

Trump refuses to answer questions

Former US president Donald Trump said on Wednesday he refused to answer questions during an appearance before New York state's attorney general in a civil investigation into his family's business practices, citing his constitutional right against self-incrimination. Trump, his son Donald Trump Jr and daughter Ivanka Trump, had fought unsuccessfully to avoid appearing for testimony in state Attorney General Letitia James's probe. **DETAILS ON P7**



P10

OFA ALL SET FOR SUPER CUP MATCH IN SALALAH



P13

ASYAD GROUP SIGNS DECARBONISATION PARTNERSHIP WITH 44.01, A START-UP



P20

AN EVENT THAT MEASURES POWER AND BEAUTY



**MUSCAT**

**MOTHER INVENTS ERASABLE NOTEBOOK**

An Omani mother who invented a re-writable notebook is trying to produce it in large quantities to cater to students from schools, colleges and universities and thus support the environment and reduce the number of trees being cut globally. It was not by chance that Hanna bint Ali al Hinaiyah came out with a locally-manufactured A4 sized notebook for her fellow staff, but was the result of her need, persistence, and long-thought process.

**DETAILS ON P2**

**REGISTRATION FOR FALLING WALLS LAB**

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced the start of registration for Falling Walls Lab Oman 2022 competition. The event is organised in cooperation with Falling Walls Lab Foundation. Registration for the contest is open till September 1, according to the ministry.

**DETAILS ON P3**



HM gets message from Somalia President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has received a written message from Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, dealing with bilateral relations between Oman and Somalia. The message was received on behalf of His Majesty the Sultan by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, when he welcomed Abdul Rahman Abdul Shakour, Special Envoy of the Somali President for Humanitarian Affairs and Drought. **DETAILS ON P2**

BUDGET SURPLUS HELPS REDUCE PUBLIC DEBT

DEBT TO GDP RATIO TO REACH 47.5% IN 2022

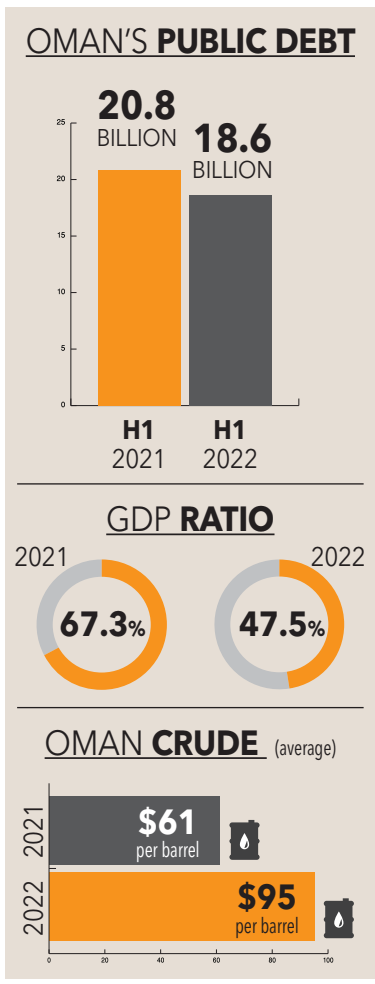
**SAMUEL KUTTY**  
@samkutyvp

In line with the efforts made by the government, Oman's public debt reduced to RO 18.6 billion at the end of the first half against RO 20.8 billion during the corresponding period last year.

The debt is further projected to decrease to RO 17.5 billion towards the end of the year bringing the debt to GDP ratio to 47.5 per cent in 2022, down from 67.3 per cent last year.

This is revealed in the latest edition of Fitch Solutions, the affiliate of the rating agency, which expects Oman's 12-month fiscal surplus to stand at 6.5 per cent of its total gross domestic product this year.

On June 30 last, Oman completed a voluntary debt buyback transaction totalling \$701 million across Eurobonds



maturing in 2025, 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029, 2031, and 2032.

Following several years of falling public finances and external accounts until 2020, the Sultanate of Oman is now benefiting from higher oil prices and fiscal and governance reforms.

Oman crude oil prices have averaged around \$95 per barrel so far this year, compared to \$61 per barrel over 2021.

Oman's expenditure growth is expected to moderate in the second half, in line with fiscal consolidation efforts.

Revenue, the report said, will rise further in the second half of the year because of high energy prices and "will help increase the country's financial surpluses, as the average price of Omani oil was \$87 per barrel in the first half of 2022, which is lower than the average oil price".

**TURN TO P2**

National leadership programme launched

**MUSCAT:** The Royal Academy for Administration has launched a national programme for developing leaderships and exploring the future. The programme seeks to groom efficient leaderships of middle management within departments of the state's administrative apparatus.

The programme comprises what is known as the First Educational Unit, which envisages training an accredited coach. It is attended by 26 specialised trainers from public and private sector establishments and is aimed at transferring knowledge and localising expertise in a manner that fits with the vision of the Royal Academy.

Dr Ali bin Qassim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy for Administration, said that the training programmes are the outcome of partnership between the Academy and Eller Executive Education Centre of Arizona University to transfer the latest skills and experiences in the field of leadership training to national competencies from certified trainers to qualify them to provide leadership programmes at the local, regional and global levels.

