commander responded that he had plenty of tanks and wanted only the items requested. When the commander mentioned all the tanks in his unit's possession, Zmei sensed an opportunity to expand the trade. He wanted more tanks, and noted that the 93rd had foreign-supplied anti-tank missiles and US portable surface-to-air missile systems available for a swap. — New York Times



A Ukrainian soldier mans a captured Russian anti-aircraft gun in the Donetsk region.

Pakistan floods: Rescued tourists recount horror

ZAIN ZAMAN JANJUA

It was midnight when Yasmin and her family were ordered to urgently evacuate their room at the Honeymoon Hotel, perched above the picturesque ice-blue waters of the Swat river.

They had swapped the sticky Lahore summer for the cooler climes of the northeastern mountains last week when they became embroiled in one of Pakistan's worst disasters — one that has left more than 1,100 dead and a third of the country submerged by heavy flooding.

In the darkness, they fled their hotel in the remote Kalam valley.

Hours later, from the safety of higher ground, they watched it collapse and crumble into the thundering waters.

“There was chaos, everyone was rushing to save their life,” the 53-year-old Yasmin said after she was evacuated to Mingora.

“We heard very strong bangs and then I saw the hotel we were staying in submerged in water. The sound of the water was so strong. It was like something had exploded.”

In the panic, she witnessed the despair of a mother unable to hold onto her small child.

“The child was shouting but his voice was overwhelmed by the gush of the water. His mother was trying to save him but she couldn't,” Yasmin recalled, choking on her words.

The boy was one of at least 21 people in the area lost to the floods, mainly due to collapsed houses.

Accounts of last Thursday night's horror have started to emerge after tourists were airlifted to safety by helicopter rescue missions — the only way of accessing remote valleys cut off by the flooding.

THOUSANDS STILL STRANDED

All along the Swat river are the remnants of destroyed bridges, upended roads and the remains of hotels clinging to the banks.

The water has receded but it could be days before road links are re-established with nearby towns.

Junaid Khan, deputy commissioner for Swat, said up to 200,000 people were cut off.

More than 600 stricken tourists have made up the majority of evacuations — with women, children and the sick prioritised in an effort led by the military and supported by the provincial government's helicopter.

About 3,500 food aid packages have already been delivered — some dropped from the back of a helicopter when crowds of people reaching for the aircraft made it impossible to land.

The stunning Swat Valley is a popular destination for its majestic mountains, lakes and rivers.

For days after her initial night of terror, Yasmin's family sheltered in guest houses farther away from the swollen river until she could be rescued with her husband, who has a kidney condition, and her 12-year-old daughter.

Her two adult sons stayed behind.

While generally expectant of seasonal monsoon rains, tourists were surprised by the scale of the flooding that swept through the area.

“It feels like I have got a second life after arriving here,” said Yasmin from the safety of the airfield.

BURNING WITH PAIN

Pakistan has received twice its usual monsoon rainfall, but Balochistan and Sindh provinces have seen more than four times the average of the last three decades.

Padidan, a small town in Sindh, has been drenched with an astonishing 1.75 metres (70 inches) since June.

Pakistan receives heavy -- often destructive -- rains during its annual monsoon season, which are crucial for agriculture and water supplies, but such intense downpours have not been seen for three decades.

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

Earlier this year much of the nation was in the grip of a drought and heatwave, with temperatures hitting 51 degrees Celsius in Sindh province.

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

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif promised aid donors that any funding would be responsibly spent.

“I want to give my solemn pledge and solemn commitment... every penny will be spent in a very transparent fashion. Every penny will reach the needy,” he said. — AFP



GRIM PICTURE

Aerial photo shows buildings of China's developer Country Garden Holdings in Zhenjiang, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. China's largest developer Country Garden Holdings reported a record 96 percent on-year drop in its first-half earnings, in the latest grim illustration of the economic chaos coursing through the country's property sector. — AFP

Gorbachev: The man who let the Soviet empire go

GORBACHEV'S FOREIGN POLICY CHOICES SENT SHOCKWAVES THROUGH THE WORLD ORDER. HE DEFUSED THE US-SOVIET NUCLEAR STANDOFF WITH A SERIES OF DISARMAMENT AGREEMENTS, WITHDREW SOVIET TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN, AND LOOSENED THE REINS ON THE LEADERSHIP OF MOSCOW'S EASTERN EUROPEAN SATELLITE COUNTRIES

Mikhail Gorbachev changed the course of modern history by triggering the demise of the USSR and allowing Eastern Europe to free itself from Soviet rule, earning him accolades in the West but the scorn of many Russians.

By championing reforms to achieve “glasnost” (openness) and “perestroika” (restructuring), Gorbachev inadvertently unleashed forces that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and his own ouster.

Lionised in the West for championing freedom and change at a time when many feared the Cold War would never end, Gorbachev became a figure of hate for many Russians who held him responsible for the destruction of the once-mighty Soviet empire.

In most instances while he was in power, Gorbachev chose peace over confrontation, hastening a thaw in ties with the West through close relationships with Western leaders such as German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and US President Ronald Reagan.

Britain's Margaret Thatcher famously remarked: “I like Mr Gorbachev. We can do business together.”But the more he relaxed restrictions during his 1985-1991 rule, the more he was sidelined by the energetic Boris Yeltsin, then a fast-rising Communist official.

By the time the USSR collapsed, Gorbachev had become irrelevant. Over the past decades, an increasingly frail Gorbachev had an ambiguous relation with President Vladimir Putin — backing the former KGB agent in a new stand-off with the West over Ukraine but criticising him for turning the clock back on democracy in Russia.

WINDS OF CHANGE

Born March 2, 1931 into a peasant family in Russia's southern Stavropol region, Gorbachev grew up with the hardships of World War II and the repressive rule of dictator Joseph Stalin, whose regime sentenced his grandfather to nine years in a labour camp.

As a boy Gorbachev was bright and hard working. At 16 he was awarded the Red Banner of Labour for helping in a record harvest, and in 1950 he won a coveted place at Moscow State University to study law.

Five years later, the ambitious graduate and his young wife Raisa moved back to Stavropol, where he began a rapid rise through the ranks of the Communist Party, becoming the youngest member of the Politburo, at age 49, in 1979.

He took over the world's biggest state and second superpower in 1985, when he was elected general secretary of the Communist Party.



Gorbachev inadvertently unleashed forces that led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union and his own ouster. — AFP

At 54 and full of fresh ideas, Gorbachev was a startling contrast to the geriatric ideologues previously in control of the Kremlin.

His foreign policy choices sent shockwaves through the world order. He defused the US-Soviet nuclear standoff with a series of disarmament agreements, withdrew Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and loosened the reins on the leadership of Moscow's Eastern European satellite countries.

At home, his perestroika and glasnost policies set off seismic changes.

Thousands of political prisoners were freed, among them scientist and dissident Andrei Sakharov.

END OF AN ERA

But storm clouds were gathering. Gorbachev's attempt in 1985 to crack down on chronic alcohol abuse was a disaster, sapping the state budget and earning the Soviet leader the lasting hatred of alcohol-loving countrymen.

His encouragement of freedom at home quickened the disintegration of the multi-ethnic Soviet empire.

From the Baltic republics to the Caucasus and Central Asia, independence movements and inter-ethnic strife shook the seemingly invincible structure of Soviet domination, while glasnost brought wave upon wave of embarrassing revelations about the Soviet Union's dark past.

In 1989, Eastern Europe countries threw out their Communist governments and the Berlin Wall was torn down.

In 1990, Gorbachev was elected the first and final president of the Soviet Union but within months had to contend with a revolt by hardline communists.

The August 1991 coup failed, but it was the defiant Boris Yeltsin who faced it

down and became a national hero while Gorbachev was held under house arrest far away in a Crimean resort.

Soon after, the Soviet Union vanished and with it Gorbachev's position.

In an op-ed published in government newspaper Rossiiskaya Gazeta in December 2016, days ahead of the 25th anniversary of his resignation, Gorbachev recognised his share of responsibility in the Soviet Union's collapse.

“But my conscience is clean,” he wrote. “I defended the Union until the end, acting through political means.”

Facing political ostracism at home, the 1990 Nobel Peace Prize winner hit the international lecture circuit, backed environmental causes, and made what observers found embarrassing fund-raising campaigns for his Gorbachev Foundation, including an appearance in a Pizza Hut television commercial.

MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT PUTIN

An ill-judged run for the presidency in 1996 saw him garner only 0.5 per cent in a vote won by Yeltsin but he maintained some influence through his part ownership of Russia's leading opposition paper Novaya Gazeta.

As Putin cemented his grip on power since the turn of the century, Gorbachev appeared torn between concern at the clampdown on civil liberties under the former KGB agent and respect for Russia's resurgence on the international stage.

In 2011 Gorbachev slammed what he saw as Russia's “imitation” of democracy as he marked his 80th birthday.

But in late 2014 he backed Putin's seizure of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and blasted the West for its “euphoria and triumphalism” following the collapse of the USSR.

As he moved into his late 80s, Gorbachev made fewer public appearances but remained a passionate advocate for the causes that had shaped his life.

When Donald Trump announced in 2018 that Washington would be pulling out of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that Gorbachev brokered with Ronald Reagan in 1987, the ex-Soviet leader was scathing.

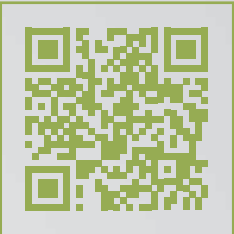
“A great danger... now looms over all that we have achieved in the years since the end of the Cold War,” Gorbachev wrote in the Vedomosti newspaper.