He added that the programme will last for 10 months, and is based on blended education, and middle-management holders in the state's administrative apparatus. — **ONA**



HARVESTING SEASON

Harvesting of mountain pomegranates has started in a number of villages in Wadi Mistal in the Wilayat of Nakhal, South Al Batinah Governorate. Four types of pomegranates are grown in these villages which are very popular. — **ONA**



**MUSCAT CANDID**

WEEKDAYS 12-3PM  
HOSTED BY ASMA AL RIYAMI

**uoc OMAN FM**



■ ROYAL OFFICE MINISTER RECEIVES LIBYAN AMBASSADOR

# HM receives written message from Somalia President

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, dealing with bilateral relations between Oman and Somalia.

The message was received on behalf of His Majesty the Sultan by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, when he welcomed here on Wednesday Abdul Rahman Abdul Shakour, Special Envoy of the Somali President for Humanitarian Affairs and Drought.

The envoy conveyed the greetings of the Somali President to His Majesty the Sultan and Omani people,

along with the President's wishes of further progress and prosperity for the Sultanate of Oman.

On his turn, HH Sayyid Shihab conveyed the greetings and wishes of His Majesty the Sultan to President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, as well as His Majesty's wishes of progress and prosperity for the Somali people.

The meeting discussed fraternal ties between the two countries and ways of enhancing them in different fields.

It also touched on issues of common concern. The meeting was attended by the Chargé D'affaires of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Somalia in Muscat. — ONA



**MUSCAT:** Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, reviewed the march of relations between Oman and Libya, when he received here on Wednesday Sania Abu al Qasim Ghoma, Ambassador of the State of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman. Gen Al Numani and the Libyan ambassador exchanged friendly talks about cooperation between the two countries, matters of mutual interest and ways of cementing ties. — ONA

# Omani mother invents erasable notebook

**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@KABEERYOUSEF

An Omani mother who invented a rewritable notebook is trying to produce it in large quantities to cater to the students at schools, colleges and universities and thus supporting the environment and reducing the number of trees being cut globally.

It was not by chance that Hannat bint Ali al Hinaiyah, a geophysicist/geoscientist, mother of seven and a retired employee of PDO, came out with a locally manufactured A4 sized notebook for her fellow beings but was the result of her need, persistence, and months-long thought process.

"It was when I realised that there should be an alternative to notebooks in the schools and colleges that I started thinking of a way. Although some notes need to be preserved for a later period, some writings, especially to learn some lessons from the teachers, by writing it on a paper, can be satisfied with this book," Hanna said.

After presenting the innovative



brochures to the Intellectual Property Department of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Al Hinaiyah and her daughter Ranman bint Hamoud al Khaifiyah obtained the intellectual property certificate for this project, as there is no equivalent one in the Sultanate of Oman and in the region.

It all began, according to Hanna, when she began to memorise the Holy Quran after taking voluntary retirement from PDO where she worked last as

Diversity and Inclusion Officer in 2019. She enrolled herself at Sharia College to improve her Quran and religious knowledge.

"I believed in writing on paper whatever I wanted to learn which helped me memorise the content a bit faster. But writing verses of the holy book on rough papers and throwing them aimlessly in trash was too hard for me and that triggered a spark in me for an alternative means," Hanna said.

Her reluctance led her to a printing press where she described what she wanted, "so that I would

have a brochure to write on its pages using whiteboard pens, erase and rewrite on it many times."

Hanna's brochure works as a whiteboard, but with many pages, the ink on which would last for several minutes until one erases it. After Al Hinaiyah saw the great benefit children are getting from it, she decided to introduce more designs that benefit other segments such as school and university students, employees, teachers, architects and designers.

Her Belgian friend, a retired geoscientist, took some of these books and she is using them to teach geology back in Belgium and her husband who's doing his PhD from Oxford University is using them for his studies as they are available in formats like ruled, unruled, checkered, etc.

Going forward, she has plans to manufacture the same in large quantities and distribute among the educational institutions and lend a hand of support to the environment and the trees in a larger sense.

# GCC sustainable development forum begins

**SALALAH:** The Governorate of Dhofar is hosting the GCC Sustainable Development Forum "One GCC Developmental Track" on Wednesday.

Organised by Al Roya newspaper, the two-day forum seeks to ally efforts for a unified future vision and development indicators among GCC states.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who felicitated those who contributed to the conference. The forum

tasks cover two main themes: "GCC future visions and requirements for the unification of efforts" and "Mechanisms for the development of GCC development indicators".

On the second day, the forum will host workshops on mechanisms on measuring performance indicators, societies progress, innovation, creating sustainable development opportunities, GCC partnerships and the overall methodology of unifying the development track.

— ONA

# EA launches conservation project for Myrrh tree



**SALALAH:** The Environment Authority, represented by the Environment Conservation Office in Dhofar Governorate, launched a project to collect preliminary data about the Myrrh tree, an endangered plant species.

This species in Dhofar relates to the Arabian Myrrh tree, which assumes significance due to its natural,

historical and economic values associated with frankincense over the ages.

The two species have been included into the list of plants running the risk of extinction in a semi-desert environment or what is known as 'rain shadow' areas in Dhofar mountains — an extension of Al Najd area.

The project seeks to develop an

initial database for Myrrh tree area of vegetation, its flowering season, its harvest and scopes of supplying the Authority's plantations with their seeds with a view to expanding the growth of this endangered species.

The survey also aims to protect Myrrh tree under adverse circumstances like overgrazing, climate change and insect attacks.

The Environment Authority plans to protect such fragile ecological systems through the establishment of an envisaged Myrrh Tree Park, said Khalid bin Ahmed Hardan, Head of Studies Department at the Environment Conservation Office. As part of the project, a plantation will be dedicated to the production of Myrrh tree seeds, he added. — ONA



# Budget surplus helps cut public debt

FROM PAGE 1

The report indicated that the increase in the average price of Omani oil in the coming months will lead to further growth in oil and gas revenues in the second half of this year, which supports the expected total revenue growth of 41.3 per cent in 2022.

Oman recorded a budget surplus of RO 784 million in the first half of the year, is poised to post its first yearly fiscal surplus in a decade in 2022.

Besides oil, tourism is another major contributor to the state exchequer.

Oman has attracted more than half of the targeted RO 3 billion in tourism investments planned between 2021 and 2023 as part of its development scheme, it said this month.

The government intends to largely allocate the fiscal surplus towards higher spending on development projects and reducing government debt. It has also introduced other measures to support economic activity and reduce the effects of past austerity on the population.

These include value-added tax exemptions, a more gradual reduction in electricity subsidies, reduced work visa fees for expatriates and lower municipality and services fees. At the same time, data shows an increase of 8.6 per cent in total expenditure, on the back of additional fuel and food subsidies due to soaring prices.

"We expect that spending growth will decelerate in the second half as global commodity prices start decreasing, reducing pressure on total expenditures, which we forecast at 5.1 per cent in 2022," the research wing of Fitch said.



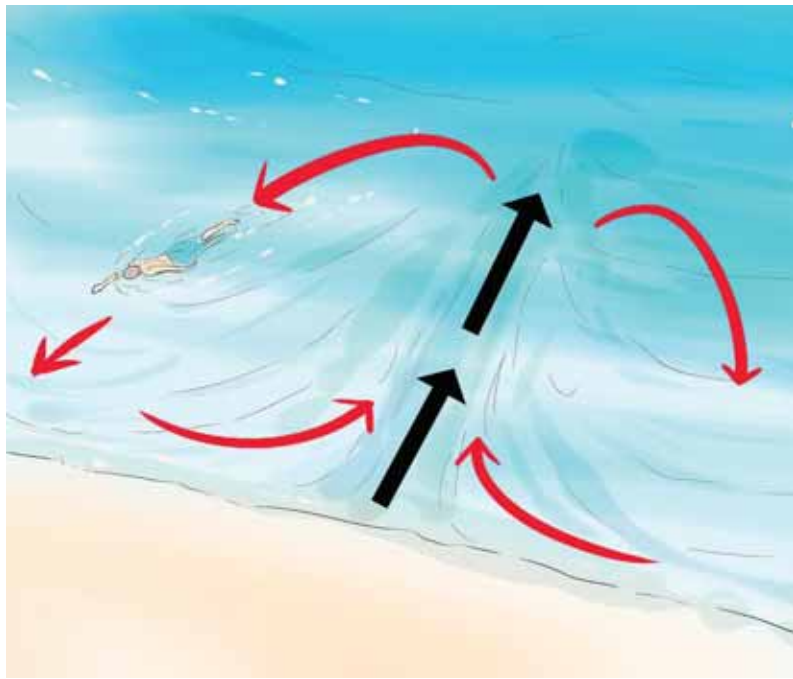
# How to swim safe and avoid rip currents

AFRAH AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUG 10

The recent cases of drowning in the Sultanate of Oman have increased the state of alertness of the rescue teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Department in various governorates. In this context, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority published a statement of Faisal bin Hamed Beit Fadel, a central officer in the Civil Defence in Mirbat and Taqah, about the authority's efforts in dealing with reports through specialised water rescue teams trained in rescue operations at wadis, dams, ponds, springs, wells and beaches.

He mentioned that, "It is not possible to determine the proportion of the rip current in the cases of drowning in Oman due to the lack of accurate information about the causes of drowning. However, statistics proved that 95 per cent of the drowning cases are caused by the presence of the rip current."

It is one of the most dangerous natural phenomena that a person can encounter, which



can kill both casual and expert swimmers. Simply, this is because a person does not know what to do when he faces this current.

It is strictly forbidden to swim in the sea during this period due to the presence of currents that intensify their strength due to the high waves during Khareef season. The Authority previously called on Dhofar visitors not to swim in the springs, waterfalls and sea,

in order to avoid unfortunate drowning accidents. The rescue teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority dealt with 521 drowning incidents during the year 2021.

Among the painful drowning cases that Oman witnessed in the past period is the drowning of the Asian family of five, including three children, at the Al Mughsail Beach. They were standing right next to the

waves crashing into the rocks, and they crossed the area of the separation fence, which led to the high waves crashing into them and their drifting into the sea. Therefore, people must follow the instructions and warnings and stay away from such places.

Drowning is the most common accident, for a reason most people don't know or people don't know how to act. So, people must know that when the person who swims is exposed to the drawing current, they must remain calm because the current will not push them down, but will pull them towards the sea, and must swim parallel to the beach to get away from the current. Then swim towards the beach and the regular waves would push him towards the shore.

The rip current is dangerous, especially if it occurs in shallow water, usually the rip currents are 2-3 metres, and they move at speeds ranging between 4-5 kilometres per hour.