But he remained hopeful.

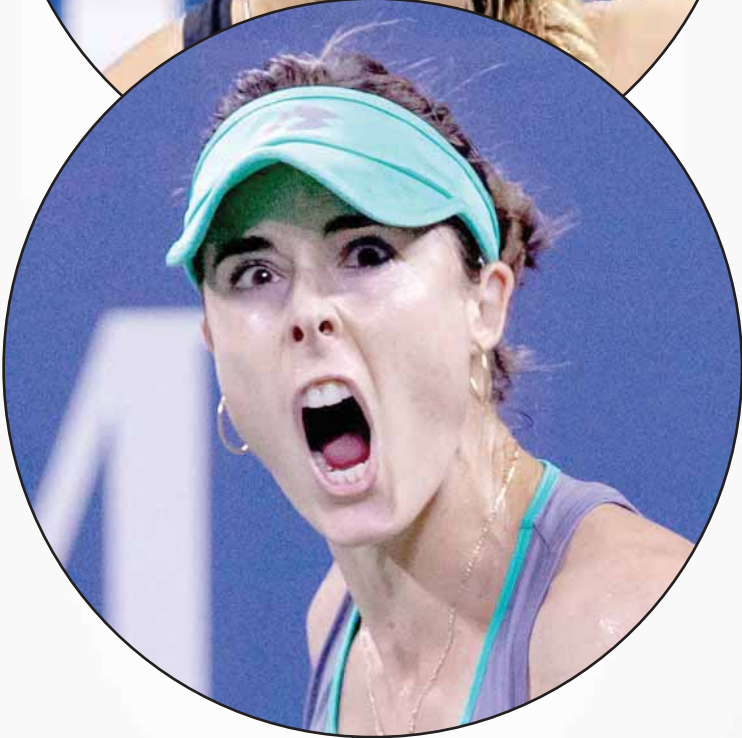
“Politics, not weapons, is the key to solving security problems,” Gorbachev wrote. “We need... to take action to prevent the world from sliding into an arms race, confrontation and ultimately hostility. Despite everything, I believe it is still in our power.” — AFP

sport

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NADAL SURVIVES SCARE, COLLINS KNOCKS OUT OSAKA



NEW YORK: Emma Raducanu became only the third defending champion to exit the US Open in the first round on Tuesday while four-time winner Rafael Nadal overcame an early scare against a player ranked 198 in the world.

Raducanu, 19, slumped to a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to veteran French player Alize Cornet who is competing in a record 63rd consecutive Grand Slam.

Nadal saw off Australian wildcard Rinky Hijikata 4-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 to register his 65th career win in New York. Also going through to a politically-charged clash were three-time runner-up Victoria Azarenka of Belarus and Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine.

Raducanu has struggled in the spotlight of being a Grand Slam winner, failing to get beyond the second round of any of the previous three majors in 2022.

“In a way I’m happy because it’s a clean slate. The target will be off my back,” said the teenager.

World number three Nadal, who is chasing a 23rd Grand Slam title and third of 2022, arrived at the tournament having played just one match since an abdominal injury forced him to forfeit his Wimbledon semifinal.

‘NEVER BE BACK’

He next faces Fabio Fognini, the Italian who famously defeated him from two sets down in the third round in 2015.

“I’m very happy to be here. It’s a long time that I played here. I thought that maybe I’d never be back,” said 36-year-old Nadal whose last appearance in New York saw him win the 2019 title.

Two-time champion Naomi Osaka was knocked out in the opening round for the first time in seven visits, losing 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to Australian Open runner-up Danielle Collins.

Four-time major winner and former world number one Osaka has won just twice on tour since April. “I tried as hard as I could. I wanted to play without my back being in pain. I only really started serving two days ago,” said Osaka.

Thursday’s action is likely to be dominated by the clash between former world number one Azarenka and Kostyuk, a vocal critic of the presence of Russian and Belarusian players on tour.

Only last week, Azarenka was axed from an exhibition on the eve of the US Open aimed at raising money for Ukraine.

Kostyuk, 20, said she turned

CORNET OUSTS CHAMPION RADUCANU

down the chance to play in protest at the presence of Azarenka and the 33-year-old Belarusian was swiftly dumped from the event.

Belarus is a close ally of Russia and has allowed Moscow to use its territory to launch attacks into Ukraine during the ongoing war.

World number one and French Open champion Iga Swiatek eased past Italy’s Jasmine Paolini 6-3, 6-0 in just 67 minutes.

Victory was a relief for the 21-year-old Pole who had suffered early losses at warm-up events in Toronto and Cincinnati.

‘HEAT GOT TO HIM’

Swiatek next faces 2017 champion Sloane Stephens.

Carlos Alcaraz, the 19-year-old world number four, was made to sweat by Sebastian Baez, winning the first two sets 7-5, 7-5 before the Argentine retired injured 0-2 down in the third.

As the temperature soared beyond the 30-degree mark, 42-year-old Venus Williams and Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina were high profile casualties. After seeing Serena Williams stave off impending retirement by reaching the second round on Monday, big sister

Venus was eyeing an 80th career win at the tournament.

However, Venus, who first played the US Open in 1997, was defeated 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) by Belgium’s Alison van Uytvanck.

“Three letters is W-I-N. That’s it. Very simple,” said two-time champion Venus, now ranked 1,504, when asked to explain why she keeps playing. However, she remains without a victory since Wimbledon last year.

Rybakina lost 6-4, 6-4 to French qualifier Clara Burel, ranked a lowly 131, on the back of 37 unforced errors.

Britain’s Cameron Norrie, the seventh seed, raced past France’s Benoit Paire 6-0, 7-6 (7/1), 6-0.

Bizarrely, Paire started packing his bags at 0-5 down in the third set and he was a beaten man after only 98 minutes. “Maybe the heat was getting to him,” said seventh seed Norrie. The result made ugly reading for Paire who dropped the first set in just 18 minutes and the third in 19.

Italian 26th seed Lorenzo Musetti defeated Belgium’s David Goffin 3-6, 7-5, 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (11/9) in a four-hour 34-minute marathon, the longest match of the tournament so far. — AFP

New Zealand’s De Grandhomme retires from internationals

WELLINGTON: Colin de Grandhomme on Wednesday became the second New Zealand cricketer after Trent Boult to get a release from his central contract and join Australia’s Big Bash League.

New Zealand Cricket bosses lamented the retirement from the Black Caps of the 36-year-old all-rounder after he was drafted to play for the Adelaide Strikers.

Zimbabwe-born De Grandhomme scored 1,432 runs in 29 Tests, also playing 45 one-day games and 41 Twenty20 internationals.

De Grandhomme follows key quick bowler Boult, who also asked to be released from his central contract and signed for Melbourne Stars in the BBL, one of the lucrative T20 tournaments worldwide that has sprung up.

Between them they have played over 100 Test matches and were two of the 20 centrally contracted players for the forthcoming season, including October’s T20 World Cup in Australia.

The 33-year-old Boult kept his spot in New Zealand’s squad for September’s one-day internationals against Australia but New Zealand Cricket has said contracted players get priority in future selection.

Being under contract to New Zealand Cricket meant De Grandhomme and Boult had been ineligible to play in the BBL, which starts in December.

Bryan Stronach, head of high performance at New Zealand Cricket, said De Grandhomme was a loss.

“He’s a dynamic player, he has his power-hitting, but he is an all-rounder and his accuracy with the ball is quite phenomenal,” he said.

Stronach is confident that other Black Caps will not follow the example of Boult and De Grandhomme.

“We don’t think there is going to be a mass exodus or anything like that,” he told reporters, adding that their exit “creates opportunities” for up-and-coming players. — AFP



New Zealand’s Colin de Grandhomme



Afghanistan’s Najibullah Zadran (L) celebrates after hitting a boundary to win the Asia Cup Twenty20 Group B match between Afghanistan and Bangladesh at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium in Sharjah. — AFP

AFGHANS THRASH BANGLADESH BY 7 WICKETS

Afghanistan march into Super 4

SHARJAH: Skipper Mohammad Nabi said Afghanistan is ready for the big guns after they became the first team to qualify for the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup following victories over Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

“As a team in this Asia Cup we are showing that Afghanistan have quality batsmen, quality bowlers and quality fielders,” said all-rounder Nabi after Afghanistan thrashed Bangladesh by seven wickets on Tuesday.

“In these two games we showed we can chase totals. Earlier opposition used to say that Afghanistan cannot chase.

“But we were quite good (in the two chases), were not under pressure and had proper balance and hopefully we do well in the next round against big teams,” added the 37-year-old.

Afghanistan’s victory over Bangladesh in Sharjah put them into the next round of the six-nation Twenty20 tournament.

Najibullah Zadran smashed six sixes in his 17-ball unbeaten 43 chasing down a target of 128 with nine balls to spare, accompanied by Ibrahim Zadran (42).

The two stood out after spinners Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Rashid

Khan took three wickets each to flatten the fancied Bangladesh batting in a tournament which acts as a tune-up to the T20 World Cup in October-November in Australia.

Fast bowler Fazalhaq Farooqi starred in his team’s opening win against Sri Lanka last week with figures of 3-11 and Nabi said the team has covered all the bases going to the Super Four where they are expected to meet India and Pakistan.

“We are not targeting anyone, we are just playing proper cricket,” said Nabi.

Since overcoming the odds to compete in the 2010 World T20 in England, the Afghan team, which was awarded Test status in 2017, has managed to qualify for all the major international tournaments. **NO SURPRISES**

The one-time nomads — many of whom were born or brought up in exile — have changed bases from Sharjah and Dubai to cities around India and Abu Dhabi.

“From the last 15 years most of the times we have played in Dubai and Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, we know the conditions better,” said Nabi.

“Sometimes in Sharjah a low total is tough to chase, that’s why

in a low chase the batsmen didn’t throw away early wickets and at the end we targeted the bowlers and won the game.”

Players including Rashid, Nabi and Mujeeb have sharpened their skills while playing cricket around the world including in the Indian Premier League (IPL).

Nabi praised the 21-year-old Mujeeb, a spinner who rattled Bangladesh with an opening spell of 3-9 in his first three overs, for his bowling in the powerplay, the first six overs when only two fielders are allowed outside the inner circle.

“He has always bowled brilliantly in the first six overs,” said Nabi.

“He is a mystery bowler and bowls in the top leagues and against top opposition. He is a good spinner.”

The team is coached by former England batsman Jonathan Trott and ex-Pakistan fast bowler Umar Gul recently joined the team as bowling coach.

This new coaching team has received wide praise from the cricketing fraternity with former India fast bowler Irfan Pathan tweeting that “Afghanistan is playing some quality cricket.”

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh	
M Naim b Mujeeb	6
A Haque lbw Mujeeb	5
Shakib b Mujeeb	11
Mushfiqur lbw Rashid	1
Affir lbw Rashid	12
M Riyad c Zadran b Rashid	25
M Hossain not out	48
M Hasan run out	14
M Saifuddin not out	0
Extras (lb3, w2)	5
Total (7 wickets, 20 overs)	127
Fall of wickets: 1-7, 2-13, 3-24, 4-28, 5-53, 6-89, 7-127	
Bowling: Farooqi 4-0-25-0, Mujeeb 4-0-16-3, Naveen-ul-Haq 4-0-31-0, Rashid 4-0-22-3, Nabi 3-0-23-0, Omarzai 1-0-7-0	
Afghanistan (target 128)	
H Zazai lbw M Hossain	23
R Gurbaz st Mushfiqur b Shakib	11
I Zadran not out	42
M Nabi lbw M Saifuddin	8
N Zadran not out	43
Extras (lb1, w3)	4
Total (3 wickets, 18.3 overs)	131
Fall of wickets: 1-15, 2-45, 3-62	
Bowling: Shakib 4-0-13-1, Mustafizur 3-0-30-0, Mahedi 4-0-26-0, Taskin 3-0-22-0, Mosaddek 2-3-0-12-1, Saifuddin 2-0-27-1	

“They are on the move and teams should be wary, India or Pakistan,” former India batsman Ajay Jadeja said on Indian website cricbuzz.

“When you play these guys in the Super Four, I won’t be surprised if they knock one of the big teams off, because they have that firepower.” — AFP

Australia crush Zimbabwe by 8 wickets to seal ODI series

TOWNSVILLE, Australia: Ruthless Australia wrapped up the one-day international series against Zimbabwe with a crushing eight-wicket victory on Wednesday in Townsville. After Mitchell Starc played a central role in routing the tourists for just 96, Australia overcame an early stutter in their chase to reach the lowly target in the 15th over and take an unassailable 2-0 series lead.

Quick Richard Ngarava briefly revived Zimbabwe’s slim hopes of a miraculous victory with the wickets of openers David Warner and Aaron Finch in the third over to leave Australia wobbling at 16-2.

But an aggressive Steve Smith (47 not out) and Alex Carey (26 not out) counterattacked as Australia cruised to a series triumph, having notched a comfortable five-wicket victory in the first ODI in Townsville on Sunday.

“It was a clinical performance from the bowlers... it couldn’t have

gone more to plan today,” said Australia skipper Finch, after red-hot Starc tore through Zimbabwe’s top order.

Zimbabwe have struggled to be competitive in the first series between the teams in Australia since 2004 and were left to rue an inept batting performance lasting just 27.5 overs.

“We didn’t get any real starts and it was unfortunate that none of (the batters) could get going,” said captain Regis Chakabva.

“We always wanted to play the best. There are lots of things to take from today to make sure we keep learning.”

Finch’s decision to bowl first for the second straight match paid off.

Paceman Starc relished the seaming conditions at Riverway Stadium to take 3-24, while spinner Adam Zampa cleaned up the tail to also finish with three wickets.

Starc is now on the brink of becoming the fastest bowler to



Mitchell Starc and Adam Zampa (right) took three wickets each for Australia.

reach 200 ODI wickets.

The left-armer, playing in his 101st ODI, was unable to reach the milestone but Zampa and towering Cameron Green (2-7) took over as Zimbabwe suffered their lowest ODI total against Australia.

Underdogs Zimbabwe, in their first ODI series against Australia in eight years, briefly rallied through experienced pair Sean Williams (29) and Sikandar Raza (17) before suffering a second consecutive lower-order collapse.

Zimbabwe will be desperate to grab a consolation victory on Saturday at the same venue in a bid to climb the ODI Super League ladder, which goes towards qualification for next year’s 50-over World Cup in India. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES
Zimbabwe 96 all out, 27.5 overs (S Williams 29, S Raza 17; Adam Zampa 3-21, M Starc 3-24, C Green 2-7)
Australia 100-2, 14.4 overs (S Smith 47 not out, A Carey 26 not out; Richard Ngarava 2-16)

Dybala brace over Monza puts Roma top

MILAN: Paulo Dybala shot Roma top of Serie A on Tuesday with a brace which sank Monza 3-0 while Inter Milan are one point behind Jose Mourinho's side after their 3-1 home win over Cremonese.

Argentina forward Dybala brought up his goal century in the Italian top flight after netting twice in the first 32 minutes at the Stadio Olimpico to put unbeaten Roma on 10 points from their first four games.

Roma, who also scored just after the hour through Roger Ibanez's header from a Lorenzo Pellegrini corner, are two points ahead of third-placed AC Milan after the champions were held to a drab goalless draw at Sassuolo.

"I really wanted to get a goal, and thankfully it happened here in front of our fans so I'm really happy," Dybala told DAZN, who added that it was "too early to talk" of a title challenge.

When asked which was his favourite of his 100 goals in Italy's top flight, Dybala broke out into a wide grin and said: "The next one."

Napoli and Lazio both have the chance to draw level with Roma in Wednesday's respective fixtures against Lecce and Sampdoria, while Atalanta and Torino — also both on seven points — face off on Thursday.

INTER ON ROMA'S HEELS

Dybala's goals came thanks to good work from Tammy Abraham, who sent the 28-year-old on his way to opening his Roma account in the 18th minute with a looping



AS Roma's Argentinian forward Paulo Dybala (C) challenges Monza's Brazilian defender Marlon during the Italian Serie A match between AS Roma and Monza at the Olympic stadium in Rome. — AFP

flick onto which his strike partner charged before rifling home.

The pair linked up again for Roma's second, this time Abraham forcing a good save from Michele Di Gregorio before Dybala showed a more aggressive side to his game by beating the Monza defenders to the ball and bundling it home.

Inter are hot on Roma's heels after bouncing back from their

weekend defeat at Lazio despite having to do without star striker Romelu Lukaku.

Belgium's Lukaku will miss Saturday's Milan derby and most likely Inter's Champions League opener against Bayern Munich next week.

But Joaquin Correa tapped the hosts ahead in the 12th minute and Nicolò Barella doubled their

lead with a stunning volley seven minutes before half-time.

Substitute Lautaro Martinez drilled home his third of the season with 14 minutes remaining to make sure Cremonese, who scored late through David Okereke, stayed second-bottom and stuck on zero points.

MAIGNAN SAVES MILAN

Milan had Mike Maignan

to thank for their unbeaten record staying intact, the France goalkeeper diving brilliantly to his right to keep out Domenico Berardi's penalty midway through the first half.

"We lacked a bit of lucidity and cutting edge in certain situations and that is what we need to work on tomorrow," Milan defender Simon Kjær told DAZN in the

aftermath of his first appearance after nine months out with a serious knee injury.

The 33-year-old lasted 79 minutes and will be hoping to stay fit for the World Cup starting in November in Qatar where his national side Denmark will face France, Tunisia and Australia in Group D.

"It's been a lot of hard work and a lot of sacrifice. I'm very happy to get back on the pitch and lend a hand to my team," Kjær added.

Milan underwhelmed on their return to Reggio Emilia 100 days after winning the Scudetto there, while their sale to RedBird from fellow US — ment fund Elliott Management is expected to formally go through by the end of the week.

Among the — ors backing RedBird's acquisition, according to a Financial Times report on Tuesday, are baseball's New York Yankees and Main Street Advisors, a California-based — ment firm whose partners include the likes of basketball star LeBron James and rapper Drake. Sassuolo sit 10th on five points but will be concerned over the condition of talisman Berardi after the Italy winger was carried to the dressing rooms not long after half-time with what coach Alessio Dionisi said was a muscle problem. — AFP

Italian Serie A results on Tuesday:
Inter Milan 3 (Correa 12, Barella 38, Martinez 76) Cremonese 1 (Okereke 90)
Sassuolo 0 AC Milan 0
Roma 3 (Dybala 18, 32, Ibanez 61) Monza 0

Oman conclude fencing campaign with 17 medals



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

Oman national fencing team made a rich haul of 17 medals at the West Asian Fencing Championships hosted by the Jordanian Fencing Federation in Al Hussein Youth City in Amman from August 23 to 31.