This may not be dangerous, but there are streams that are 50 metres wide, 200-400 metres long, and reach speeds of 15 kilometres per hour.



## Registration opens for Falling Walls Lab Oman competition

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced the start of registration for Falling Walls Lab Oman 2022 competition. The event is organised in cooperation with Falling Walls Lab Foundation.

Registration for the contest is open till September 1, according to the Ministry, which indicated that, on September 19, innovators have an opportunity to articulate their intellectual products within a period

of 3 minutes before an arbitration committee.

The winner of the local round will contest a similar international event on November 8, 2022 in the city of Berlin, Germany, and attend a related global conference the next day, which will see the final rounds of the competition.

The competition was founded by the Falling Walls Lab Foundation, a non-profit organisation based in Berlin, on November 9, 1989. — ONA

## University of Nizwa launches two new health programmes

RAWAN AL NADABI  
NIZWA, AUG 10

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation recently approved two new Speech and Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy programmes at University of Nizwa.

The two health programmes, the first of its kind in the academic field in Oman, came after a study conducted by the university in 2017 of the labour market and its needs for health rehabilitation services based on statistical indicators of morbidity, population growth and graphical distribution of rehabilitation services.

Occupational Therapy specialisation is concerned with diagnosing and treating functional and motor deficiencies in addition to the psychological and mental aspect. While Speech and Language Pathology specialisation is concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of speech, language and swallowing disorders caused by muscular, psychological or neurological diseases that affect the brain.

Dr Ahmed al Kharusi, Assistant Professor at Rehabilitation and Allied Health professions, told the Observer that "in Oman rehabilitation services are still evolving and they are available in central cities with limited scope", adding that, "the current rehabilitation services in Oman cover widely the acute phase of injury but there is a huge demand for specialised rehabilitation post-acute services such as community rehabilitation, cardiac rehabilitation and rehabilitation for disabled and neurological disorders."

The two specialisations are a step forward in Oman Vision 2040 in the field of education and health, Al Kharusi mentioned. "New programmes will ultimately contribute to Oman Vision 2040 and Health Vision 2050 by identifying the need for various health education programmes, and will help to fulfil employment for the new expansion in health services," he added.

The national diploma students and international students showed keen interest in these two new majors as they are new in the market and there is huge demand for these specialisations nationally and internationally.

Both specialisations keep pace with modern health service requirements as they are based on three major analyses of health problems: psychological, biological and social. Al Kharusi confirmed, "There are committees in the University of Nizwa that have identified new areas in health services with the highest potential for developing additional new health programmes. That will be announced once the study of market needs is completed."



Occupational Therapy specialisation is concerned with diagnosing and treating functional and motor deficiencies in addition to the psychological and mental aspect



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Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

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# GROWTH MINDSET MIGHT BE NEED OF THE HOUR

THE QUESTION IS WHEN WE  
FOCUS SO MUCH ON  
PHYSICAL FITNESS BY TAKING  
CLASSES TO LEARN FOOTBALL,  
TRAIN FOR RUNNING AND  
CYCLING AND KNOW THE  
BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL  
FITNESS, HOW OFTEN DO WE  
TALK ABOUT MENTAL FITNESS?



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
@lakshmioman

When the job market is difficult to break into, what is that one can do?

Would you agree with the statement that everything is an opportunity?

Karen du Four des Champs is an Executive, Leadership, Intercultural and Mindfulness Coach who believes it is all about how we look at it.

She asked, there are economic challenges so how do we rescale, upscale and cross scale?

“I think we really need to work with mental fitness because mental fitness is getting the brain ready to be open with a growth mindset,” Karen said.

Instead of thinking of doom and gloom and sulking about not getting an interview or not getting a job or worry about the hundreds of people who have applied for jobs one could go into a growth mindset by asking, “Okay, what did I learn from this? What was the gift or the opportunity that has been gained?”

“We have to shift our perspective,” Karen pointed out. It was learning more about Positive Intelligence that led her deeper into the concept of growth mindset. The positive Intelligence Programme grows three mental fitness muscles as explained by the author of the book, Positive Intelligence by Shirzad Chamine. Positive Intelligence is defined as a measure of Mental Fitness, indicating how quickly one recovers from negative to positive responses to challenges.

“There are two regions in our brain - we have the survival side, where we are on the fright or flight mode and it causes us anxiety, guilt and unhappiness. Then we have the striving part of the brain where our wisdom, creativity come and we are calm and take action,” she explained.

According to Karen, the survival region tells us we are not good enough, this is not good and this is where our saboteurs are. There are times when we doubt ourselves

and wonder who we are to do this?”

She explained further on the other region of the brain - the sage region makes you less stressed.

Shifting perspective is not an easy process.

“It is difficult,” Karen agreed. But what can help is practising mindfulness.

“Pause, take a deep breath, reflect, do mindfulness practice. It is called Positive Intelligent Quotient to build the thriving part of the brain. To develop a growth mindset you need to take time to think, write and reflect.”

When one does not get a positive feedback after a job interview, what do you feel?

“Do you feel you are the best candidate and the right one for the job? And you are wondering why you did not get the job? I would ask, what is the 10-per cent truth to that feedback? There must be some truth. We have to ask ourselves - what is the learning here?”

We can overcome any challenge, we just have to look at their perspective. She suggested someone else should be asked for their perspective because one can be so stuck with their own perspective.