As many as 150 men and women fencers from 11 countries including Sultanate of Oman, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Syria, Iraq and hosts Jordan competed in the championship. Oman fencers bagged 17 medals, which include nine gold, four silver and four bronze medals in age groups under-13, under-15 and under-17.



In another achievement for the Omani contingent, Oman team coach Hisham Karshoud claimed the best coach award at the event.

In the Under-13 category, Oman team players showed excellent performance and won victories and medals with great competence and efficiency.

In women's section, Jana bint Mohammed al Sharjiyah won the gold medal in the epee competition while Salma bint Saeed al Daghihiyah claimed the silver medal in the same category. Ali bin Hamad al Busaidi clinched two gold medals in his first ever international participation for Oman. Ali al Busaidi came top in youth category and epee competition.

MUSCAT: Omantel continues its quest to enable e-sports in Oman. On Saturday, the company hosted a prestigious e-sports event, Omantel Fifa 22 Tournament, in Salalah, Dhofar. Top players from the Middle East were in for a strong competition, where they unleashed their full potentials.

Demonstrating Omantel's ability to host a major regional e-sports event, the tournament attracted fans of the Fifa game, Fifa champions, and gaming in general. In addition, the event reflected on Omantel's continuous commitment and support towards the advancement that circulates around the e-sports industry in Oman. This was an important opportunity for the Fifa e-sports champions and fans to come together.

Building up to the flying start to the launch of Omantel's e-sports platform that has been initiated with PlayHera MENA, the tournament was an opportunity for the passionate gamers to showcase their talents and meet the legends. Eng Aladdin Baitfadhil, Chief Commercial Officer at Omantel, commented, "We were extremely delighted to host such a reputable Fifa tournament with only the elites. We see the event as a platform for champions across the Middle East to gather and showcase their competitive talents.

"It is also an occasion to thrust Oman into the limelight as a country that works towards the progress and development of the gaming and e-sports industry.



In addition, it is an opportunity for young fans to share the stage with talented e-sports players in the heart of Salalah. Owing to the enormous popularity of e-sports all around the world, we hope our youth would avail such opportunities to grow and compete regionally and internationally."

Following intense competition between the champions, Abdullah Mohammed Al Raish, a Fifa Champion from Kuwait, succeeded in claiming the first place, as the runners-up position was achieved by Mohammed Fawzi Hothan from Saudi Arabia.

Saleh al Ghassani from the Sultanate of Oman won the third place.

Abdullah Mohammed Al Raish, Fifa Champion from Kuwait, reflected on the professional organisation of the tournament as he stated, "I was really impressed by the detailed and well-thought-out event planning, from welcoming us to providing all the necessary tools to compete and showcase our skills to the fans. The e-sports industry is developing rapidly in the Middle East; thus, it was extremely important to participate in this tournament, especially in such welcoming conditions here

in Salalah".

Fahad bin Abdulrahman al Hasani, Omani Fifa Champion, illustrated the significance of hosting such tournaments in the region as he said, "the gaming industry is continuously evolving all around the world, as such, it is vital to be aligned with this revolution here in the Middle East, to allow young and talented gamers to showcase their skills and build careers around the industry. The event was a huge success for me, not only for competing with fellow talented players, but because of the unity, gathering, and interaction with e-sports fans."





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Malsarah Islamic

Fruit trees, crops thrive in Al Najd Agricultural Zone

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

The number of trees planted in Al Najd Agricultural Zone in Dhofar Governorate has soared to over 143,000, which includes about 45,000 different types of date palms trees that yield more than 1,000 metric tonnes of Omani dates per annum.

Al Najd Agricultural Zone, distinguished by its natural and environmental features, covers an area of more than 40,000 sq kilometres. It is one of the most promising agricultural hubs in the Sultanate of Oman, having supporting the cultivation of various types of crops and fruits.

Dr Ahmed bin Suhail al Hadhari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Agricultural Association in the Governorate of Dhofar, said the Najd region was home to 111 farms (based on a 2019 survey).

The cultivation of palm trees is concentrated in the areas of Al Hela, Hanfeet and Al Shasr, he said, adding that harvests are rising year on year. One such farm, with around 12,000 date palms, is expected to start yield about 300 tonnes of fresh Omani

AL NAJD AGRICULTURAL ZONE, DISTINGUISHED BY ITS NATURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES, COVERS AN AREA OF MORE THAN 40,000 SQ KILOMETRES. IT IS ONE OF THE MOST PROMISING AGRICULTURAL HUBS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, HAVING SUPPORTING THE CULTIVATION OF VARIOUS TYPES OF CROPS AND FRUITS.

dates starting from this year. Output is projected to reach 800 tonnes per year within a few years, he noted.

But he acknowledged challenges in the form of the high cost of good quality seedlings, placing them beyond the economic means of local farmers to procure.

Furthermore, farmers are lacking in the requisite expertise to care for date palms, as well as skills in date harvesting, sorting and cleaning, he said.

Other produce from Al Najd include seasonal fruits, such as watermelon and melon, which are currently being consumed locally and also exported to neighbouring countries. Of late, fresh produce has also included figs, guava, lemon and other fruits, he added.



Salalah Forum shows pathway to GCC economic diversification

BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 31

Under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the conference “Economic Diversification in the Gulf Countries: Between Prospect and Reality” was opened on Tuesday in the Millennium Resort at Salalah and continued its deliberations yesterday.

The conference, which is sponsored by Smart Investment Gateway (SIG), Al Roya newspaper, and the Regional Programme Gulf States at Konrad-Adenauer- Stiftung (KAS), a German Think Tank, discussed yesterday three topics: The future visions of the Gulf States and economic diversification efforts; mechanisms for achieving economic diversification in the GCC countries; and the role of public policies in enhancing competitiveness and attracting local and foreign investments. Today, the conference will discuss the global rapid changes and the future of economic diversification in the Arab Gulf States.

The speakers of the conference are coming from all the GCC countries, in addition to Germany, Italy, Britain and Switzerland. They are academics, experts in economy, practitioners and policymakers.

The conference also attracted the business community in Oman and attended by representatives from Arab think tanks.

In his welcoming remarks, Hatem bin Hamad al Taie, Member of the State Council and the Editor-in-Chief of Al Roya newspaper, emphasised the importance of economic diversification in order to face the challenges that may result from the fluctuations of the oil prices especially that the income of the Gulf States is mostly coming from oil.

He also stressed the importance for the Gulf countries to build an



“It is important for Gulf countries to build an economic model that invests in the future such as projects related to digital sectors and services, tourism, distinguished education, production and labour-intensive factories, and technical projects related to the outputs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

HATEM BIN HAMAD
AL TAIE

Member, State Council
Editor-in-Chief, Al Roya

economic model that invests in the future such as projects related to digital sectors and services, tourism, distinguished education, production and labour-intensive factories, and technical projects related to the outputs of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In his turn, Dr Yousuf bin Hamad al Balushi, Founder

and Chairman of the Board of Directors of SIG, stressed in his opening remarks the importance of the timing of the conference.

“The conference is taking place at an important period that comes between a sharp decline and a significant rise in oil and gas prices, between a complete closure and openness in economic activities, between inflation and stagnation, and between geopolitical changes in the region and the world,” he said.

He also informed the participants of the conference about a project he is leading in cooperation with KAS to create a platform that measures the economic diversification in the Arab Gulf States, which will include statistics and indicators for comparing the level of diversification of these countries.

Simon Engelkes, a policy adviser for the Middle East and North Africa at KAS explained in his remarks the roots of KAS, its affiliation with the German Christian Democratic Union and its work in the Gulf region. He said: “We are proud to be the only Germany foundation working in the Arab Gulf States since 2009” adding that KAS’s “work in the GCC countries particularly focuses on accompanying the socioeconomic transformation

and modernisation processes that have taken off in the region — including the efforts on economic diversification.”

He also added that KAS aims “at creating multinational dialogue platforms for discussion and knowledge transfer between stakeholders in the region as well as with Germany and Europe in order to strengthen mutual trust and understanding.”

Following the opening remarks, the conference began with a keynote speak provided by Dr Bassam Fattouh, Director of the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies (OIES), who presented a paper entitled “Gulf Oil Exporters’ Transition Policies.”

Rather than shifting away from oil, Dr Fattouh argues for the need of the Gulf States to invest in renewable energy and for making the fossil oil more competitive in future markets by investing as well in decarbonisation techniques.

His argument was supported by Dr Giacomo Luciani, Professor at Sciences Po’s Paris School of International Affairs, and the University of Geneva, who presented a paper under the name “The consequences of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on global energy and the diversification of the GCC economies.”

TURN TO PAGE 15

Construction of RO 50m Shinas jetty now complete

JOMAR MENDOZA
@jmObserver

A joint project between the Sultanate of Oman’s Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information and Technology and Qatar Primary Metals Company (QPMC) for the construction of a jetty in Khatmat Milaha

in the Wilayat of Shinas is now completed. Valued at around RO 50 million, the project plans to support the export of gabbro to Qatar and is slated for operations soon.

At the heart of the project is a 1,800-metre-long jetty offering drafts of 8-12 metres that allow for the loading of gabbro directly



on to ships or barges plying between Shinas and Qatar. It features a conveyor belts for carrying raw materials transiting the Al Batinah highway and connects it to Khatmat Milaha quarry with the sea berth.

The export capacity of the facility, when fully operational, is estimated at 7 million tonnes of

gabbro annually.

The Khatmat Milaha jetty project is the first port facility of its kind to be established outside the framework of commercial ports in the Sultanate of Oman, but will nevertheless play an important role in supporting maritime transport and logistics activities in the country.

OIFC Khedmah offers quality debt recovery service

MUSCAT: Reflecting on more than 40 years of experience in bill collection in the Sultanate of Oman, Oman Investment and Finance Company's (OIFC) Khedmah continues to develop its scope of work, thereby including the purchase of debts from telecommunications companies and other businesses.

With a dedicated team and collection channels, the company is striving to enhance and develop the new service without compromising the quality of customer experience.

Commenting on the same, Mohammed bin Saifal Toqi, Senior Director of Communications Operations at Khedmah, said, "We have been working on the debt recovery activity plan for some time now since OIFC has a number of contracts with several telecom companies in Oman.



We have started this service as a result of these contracts, whereby, we purchase the debts from the companies. In order to provide the payment mechanism, several procedures are followed, including directly contacting the subscriber and determining

the most appropriate payment method." Keeping up with the latest advances at work, achieving growth as well as expanding its customer base, Khedmah continuously provides training to its employees and hosts

workshops on and off the job. The company believes that boosting the abilities of human resources and instilling the right skill set are key factors in preparing them for job requirements.

The company also continues to develop systems to keep pace with the steady development in the sector, considering the standards of safety, speed and ease of use. OIFC seeks to become a one-stop shop where everybody's needs are met on the same platform. It is working toward adding new services to keep pace with the sector's demands and facilitate the provision of services to subscribers.

Additionally, the company keenly studies the market's needs and stays up-to-date with the advancements in global technologies to maintain its position in the sector.

Alizz Islamic Bank offers home finance at 4.75%

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank has launched flexible finance choices for those looking to purchase or build their new home at a profit rate of 4.75 per cent only. Home finance, approved by the banks Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB), offers easy, quick and flexible financing.

This comes in line with the bank's vision to provide fast, safe and innovative digital solutions to carry out financial transactions for its customers.

Home finance is available for locals and residents working in the public sector with a minimum monthly salary of RO 300, or the private sector with a minimum monthly salary of RO 350 including business owners, with flexible payment options for up to 20 years and financing up to 80 per cent of the value of the property. Alizz Islamic Bank is proud of its role in helping customers to secure their dream homes while observing the provisions of Sharia.

The bank has been continuously working on improving its services and product offering through continuous engagement with customers to thoroughly



understand their needs. Alizz Islamic Bank offers various Home Finance solutions that provide customer's the option to purchase a home using a proportionate portion of their monthly income. The bank is always keen to help customers achieve their goals through a variety of solutions.

Customers that are interested can apply for finance by visiting any of Alizz Islamic Bank branches across the Sultanate of Oman. They can also call the customer service centre on the banks 24-hour toll free number 80072265 for answers to all their financing enquires.

As one of the first full-fledged Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman, Alizz Islamic Bank seeks to provide Islamic banking solutions and products inspired by the Sharia and approved by its Sharia Supervisory Board.

S&P Global Commodity Insights acquires flagship ME energy events

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

S&P Global Commodity Insights, the leading independent provider of information, analysis, events, and benchmark prices for the commodities and energy markets, announced today it acquired two flagship energy conferences from Singapore-based Conference Connection.

The purchase of the Middle East Petroleum & Gas Conference (MPGC) and the Fujairah Bunkering & Fuel Oil Forum (FUJCON) further extends S&P Global Commodity Insight's leadership in events and conferences to the Middle East, joining other global flagship events such as CERAWeek, APPEC, and the World Petrochemical Conference (WPC). Financial terms were not disclosed.

Under previous leadership and guidance, MPGC and FUJCON have grown into must-attend gatherings for industry discovery and lively

debate in the energy markets. The S&P Global Commodity Insights team looks forward to nurturing the valuable regional relationships and building on strong and secure conference foundations at this important time in the global energy transition.

Sue Avinir, Senior Vice President of Conferences & Advisory Solutions, S&P Global Commodity Insights, said: "The acquisition of MPGC and FUJCON provides S&P Global Commodity Insights with a truly global footprint in the energy events space. We look forward to enhancing and extending these events where market stakeholders come together to share diverse insights and enable business connections led by skillful event development and programme management, which we will be delighted to continue under our S&P Global leadership."



What it takes to become a hub for FDI



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI.

The inflow of foreign investments into the region is the result of policies and measures adopted recent years based on its political and economic appeal.

The State of Qatar is a notable example of a country that continues to simplify investment procedures and modernise economic laws and legislation, which have helped it open the door for foreign capital to be invested in its productive sectors.

Today, it allows companies to own up to 100 per cent of capital, and enjoy tax and customs exemptions that international companies are looking for.

It is a great achievement for Qatar in attracting 71 per cent of the total foreign direct investment in the Middle East during the second quarter of this year. This means that it is continuing to promote the policy of economic diversification, while establishing new projects in various fields such as software, information technology, business services, financial services, oil and gas and other economic sectors.

The inflow of investments will help create opportunities for national labour and expatriates as well. During the last period, it was able to provide 6,680 job opportunities through investments amounting to \$19.2 billion, according to the Investment Promotion Agency (IPA Qatar) bulletin.

This achievement comes after two years of disruptions

caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in many countries of the world, which today suffer from indebtedness, inflation, unemployment, and others.

Today, Qatar has become one of the countries that attract FDI, not only at the level of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, but also at the level of the countries of the Middle East and the world at large.

The IPA, which oversees many activities and works to promote investment under the "Invest Qatar" brand, has become a national platform for attracting foreign direct investment through its advisory services, support and experience in the various fields that Qatar seeks to achieve in the region.

Today, it owns many service, logistical, banking and other institutions that help it achieve these goals. As an investment agency, it is continuing to introduce international investors to the business opportunities available in this country, and the sustainable development that can be achieved in the economic and social fields that Qatar seeks in this regard to enhance the pace and objectives of economic diversification.

FDI into Qatar is continuing to be achieved, and it is taking an upward trend, especially as it is on the verge of staging the Fifa World Cup.

Visitors will have the opportunity to see and learn about the transformation that this country is witnessing in commercial, economic and real estate, as well as sports and educational developments and other achievements in the field of energy and clean energy.

This will help the country to expand global partnerships with other markets. Finally, the establishment of the Qatar Investment and Trade Court supports these trends in creating an attractive environment for investment, which sends a message of reassurance to investors and business owners to invest in Qatar.

Discover more with the powerful Ford Bronco

MUSCAT: Ford's powerful and capable Bronco SUV is built to be a better companion on varied terrains. The Bronco exceeds expectations, standing out to deliver some of the finest driving experiences on or off the road.

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delivers maximum 4x4 go-anywhere, anytime capability and confidence. Backing your exploration activities and allowing you to make the most of off-road journeys is the off-road mapping and drive technologies.

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Up to seven driver-selectable modes are offered including Normal, Eco, Sport, Slippery and Sand, with Baja, Mud/Ruts and

Rock Crawl for off-road driving. Available segment-first Trail Toolbox gives Bronco owners a suite of exclusive technologies to elevate their off-road experience. This includes Trail Control – cruise control for low-speed trail driving, while Trail Turn Assist tightens off-road turning radiuses through torque vectoring, and the innovative Trail One-Pedal Drive acceleration/braking control makes for more precise and confident slow-mode rock crawling.

Segment-leading levels of off-road capability are possible thanks to Bronco's available best-in-class 11.6-inch ground clearance, maximum 26.3-degree break over angle and 37-degree departure angle, plus best-in-class water fording capability of up to 33.5 inches.

Those interested in experiencing the Ford Bronco can visit their nearest Ford showroom. In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC.

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Spot Market, Direct Sales offer new lifeline to Oman power plants falling out of contract

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, AUGUST 31

A number of gas-based power plants coming to the end of their contracts are now banking on two key initiatives to continue to eke out a return on their investments.

The Spot Market, which came into operation in the Sultanate of Oman earlier this year, together with the Direct Sales Framework – a scheme that will allow eligible generators to sell their output directly to large customers – promise to offer a lifeline to power plants falling out of contract.

According to Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the sole buyer of output from the nation's power and water desalinated plants, Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) covering a total of around 2,000 megawatts (MW) of generation capacity are due to expire over the 2021 – 2022 timeframe.

Contract extensions for these older gas-based power plants, which came into operation nearly 20 years ago, have been few and far between primarily because they are seen as less efficient compared with their more modern versions.

Besides, investments in solar



and wind-based renewables capacity are helping conserve and divert valuable natural gas for more value-generating activities.

“Some of the expiring capacities have already been displaced with newer, more efficient, generation plants that utilise less gas per MWh (megawatt-hour) of electricity produced,” said OPWP in its latest Annual Report.

“The expected cumulative annual savings from these non-renewals is approximately RO 50

million. Furthermore, the new mechanisms (spot market and the Direct Sales Framework) provide the sector with options to meet the system generation capacity requirement in a more flexible way, that ensures overall generation cost be minimised,” it further stated.

The Spot Market, also known as the Oman Electricity Market, was brought online in January this year with the goal to provide

that ensures overall generation cost be minimised,” it further stated.

The Spot Market, also known as the Oman Electricity Market, was brought online in January this year with the goal to provide

a mechanism for engaging in wholesale electricity in a manner that takes into account the variation in electricity generation and consumption.

Through the Spot Market, OPWP is able to purchase electricity on a short-term basis based on three key factors: prices that vary every hour during the trading period; electricity demand at the time; and offers from generators.

A separate entity within OPWP currently operates the Spot Market, which is currently implemented within the Main Interconnected System serving the northern half of the country. The scope of the Spot Market could be expanded to include the Dhofar Power System as well in the future.