The question is when we focus so much on physical fitness by taking classes to learn football, train for running and cycling and know the benefits of physical fitness, how often do we talk about mental fitness? It is about building part of our brains so we are more mentally fit to recover quickly from setbacks.

The successful bounce back quickly from setback because they have been working on the thriving region of the brain. It is a life-long practice.

“Practising meditation, mindfulness, power breaks are all part of a discipline one must do every day,” Karen advised.

She said, “Ask questions like, what did I do today? Where did I trip? How quickly did I recover? When you journal it, you can go back and look at how you have improved over the months.”



SULTANATE OF OMAN  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT



The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

| Tender Ref.           | Description                                                                                                                           | Last Date for Collection of Tender Document | Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 08:00 am Wednesday | Eligibility                                                                                          | Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) |  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| MOH/HQ-59/2022-Recall | Supply of Pharmaceuticals for the Royal Hospital                                                                                      | 11/August/2022                              | 17/August/2022                                            | Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board                    | R.O 45.000 Per set          |  |
| MOH/HQ-168/2022       | Supply of Surgical Items (Hand Surgery)                                                                                               | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      | R.O 25.000 Per set          |  |
| MOH/HQ-169/2022       | Supply of Surgical items (Adult Cath lab) for The Royal Hospital                                                                      | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-170/2022       | Supply of Medical Gas for the Royal Hospital                                                                                          | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-171/2022       | Consultancy Engineering Services (Design and Supervision) for Construction of Mudhaibi Health Center in North Al Sharqiah Governorate | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         | Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in The First Grade |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-172/2022       | Supply & Installation of Servers for Health Establishments in Various Governorates                                                    | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         | Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board                    |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-173/2022       | Supply of Computer Equipment at Al Amerat Heights Health Centre in Muscat Governorate                                                 | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-174/2022       | Supply of Linen and Patient Uniforms for Various Health Establishment                                                                 | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-176/2022       | Provision of Catering Services for Various Local Hospitals at Al Dakhiliyah Governorate                                               | 18/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |
| MOH/HQ-178/2022       | Provision of Catering Services at Quriyat Hospital in Governorate of Muscat                                                           | 25/August/2022                              | 14/September/2022                                         |                                                                                                      |                             |  |

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> enclose **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id [etenderhd@ita.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@ita.gov.om).





## India asks airlines to share passengers’ info

VINOD NAIR  
@VINOT\_NAIR

The Indian government has said that airlines will have to mandatorily provide details of all international passengers to the Customs Department for preventing and prosecuting offences under the Customs Act.

Every airline will have to transfer the ‘passenger name record information’ from their reservation system to the database of the Customs Department for every international flight departing from India or arriving in the country, according to the Passenger Name Record Information Regulations, 2022 notified by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) under the Ministry of Finance.

The information such as passenger name record (PNR), date of travel, credit card details and seat assigned will have to be shared at least 24 hours before departure and failure to comply will invite a minimum penalty of ₹25,000 and a maximum of ₹50,000 for every act of non-compliance, the regulations say.

The rules note that the National Customs Targeting

Centre for Passengers or the database set up by the CBIC will collect the information for “risk analysis of passengers” for the purpose of “prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of offences under the Act [Customs Act, 1962].”

Such data can also be shared with law enforcement agencies or government departments of India or any other country under regulation 10.

Regulation 10 states, “When the passenger name record information relates to any offence, under any law for the time being in force, at the national or international level, the National Customs Targeting Centre for Passengers may share the relevant information on a case-to-case basis.”

The details the airline will have to share include PNR (Passenger Name Record) locator code, date of reservation, date of intended travel, frequent flyer and information on other benefits such as free tickets and upgrades, all available contact information, billing information including credit card number, travel agency or agent, seat information as well as the history of changes to the PNR.

## Oman Air unveils details of Match Day Shuttle flights

**MUSCAT:** To facilitate travel for football fans to this year’s Fifa World Cup in Qatar, the airline will operate 48 Match Day Shuttle flights between Muscat and Doha from November 21 to December 3.

The airline offers

wide-body service, including the Boeing 787 Dreamliner between Muscat and Doha.

Return Match Day Shuttle flights can be booked on the Oman Air website (omanair.com) with prices starting from RO 49 for Economy Class

and RO 155 for Business Class. Fares include fees, taxes, airport charges and hand baggage allowance.

Passengers are advised to arrive in Doha at least four hours before the start of the match due to the high frequency of flights each day. In addition, all

passengers must register for a Hayya card (fan ID) prior to their flight, as this is required for travel on all Match Day Shuttle flights and for entry into Qatar.

Throughout the tournament, football fans can book their Match

Day Shuttle flights, which provide a smooth and comfortable 24-hour experience between Muscat and Doha.

The service is intended to seamlessly connect fans to Qatar so that they can attend their respective matches.



### NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. Gurpreet Singh** holder of Indian Passport No. N4867135 has left the company and is no longer employed at **IDEAL STROKE Co. LLC** and its Sister Concern. He is not authorized to represent our organization in any dealing. Those who will deal with him will do so on their own risk and any official claim whatsoever against above shall not be entertained hereafter of this publication.