Another initiative that could help power plants with expiring/expired contracts is the Direct Sales Framework. When implemented before the end of this year, it will enable eligible generators with expired PPAs to agree supply commitments directly with industrial and other large consumers – a mechanism that allows the bypassing of OPWP as the sole offtaker of electricity output.

Oil prices fall 3% on recession fears



Crude oil storage tanks are seen from above at the Cushing oil hub in Cushing, Oklahoma. – Reuters

LONDON: Oil prices continued to slide on Wednesday on investor worries about the ailing state of the global economy, bearish oil demand signals from Opec+ and increased restrictions to curb Covid-19 in China. Brent crude futures for October, due to expire on Wednesday, were down \$3.41 at \$95.32 a barrel following Tuesday's \$5.78 loss. The more active November contract was down \$2.97, or 3.04 per cent, at \$94.87 a barrel.

US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures were down \$2.89, or 3.15 per cent, at \$89.15 a barrel by 10:44 GMT, after sliding \$5.37 in the previous session on recession fears.

“The latest signs of stuttering growth are contracting Chinese factory activity in August and the slower-than-expected expansion of the country's service sector,” Tamas Varga, analyst at PVM Oil Associates, said.

“Additionally, both the Fed and the ECB are thought to hike interest rates significantly next month, probably by as much as 0.75 per cent — and all these make equity investors run for the exit. Oil duly follows, at least for the time being.” China's factory activity extended declines in August as new Covid infections, the worst heatwaves in decades and an embattled property sector weighed on production, suggesting the economy will struggle to sustain momentum.

— Reuters

Salalah Forum shows pathway to GCC economic diversification

FROM PAGE 13

Following the keynote speech, the sessions of the conference started. In the first session four speakers addressed the topic “Future Visions of the Gulf States and Economic Diversification Efforts.”

They are HH Dr Adham al Said, Founding Partner of The Firm for Business and Economic Consulting and Assistant Professor at the College of Economics & Political Science at Sultan Qaboos University.

He presented a paper on “The Role of State-Owned Enterprises in Oman's Economic Diversification Efforts.”

Dr Asaad Alshamlan —

Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for European Studies at Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies. His paper was on “Economic Diversification in Vision 2030: Challenges and Opportunities.”

Dr Abdulsamee Albahbahani, CEO of Qamar Al Kuwait Petroleum Services Co., who spoke about “Economic Diversification Conflicts: Kuwait Case History.” Finally, Dr Frank Himpel, Full Professor and Founding Director of the Institute of Logistics at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Germany, presented a paper entitled “Economic Diversification in the Gulf States - Causes and Effects: A view on the

Gulf States with a focus on Oman and Qatar.”

In the second session that addressed the Mechanisms for Achieving Economic Diversification in the GCC Countries, Dr Ahmed al Maawali, an economic adviser and a former adviser at the World Bank in Washington spoke about “Prospects for Oman's Economic Diversification.”

Mohammed Baharoon, Director General and co-founder of the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre (b'huth), talked about “The Geostrategic Implication of Economic Diversification: The UAE Experience.”

Farah al Qawasmi, Researcher at the Gulf Studies Center,

Qatar University, spoke about “Prioritising the Water-Energy-Food Nexus in the Pursuit of Sustainable Development.” And finally, Dr Giacomo Luciani presented a paper on

“The consequences of Russia's attack on Ukraine on global energy and the diversification of the GCC economies.”

The third session addressed the Role of Public Policies in Enhancing Competitiveness and Attracting Local and Foreign Investment. In this session, Dr Steffen Hertog, Associate Professor of Comparative Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, spoke about “The new oil boom, a changing social contract, and the

outlook for diversification.”

Dr Omar al Ubaydli, Director of Research at the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International, and Energy Studies (Derasat), presented a paper on “How an open data policy would improve GCC competitiveness.”

Dr Shamsa bint Masoud bin Nasser al Sheibaniyah, Economic Expert in the Sultanate of Oman, talked about “Role of Public Policies in Enhancing Innovation and Sustainable Entrepreneurship.” And Dr Atef Elshabrawy, Economic Adviser to the World Bank, Expert on Innovation, MSME Finance and the SDGs, spoke about “Economic Diversification in GCC Countries: Opportunities and Challenges.”

MSX-listed companies post \$468.4m total net profits in Q2

JOMAR MENDOZA

@JmObserver

Total net profits for listed companies in Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) increased by 11 per cent y-o-y to \$468.4 million in Q2 2022 compared with \$422 million in the same quarter in 2021, this according to the latest report by Kamco Invest.

The banking sector, the biggest sector in Oman's bourse improved 11 per cent in Q2 2022 to reach \$276.4 million, up from \$248 million in Q2 2021.

The utilities sector followed with the second largest total net profits of \$57.7 million during Q2 2022, down from \$62.2 million in Q2 2021.

Bank Muscat, the Sultanate of Oman's largest bank by assets, posted the biggest profits within the banking sector during Q2

2022 with net profits of \$132.4 million as compared to \$123.4 million during Q2 2021. Overall, Bank Muscat posted a net profit of \$257.82 million (RO 99.26m) for the first six months ended June 30, 2022, an increase of 4.9 per cent from the same period in 2021.

Falling net impairment credit losses mainly contributed to the bank's rise in profits. However, profits for HSBC Bank Oman witnessed the biggest percentage increase among the banks recording 63 per cent rise in Q2 2022 earnings, which reached \$24.4 million as compared to \$15 million during Q2 2021.

On the other hand, Oman Arab Bank was the only bank among the eight banks on the exchange to post a decline in its Q2 2022. Oman Arab Bank reported a 50.8 per cent fall in Q2 2022 net profits



to \$9.1 million as compared to \$18.6 million in Q2 2021.

The profit growth for the telecom sector came on the back higher profits reported by Omantel that reached \$41.8 million in Q2 2022 from \$39.8 million in Q2 2021.

Overall, Omantel reported a

net profit of \$96.88 million (RO 37.3 million) for the six months ended June 30, 2022. Increase in net profit is predominantly because of sustainable revenue growth in postpaid mobile revenue (11.7 per cent) and fixed broadband revenue (2.1 per cent), cost optimisation measures,

reduction in impairment provision against receivables and depreciation.

Comparatively, Oman Qatari Telecommunications SAOG (Ooredoo) reported a 51.5-per cent increase in Q2 2022 net profits that reached \$13.5 million.

The materials sector witnessed the largest percentage growth in Q2 2022 net profits among the sectors in the MSX market. Raysut Cement Co and Oman Chlorine Co both returned to profits in Q2 2022 after dipping into the red in Q2 2021. Raysut Cement announced Q2 2022 net earnings of \$0.4 million as compared to a net loss of \$8.6 million in Q2 2021.

Similarly, Oman Chlorine posted \$2.1 million in Q2 2022 net profits up from a loss of \$0.4 million in Q2 2021.

Total Q2 net profits of the energy sector reached \$16.7

million as compared to \$5 million in Q2 2021, witnessing a 235 per cent y-o-y jump. Shell Oman Marketing Company SAOG registered absolute profit rise among the four companies in the sector with Q2 2022 net profits of \$6 million up from \$1.1 million in the same period last year.

The energy company's jump in the quarterly profits were attributed to higher revenue due to higher sales, especially on the growth of non-fuel retailing. On the other hand, Oman Oil Marketing Co recorded the biggest Q2 2022 net profits among the companies in the sector with \$6.9 million in Q2 2021.

Of the four companies in the sector, National Gas was the only loss-making company registering a loss of \$0.6 million in Q2 2022 as compared with a loss of \$0.7 million in 2021.

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Arab food is not just a cuisine, but it is an entire culture that traces its origin to a blend of Persian, Turkish, African and Indian cuisines and has evolved over the past few centuries to fit the tastes and needs of its inhabitants from across the world and bequeathed from generation to generation... **P20**

Severe drought in Spain uncovers submerged monuments



A CENTURIES-OLD church and a huge megalithic complex are among the underwater monuments that have resurfaced in Spain as a severe drought causes water levels in reservoirs to plunge. After a prolonged dry spell, Spain's reservoirs — which supply water for cities and farms — are at just under 36 per cent capacity, according to environment ministry figures for August. The receding waters have exposed the ruins of an 11th-century church in the usually submerged village of Sant Roma de Sau, which was flooded in the 1960s when a nearby dam was built. Normally, the church's bell tower is the only visible sign of the village in the northeastern region of Catalonia. Drawn by pictures on social media and television reports, crowds of tourists fill the restaurants in the nearby village of Vilanova de

Sau. "It has been years since (water levels) are as low as they are now," said 45-year-old Nuria Ferrerons during a recent visit to the site. "We saw it on social media and we said 'well let's see how it is'," she added. Two tourists on a canoe paddled through an arch of the church, which is fenced off to prevent people from getting too close due to the risk the ruins could collapse. "Normally you can only see the bell tower," said Sergi Riera, who came to see "something that has not been visible for years". In Spain's western Extremadura region, the receding waters of the Valdecanas reservoir have revealed a prehistoric stone circle on an islet that is normally underwater. Dubbed the "Spanish Stonehenge", the circle of dozens of megalithic stones was discovered by archaeol-

ogists in 1926 but the area was flooded in 1963 when the reservoir was built. The stones are also drawing tourists, who reach the islet on boats operated by several private firms. Officially known as the Dolmen of Guadalperal, the site is believed to date back to 5000 BC. "People leave delighted," said Ruben Argenta, who owns a firm offering guided tours of the stones. Manuel Mantilla, a sixty-year-old from the southern city of Cordoba, was visiting with his wife after hearing about the site through the media. "We saw that as a unique opportunity," he said. Climate change has left parts of Spain at their driest in more than 1,000 years, and winter rains are expected to diminish further, a study published in July by the Nature Geoscience journal showed. — **AFP**

READ

I KISSED SHARA WHEELER

BY CASEY MCQUISTON

Chloe Green seeks answers about the disappearance of Shara Wheeler.



VENICE FILM FESTIVAL

(From L.) US actor Adam Driver, US director Noah Baumbach, US actor Don Cheadle, US actress Greta Gerwig, British actress Jodie Turner-Smith, British actress May Nivola, British actress Raffey Cassidy and British actor Sam Nivola pose during a photocall for the film "White Noise", presented in the Venezia 79 competition on the opening day of the 79th Venice International Film Festival at Venice Lido. — **AFP**



TOMATINA FESTIVAL

Revellers covered in tomato pulp take part in the annual "Tomatina" festival in the eastern town of Bunol. The iconic fiesta, which is billed as "the world's biggest food fight" has become a major draw for foreigners, in particular from Britain, Japan and the United States. — **AFP**





Amazon to unveil its \$1bn bet with ‘Lord of the Rings’ prequel launch



STANLEY KUBRICK ONCE famously said J R R Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy of novels was unfilmable. It is hard to imagine what the great director would have made of Amazon's \$1 billion gamble on "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power," a 50-hour television series based on the dry historical footnotes published at the end of book three.

The show, out on Friday globally on Prime Video, aims to tap into the huge and enduring appeal of books still regularly voted the world's best-loved novels of all time, as well as Peter Jackson's Oscar-winning film adaptations.

It is central to Amazon's bid to stand out in the "streaming wars" with Netflix, Disney+ and HBO Max — whose own "Game of Thrones" prequel just launched — and is bankrolled by multi-billionaire founder Jeff Bezos, a Tolkien mega-fan.

But populated by heroes and villains who are barely — if at all — referenced in Tolkien's trilogy and its "Appendices" of fictional mythology, and featuring a largely unknown cast and creators, there is no doubting the scale of the gamble.

"It is quite nerve wracking — we're building something from the ground up that's never been seen before," said

Sophia Nomvete, who plays Princess Disa, the first female and first Black dwarf depicted on screen in Tolkien's world.

"There's definitely a few nerves. We want to get it right," she said at the Comic-Con fan event last month.

"The Rings of Power" is set in Tolkien's "Second Age" — a period of history in his fictional Middle Earth world thousands of years before the events of "The Hobbit" and "The Lord of the Rings."

So while a handful of characters from Jackson's films reappear in Amazon's show — mostly younger versions of elves such as Galadriel and Elrond, who are of course immortal — there is no Frodo, Gollum or Aragorn in sight.

Most characters from Tolkien lore are appearing on screen for the first time, and some have even been created entirely from scratch for the show.

"Tolkien hasn't really written much about who he is as a person," said Maxim Baldry, whose character Isildur was briefly seen fighting the evil lord Sauron in a flashback at the start of Jackson's trilogy.

Here, Baldry plays a younger version of the tragic hero, struggling with the death of his mother, over-bearing pres-

sure from his father, and a romantic yearning for adventure.

"What a gift, firstly, to explore someone's beginnings, finding their true colours, understanding who they really are," said Baldry.

He added: "Season one is purely about setting up characters and introducing new characters to the family... fleshing out a pretty skeletal world that Tolkien just created in the Second Age."

WONDERFULLY CRAZY

The fate of the series rests in the hands of creators — or "showrunners" — Patrick McKay and J D Payne, who pitched their concept to Amazon after it bought the rights in 2017, but had only a handful of previous projects credited on their CVs.

"We wanted to find a huge Tolkienian mega epic. And Amazon were wonderfully crazy enough to say 'yes, let's do that,'" McKay said at Comic-Con.

At the London premiere Tuesday, Bezos admitted that "some people even questioned our choice" to bring in "this relatively unknown team."

"But we saw something special," he said, according to Variety.

Amazon has also put on glitzy premieres for "The Rings of Power" in Los

Angeles, New York and Mumbai.

The show's lavish globe-trotting promotion is just a drop in the ocean compared to the astonishing cost of actually making a series dubbed the most expensive ever for television.

Amazon splurged \$250 million buying the rights from Tolkien's estate, and some \$465 million on the first season alone. It has committed from the start to making five full seasons, meaning the final cost is expected to pass \$1 billion.

With high stakes has come considerable secrecy.

Plot details and reviews were strictly embargoed until Wednesday, just two days before the series' launch, and even its actors have not been told the fates of their characters.

"No idea! I don't even know what's happening next season," said Megan Richards, who plays Poppy Proudfoot, a character whose Harfoot race are ancestors of the hobbits.

"There's an arc that Tolkien has given us for the Second Age. So there are certain things we know," Daniel Weyman, who plays a mysterious man billed simply as "The Stranger," said.

"The thing that I hold on to is that our showrunners, they definitely know their arc. They know their arc already." — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD

Between the covers: Librarian reveals left-behind treasures



FAMILY PHOTOS, a Public Enemy backstage pass, a weekend to-do list ("Saturday: file taxes, Sunday: chill, watch game"): it's amazing what people leave in library books.

For years, one US librarian has made a collection of the flotsam she found between the pages of borrowed titles.

Now Sharon McKellar is opening her trove for visitors to the library in Oakland, California, in a special exhibition called "Found in a Library Book".

"I wanted to share something that was really interesting to me that I had a feeling would be interesting to other people," said McKellar, supervising librarian for teen services at Oakland Public Library.

It "tells a story of our community and our city in a different and sort of unexpected way and ties back to the library."

Among the make-and-make-do bookmarks of children's art and Christmas snapshots, there are letters written but never sent, notes from lovers, and postcards of thanks — "I got your check," it says on the back of an illustration from "Alice in Wonderland."

Each of them offers a snapshot — tantalising or mundane — of the life of the person who left it there.

"There are some that are letters or cards or postcards that were sent between people — or maybe not actually sent — that feel really personal," McKellar said.

"There are some notes and letters that feel very unfinished. Or I really want to know what happened next."

'INCREDIBLY HOT!!!'

McKellar began collecting the apocrypha around 10 years ago and has blogged about her hobby for several years, but the chance to curate an exhibition came when the library launched a new website.

This allowed her to group the ephemera by theme or category — including notes, art, photos, cards and letters, artefacts, bookmarks, creative writing, lists, and kids' items.

Some entries overlap and fit into two or more boxes, like an interview that a child carried out with their grandmother about how and why she immigrated from Vietnam decades earlier.

Others defy easy categorisation — a print of a 2008 recipe for pot roast has the admonition "Behave" in the large blank space before the ingredient list begins.

Some letters are meditative, like that thanking its anonymous recipient for "all that you do," but acknowledging "We do have a tendency to argue. I'm working on stopping that."

Others, including "Ruminations from an O G" are filled with regret:

"27 years in this madhouse / my fate sealed long ago / if you are young, get out now / you can do better / Go back to school. Learn a skill. / The Post Office is no place to be somebody / It is high school with a paycheck.

"You will not grow here / you will stagnate, losing your soul, mind and body / Listen to your heart / Hear what it says!"

The glimpses of lives lived and preserved in between the pages of a book are special to McKellar.

"There are... some that really sound like somebody's... inner thoughts, like, you know, (they're) trying to talk themselves through a really hard time or trying to give themselves a pep talk," she said.

"There's obviously no way of knowing who wrote them, which is probably for the best."

One part of the display collates the jury-rigged bookmarks readers insert when they find themselves without any other way to mark their place.

Among them a flier for a Beatles memorabilia shop in London, concert tickets, a sticker from the Euro 2012 football championships, phone cards, a receipt for new windshield wipers and that favourite standby of the travelling reader — the airplane boarding pass.

But the note that McKellar particularly loves is one presumably penned by an infatuated teenager.

"OK, so I just want to say that I find it AMAZING how, no matter what Newt is doing, he either looks SUPER ADORABLE or INCREDIBLY HOT!!!" — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ANIMAL PLANET

Pakistan's Madhubala elephant gets relief after years of dental pain



MADHUBALA, a 16-year-old elephant in Pakistan suffering for years from a dental infection and pain caused by a broken tusk, finally got relief on Wednesday after undergoing treatment while under unique standing sedation.

Madhubala is one of four African elephants being treated in Karachi by an eight-member team from global animal welfare group Four Paws, which in 2020 relocated Kaavan — an elephant dubbed the world's loneliest — to Cambodia from Islamabad.

Their visit follows an order by the Sindh High Court (SHC) in Karachi last year for Four Paws to assess the health of the animals after local animal rights activists had raised concerns in court about their well-being.

Named after a legendary Indian actress, Madhubala's eyes were taped shut, her legs tied to side-grills to support her during sedation and the subsequent treatment at the Karachi Zoo.

Frank Goeritz, Head of the veterinary service at Leibniz Institute for zoo and wildlife research in Berlin, checks for veins as he along with vets and animal experts from the FOUR PAWS International perform dental procedure of a 16 year-old elephant, Madhubala, at the zoo in Karachi, Pakistan August 17, 2022.

"Due to long-term inflammation the tissue is so fragile and thin it's not possible to take it out at once, it is breakable," Dr Marina Ivanova said, showing Reuters reporters the extracted tusk.