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### Embassy of India Muscat

#### Vacancy for the post of “Arabic Interpreter/Translator”

Applications are invited for the post of Arabic Interpreter/translator in the Embassy of India, Muscat. The pay scale of Interpreter/translator is RO 600-18-870-26-1130-34-1470 with starting salary of OMR 600.000 per month. The candidate should be of age group 25-35 years and should be holding a postgraduate degree in Arabic from a recognized university preferably with degree/diploma in Arabic translation. Applicant should possess sound knowledge of English, Hindi and Arabic languages, should have good communication and translation/interpretation skills and also conversant with computers & social media platforms. Apart from Translation / Interpretation skills, the applicant is expected to carry out protocol duties and liaise with Govt and civic bodies. Candidates with prior working experience would be preferred. Interested candidates meeting the required criteria may visit Indian Embassy website and fill out an application form and send their detailed CV along with scanned copies of educational degree/ experience, **Oman residence visa (mandatory)** and copies of reference provided by previous employer, if any at [secondsecadmn@gmail.com](mailto:secondsecadmn@gmail.com) latest by **August 25, 2022**.



## OMAN CHLORINE S.A.O.G. عمان كلورين ش.م.ع.م

P.O. BOX 193, POSTAL CODE 134, MUSCAT, SULTANATE OF OMAN TEL: 24695839 - FAX: 24695768

### Chairman’s Report For the six months period ended 30 June 2022

Dear Shareholders,

After greetings,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present the unaudited result of parent and group for the six months period ended June 30, 2022.

The summarized operating result for the above period is as under-

| Details                                                      | Parent             |                    |                   | Consolidated       |                   |                   |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                                                              | 30-06-22<br>RO'000 | 30-06-21<br>RO'000 | Variance<br>% YOY | 30-06-22<br>RO'000 | 30-6-21<br>RO'000 | Variance<br>% YOY |
| Sales                                                        | 6,694              | 4,499              | 48.79             | 15,445             | 8,383             | 84.24             |
| Cost of sales                                                | (3,846)            | (2,583)            | 48.90             | (9,658)            | (6,162)           | 56.73             |
| Gross profit                                                 | 2,848              | 1,916              | 48.64             | 5,787              | 2,221             | 160.56            |
| Selling and distribution expenses                            | (544)              | (472)              | 15.25             | (1,408)            | (997)             | 41.22             |
| General and administrative expenses                          | (507)              | (527)              | (3.80)            | (969)              | (946)             | 2.43              |
| Operating profit                                             | 1,797              | 917                | 95.97             | 3,410              | 278               | 1,126.62          |
| Finance charges                                              | (81)               | (32)               | 153.13            | (1,231)            | (1,363)           | (9.68)            |
| Other income                                                 | 149                | 110                | 35.45             | 113                | 98                | 15.31             |
| Share of loss of Joint Venture                               | -                  | -                  | -                 | (152)              | (158)             | (3.80)            |
| Profit before taxation                                       | 1,865              | 995                | 87.44             | 2,140              | (1,145)           | (286.90)          |
| Taxation                                                     | (290)              | (142)              | 104.23            | (290)              | (142)             | 104.23            |
| Profit for the period                                        | 1,575              | 853                | 84.64             | 1,850              | (1,287)           | (243.75)          |
| Profit attributable to parent co. shareholders               | -                  | -                  | -                 | 1,762              | (318)             | (654.09)          |
| Share of profit/(loss) attributable to minority shareholders | -                  | -                  | -                 | 88                 | (969)             | (109.08)          |

#### 1. Performance Overview of Parent Company:

- The company commenced the commercial operations of our brownfield expansion for Caustic Soda Plant (30 MTD) from November 2021.
- The company consistently maintained the capacity utilization of the plant at higher level and achieved over 94.8% capacity utilization from the existing plant and 107.9 % from brownfield expansion plant during first half of 2022. The combined capacity of the plant now is 75 DMT.
- The enhanced capacity due to expansion will lead to higher customer retention and improved revenues in the coming years.
- The overall sales volume increased during 2022 by 54.5% owing to higher prevailing selling prices of our products and increased capacity.
- The export sales volume was higher, and this is partly on account of reaching new areas in MENA, East Africa, and some European regions.
- The global caustic and Calcium Chloride prices increased substantially due to global supply chain constraints resulting in higher realization of prices in our products.

Taking into the account the competitive environment, the profitability of the parent company is to be considered exceptional.

#### 2. Performance overview of Subsidiaries

##### 2.1 Union Chlorine LLC (UAE)

For the first six months of 2022, the company posted a positive EBITDA of RO 1607K (Q1-2021 RO 140K). Profit of RO 528K reported during first six months of 2022 against the net loss was RO 879K corresponding period 2021. The parent company’s share of profit including its 100% subsidiary (OIDC) is RO 316K. The plant operating at capacity utilization of 103%, the revenue was higher due to higher international price of caustic flakes.

Amount RO ('000)

| Particulars             | H1-2022 | H1 2021 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|
| Revenue                 | 4,565   | 2,660   |
| EBITDA                  | 1,607   | 140     |
| Profit/(Loss) after Tax | 528     | (879)   |

##### 2.2 Gulf Chlorine LLC (Qatar)

For the first six months of 2022, the company posted a positive EBITDA of RO 853K (RO.171K in H1-2021). The net loss was RO 252K (RO.1258 -H1-2021) The parent company’s share of loss is RO 129K.