An endoscopy before the procedure showed the full tusk inside measured 31 centimetres (12.2 inches), she said.

"It is important for us to focus on postsurgical treatment, the removal of the tusk would open a big wound, so this wound needs daily cleaning" she added.

During the five- to six-hour procedure, Madhubala did not put up much resistance as she was kept sedated.

"Today we are happy to start the first unique procedure at the zoo in standing position not in sleeping or complete anaesthesia as it could be risky for the elephant and could be fatal, which we don't want," team leader Dr Aamir Khalil said.

The other elephants were in a much better state as their foot treatment started two months ago, Khalil said, adding that the group had more work to do to improve the welfare of the animals. — Reuters

CULTURE

Flowers, photos as tributes paid to princess Diana, 25 years on



WELL-WISHERS left flowers and other tributes on Wednesday at princess Diana's former London home and above the Paris road tunnel where she lost her life, to mark the 25th anniversary of her death.

The former Lady Diana Spencer, whose fairytale marriage to Prince Charles captivated the world until it publicly unravelled with revelations of infidelity and divorce, died in a car crash in the French capital on August 31, 1997.

A trickle of well-wishers laid flowers, flags and photographs for the self-styled 'queen of people's hearts' at the gates of Kensington Palace, and at the Place Diana, above the Pont de l'Alma tunnel.

At the Spencer family home, Althorp House, where Diana is buried in a lead-lined coffin on a secluded island on the estate, her brother Charles Spencer lowered the Union Jack to half mast.

"She was a global celebrity," retired camera operator Claude Gautier, 79, who came to pay his respects at the makeshift memorial in Paris, said.

"She was classy, sporty, elegant. Everyone's sad today. My flowers for her are on the inside," he said, touching the badge of his England football shirt.

"The flowers here will wilt but mine will never die."

"We're really missing someone like her today. If you look around the world, there's no one like her," added German tourist Ulrike Plank, 64, from Munich.

In London, well-wisher Julie Cein also said it was important to keep her positive memory and legacy alive.

"She showed empathy, kindness, consideration to all people, regardless of their class in society," she added.

- LEGACY -

Diana, who was just 36 when she died, remains widely revered as a fashion icon and for having cut through stuffy royal convention, particularly after her very public divorce.

She was also praised for charity work highlighting the scourge of landmines and encouraging a change in attitudes to people with HIV/AIDS.

In a sign of the enduring fascination with the royal, last weekend a sporty Ford Escort she once owned was sold for £737,000 (\$864,000) at auction.

Her marital troubles will also feature in the latest series of the hit Netflix drama "The Crown" later this year.

Joe Little, managing editor at Majesty Magazine, said Diana had influenced her sons, princes William and Harry, to be less formal than traditional royals.

"They are much more 'touchy feely' than they ever would have been," he said, pointing to William's hugs for England's women footballers after their Euro 2022 victory this month.

"William can see there is no need for much of the formality in royal life that existed when his father was of a similar age."

Last week, Harry, who has admitted to mental health struggles because of his mother's death, said he would 'share the spirit of my mum with my family, with my children, who I wished could have met her'.

"Every day I hope to do her proud," he told a fundraising dinner in the United States for his Sentebale charity, which supports young people in Africa with HIV.

"I want it to be a day filled with memories of her incredible work and love for the way she did it," he added.

- RIFT -

Last year, the brothers unveiled a statue of her at Kensington Palace on what would have been her 60th birthday, remembering "her love, strength and character" and as a "force for good" around the world.

This year, the brothers will not take part in any official commemorations, preferring instead to mark the occasion in private with their own families.

William, 40, recently announced a move from London to the Windsor estate west of London with his wife, Catherine, and their three young children.

Harry, 37, now lives in California with his wife, Meghan, and their two children, after the couple quit the royal family in early 2020.

The Daily Telegraph said on Saturday that the brothers had "agreed to draw a line under their public commemorations" at the 20th anniversary five years ago.

But the brothers, who at the age of just 15 and 12 walked, heads bowed, behind Diana's coffin at her funeral, are also reportedly on non-speaking terms.

William has angrily hit back at claims in a television interview from Harry and Meghan of racism in the royal family.

The couple are due at a series of charity events in Britain next week, staying near William and Kate on the sprawling Windsor estate.

There are reportedly no plans for the brothers to meet, nor for Harry to visit his ailing 96-year-old grandmother at her Balmoral retreat in Scotland. — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Shorten your pain with analgesic

AT SOME POINT, you hear from some and those around you a complaint of back pain. Perhaps the person has been injured at one time and eventually suffered slight regular pains.

For some, the pain may actually be a good sign as it reminds them to pay attention better to their bodies. For those who would like to remain walking for a few more decades, this will prompt them to seek medical help to not suffer permanent damage.

This pain, of course, will not be enjoyable and for sure those concerned will have to take sedatives to ease the discomfort.

In a way, back pain is common, but there is a different type of injury that is more common in our lives. Probably that individual's life: psychological suffering. And here I do not mean depression or anxiety, which requires professional intervention, but I mean the routine chronic grind of conflict, dissatisfaction and sadness, which often constitutes a slight pain in the background of our days!

Most of those pains may be one disease that has many names from a neurological point of view! Where one of the medical studies indicated: that physical pain activates several parts of the brain, especially the cortex called the anterior cingulate cortex.

Neuroscientists found that our brains suffer from emotional pain in the same place!

This leads us to a fundamental and real point, which is that physical pain consists of two main parts: the sensory component (physical sensation) and the emotional component (unwanted or aversive perception).

Here, psychological pain participates in this second component, as we may have noticed in our

reality sometimes. Did you not notice an individual who became suffering from a severe headache for the first time in his life only after the unexpected death of his relative?

Thus whether that pain is a useful warning sign or just an annoyance, psychological pain can get in the way of our lives. Perhaps the trick here is to make it manageable safely, without erasing it completely, as some (mild) pain relievers do with everyday aches. Especially since a lot of psychological suffering has physical manifestations. When you feel anxious or tense, for example, you might be tempted to tighten your stomach muscles. Noting such physical signs can help you effectively manage the emotions that they cause.

On the other hand, it was found that contact with other people significantly protects against all kinds of pain. Social support is something we are all aware of and how it relieves symptoms of physical pain. Especially since medical studies have also proven that people who have more social support, have more moderate responses to cortisol in the face of stress. Having family or friends around you is really a preventative when it comes to psychological pain associated with one's life.

In the end, I emphasise here and always that helping others in distress certainly leads to better emotional regulation and reduces symptoms of depression. You may not need to be reminded that giving love may in fact be the best strategy – if you will – to reduce pain in this life.

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



art & life

Local Scene

f t i y l @omanobserver

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 1 | 2022

Serving Arabian dishes with frankincense to global foodies

By Kabeer Yousuf

Arabian foods have distinctive features, they stand out from the rest of the world and probably the unique aroma, and ingredients are the very reason that have generated a global yearning for Arabic foods.

Did we know that Oman's own frankincense is an inevitable ingredient to some of the Arabic dishes that adds a seraphic value to the taste buds across the geographical boundaries?

Largely, Arab food is not just a cuisine, but it is an entire culture that traces its origin to a blend of Persian, Turkish, African and Indian cuisines and has evolved over the past few centuries to fit the tastes and needs of its inhabitants from across the world and bequeathed from generation to generation.

"Arabic cuisine places more emphasis on the use of spices and generally use more spices to enhance flavour with garlic, onion, chili pepper, cumin, cilantro, coriander, cinnamon, and many others," says Deepali Tomar, Sous Chef at the Omran's Alila Hinu bay Resort in Mirbat in Salalah.

A range of Arabic foods include Manakeesh, Grilled halloumi, Foul medames, Falafel, Tabouleh, Moutabal/ baba ghanoush, Fattoush and so on and so forth and majority of the Arabic dishes include olive oil and za'atar besides mezze or bread dips, and stuffing.

Deepali Tomar shares two of her main recipes with Oman's frankincense as a main ingredient that made the visitors to khareef mouth-watering.



ARABIC SHUWA

SHUWA MARINATION

INGREDIENTS

250 ml Date Vinegar
150 gm Tamarind Pulp
50 gm Garlic chopped
50 gm Coriander seeds Crushed
50 gm Chili flakes
25 gm Black Pepper Crushed
25 gm Salt

LAMB STUFFING

Ingredients:
250 gm Celery chopped
150 gm Red Onion chopped
10 gm Thyme chopped
10 gm Ross marry

METHOD

1. For Shuwa margination, Mix all spices together and mix it well and cover with the corn oil and keep out side for the fermenting.
2. When you are going to cook the lamb, stuff the mixture before cooking. Season nicely and marinate the lamb with the shuwa marination and keep one day inside the chiller. While cooking, wrap it with the banana leaves.
3. Roast in oven at 120 for 4 hours

GHOBASH

Frankincense Cream

Ingredients:
500 ml Milk
500 ml Cooking cream
200 gm Sugar
100 gm Corn flour
5 ml frankincense oil
150 gm keshta cream
3 Nos Phyllo sheet
1Tbl Ghee

METHOD

1. Make a corn flour slurry and keep aside. Boil the milk, cooking cream and sugar together. Add this corn flour slurry inside the liquid. Mix it well until this liquid gets into a thick consistency. Once it's cooled down, put it in the piping bag.

2. Take a 3 phyllo sheet each layer Sprinkle with the melted butter. Then pipe the cream which u made before and roll it
3. Bake the Bhugasa in a preheated oven in 160c for 45 minutes, until the phyllo is crisp and golden brown.