Amount RO ('000)

| Particulars      | H1 2022 | H1 2021 |
|------------------|---------|---------|
| Revenue          | 4,541   | 1,656   |
| EBITDA           | 853     | 171     |
| (Loss) after Tax | (252)   | (1,258) |

Revenue during the period has jumped from RO 1,656K to RO 4,541K, Company since March 2022 is operating at 100% capacity and is expected to operate at 100% capacity for remaining period of 2022.

#### 2.3 Oman Industrial Development Company SAOC

Oman Industrial Development Company is fully owned by Oman Chlorine and the company holds an 11.1% economic interest in Union Chloride LLC – Abu Dhabi. posted loss of RO 1019/- for the first six months of 2022 (RO. 1,399/- for 2021).

#### 3. Outlook:

##### a. Parent:

The parent company awarded the contract for the brownfield expansion of the existing Chlor Alkali plant from 45 TPD to 75 TPD which is now fully operational and for new Calcium Chloride plant with the capacity of 85 TPD in 2019, which became operational in July 2022. The above expansion will lead to cost optimization, which will enable the parent company to cater for local demand and compete effectively with imports in the local market and also to offer better price to export customers.

The commissioning of leading industrial ventures in Oman will improve the demand for the products and the impact will be fully reflected in the profitability once the proposed expansion goes on stream.

We are cautiously optimistic about product demand and stable price during 2022.

#### Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

|                                                                 | Parent               |                      | Consolidated         |                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                                                                 | 30/06/2022<br>RO'000 | 31/12/2021<br>RO'000 | 30/06/2022<br>RO'000 | 31/12/2021<br>RO'000 |
| <b>ASSETS</b>                                                   |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| <b>Non-current assets</b>                                       |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Goodwill                                                        | -                    | -                    | -                    | -                    |
| Property, plant and equipment                                   | 16,468               | 15,859               | 77,211               | 77,520               |
| Investment in subsidiaries                                      | 14,353               | 13,544               | -                    | -                    |
| Subordinated Loan                                               | 2,302                | 2,302                | -                    | -                    |
| Investment in Joint Venture                                     | -                    | -                    | 1,146                | 1,295                |
| Right of use assets                                             | 810                  | 831                  | 2,511                | 2,556                |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>                                 | <b>33,933</b>        | <b>32,536</b>        | <b>80,868</b>        | <b>81,371</b>        |
| <b>Current assets</b>                                           |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Inventories and consumables                                     | 1,210                | 1,178                | 2,558                | 2,850                |
| Trade and other receivables                                     | 3,486                | 3,540                | 8,351                | 7,488                |
| Cash and bank balances                                          | 1,779                | 1,473                | 2,307                | 2,712                |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                                     | <b>6,475</b>         | <b>6,191</b>         | <b>13,216</b>        | <b>13,050</b>        |
| <b>Total assets</b>                                             | <b>40,408</b>        | <b>38,727</b>        | <b>94,084</b>        | <b>94,421</b>        |
| <b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>                                   |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| <b>Capital and reserves</b>                                     |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Share capital                                                   | 6,810                | 6,810                | 6,810                | 6,810                |
| Statutory reserve                                               | 2,848                | 2,848                | 2,848                | 2,848                |
| General reserve                                                 | 850                  | 850                  | 850                  | 850                  |
| Cashflow hedge reserve                                          | -                    | -                    | (217)                | (270)                |
| Retained earnings                                               | 18,053               | 17,669               | 11,507               | 10,937               |
| <b>Equity attributable to the Parent Company's shareholders</b> | <b>28,561</b>        | <b>28,177</b>        | <b>21,798</b>        | <b>21,175</b>        |
| <b>Capital contribution from Non-controlling interest</b>       | -                    | -                    | 7,128                | 7,128                |
| <b>Non-controlling interest</b>                                 | -                    | -                    | (1,605)              | (1,728)              |
| <b>Total equity</b>                                             | <b>28,561</b>        | <b>28,177</b>        | <b>27,321</b>        | <b>26,575</b>        |
| <b>Non-current liabilities</b>                                  |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Term loan                                                       | 5,751                | 4,601                | 45,859               | 46,719               |
| Liability on land lease non current                             | 829                  | 830                  | 2,565                | 2,569                |
| End of service benefits                                         | 155                  | 157                  | 303                  | 302                  |
| Retentions due to contractors                                   | -                    | -                    | -                    | -                    |
| Cashflow hedge reserve                                          | -                    | -                    | 360                  | 356                  |
| Deferred tax liability                                          | 771                  | 742                  | 771                  | 742                  |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b>                            | <b>7,506</b>         | <b>6,330</b>         | <b>49,858</b>        | <b>50,688</b>        |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>                                      |                      |                      |                      |                      |
| Trade and other payables                                        | 3,317                | 3,633                | 9,070                | 9,432                |
| Liability on land lease current                                 | 73                   | 73                   | 132                  | 114                  |
| Retentions due to contractors                                   | -                    | -                    | -                    | -                    |
| Current portion – Term Loan                                     | 175                  | 218                  | 5,233                | 3,443                |
| Short term borrowings                                           | 458                  | -                    | 2,152                | 3,778                |
| Cashflow hedge reserve                                          | -                    | -                    | -                    | 95                   |
| Provision for income tax                                        | 318                  | 296                  | 318                  | 296                  |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>                                | <b>4,341</b>         | <b>4,220</b>         | <b>16,905</b>        | <b>17,158</b>        |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                                        | <b>11,847</b>        | <b>10,550</b>        | <b>66,763</b>        | <b>67,846</b>        |
| <b>Total equity and liabilities</b>                             | <b>40,408</b>        | <b>38,727</b>        | <b>94,084</b>        | <b>94,421</b>        |
| <b>Net asset per share</b>                                      | <b>0.419</b>         | <b>0.414</b>         | <b>0.401</b>         | <b>0.329</b>         |

#### b. Subsidiaries

##### Union Chlorine LLC

The company has established long term supply agreements with major oil and gas companies and has also established direct supplies to end user, this is expected to positively reflect in the performance. The management is continuously adopting cost cutting measures and has also managed to secure the lowest industrial electricity tariff by getting higher ICV and economic multiplier rating.

Management outlook for the selling Prices in 2022 remains positive which is expected to generate positive returns and healthy inflow.

##### Gulf Chlorine WLL

The company expects promising outlook in terms of production, revenue growth, EBITDA and bottom-line for remaining months of 2022. During the period the company has entered various export markets and is expecting to further increase its exports in GCC, MENA and Europe in future.

The JV, producing Calcium chloride, in which the company holds 35% share is operating at 95% capacity as there is strong demand for the products.

##### Oman Industrial Development Co. SAOC (OIDC)

The improved operating performance of Union Chlorine LLC will result in improved operating performance of OIDC.

The above measures will enhance the future cash flows of the company and its subsidiaries and will improve the financial leverage of the group.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management, we wish to express our loyalty and thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik May Allah protect Him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its People.

The Board records its sincere appreciation to Government Authorities for their support and encouragement in particular the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, the Capital Market Authority as well as all the employees of the company and management for their sincere efforts, leading to the continued success of the company.

Said Mohamed Ahmed Al Harthy  
Chairman of Board of Directors

#### Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the 6 months period ended 30 June 2022

|                                                                                                         | Parent             |                    | Consolidated       |                    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
|                                                                                                         | 30-06-22<br>RO'000 | 30-06-21<br>RO'000 | 30-06-22<br>RO'000 | 30-06-21<br>RO'000 |
| Revenue                                                                                                 | 6,694              | 4,499              | 15,445             | 8,383              |
| Cost of sales                                                                                           | (3,846)            | (2,583)            | (9,658)            | (6,162)            |
| Gross profit                                                                                            | 2,848              | 1,916              | 5,787              | 2,221              |
| Selling and distribution expenses                                                                       | (544)              | (472)              | (1,408)            | (997)              |
| General and administrative expenses                                                                     | (507)              | (527)              | (969)              | (946)              |
| Operating profit                                                                                        | 1,797              | 917                | 3,410              | 278                |
| Finance charges                                                                                         | (81)               | (32)               | (1,231)            | (1,363)            |
| Other income                                                                                            | 149                | 110                | 113                | 98                 |
| Share of loss of Joint Venture                                                                          | -                  | -                  | (152)              | (158)              |
| Profit before taxation                                                                                  | 1,865              | 995                | 2,140              | (1,145)            |
| Current tax                                                                                             | (261)              | (156)              | (261)              | (156)              |
| Deferred tax                                                                                            | (29)               | 14                 | (29)               | 14                 |
| Profit for the period                                                                                   | 1,575              | 853                | 1,850              | (1,287)            |
| <b>Other comprehensive income:</b>                                                                      |                    |                    |                    |                    |
| <i>Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss:</i>                                         |                    |                    |                    |                    |
| Currency translation difference of foreign subsidiaries                                                 | -                  | -                  | -                  | -                  |
| Net changes in cash flow hedge reserve                                                                  | -                  | -                  | 88                 | (362)              |
| <b>Total comprehensive income</b>                                                                       | <b>1,575</b>       | <b>853</b>         | <b>1,938</b>       | <b>(1,649)</b>     |
| <b>Results attributable to:</b>                                                                         |                    |                    |                    |                    |
| Parent Company shareholders                                                                             | -                  | -                  | 1,762              | (318)              |
| Non-controlling interest                                                                                | -                  | -                  | 88                 | (969)              |
|                                                                                                         | <b>1,575</b>       | <b>853</b>         | <b>1,850</b>       | <b>(1,287)</b>     |
| <b>Total comprehensive income attributable to:</b>                                                      |                    |                    |                    |                    |
| Parent Company shareholders                                                                             | -                  | -                  | 1,815              | (534)              |
| Non-controlling interest                                                                                | -                  | -                  | 123                | (1,115)            |
|                                                                                                         | <b>1,575</b>       | <b>853</b>         | <b>1,938</b>       | <b>(1,649)</b>     |
| <b>Earnings per share on profit attributable to the Parent Company shareholders – Basic and diluted</b> | <b>0.0231</b>      | <b>0.0125</b>      | <b>0.0259</b>      | <b>(0.0047)</b>    |

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of a written request.



■ UNESCO-LISTED BUILDING IN SANAA COLLAPSES



People inspect a collapsed Unesco-listed building in the old city of the Yemeni capital Sanaa on Wednesday following heavy rains. – AFP

# Japan cabinet recast as Church ties raise anger

**TOKYO:** Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (pictured) reshuffled his cabinet on Wednesday amid growing public anger about the ruling party’s ties to the controversial Unification Church, saying the group had held no sway over party policy.

The Liberal Democratic Party’s longstanding links to the Unification Church, which critics call a cult, has become a major liability for Kishida in the month following the killing of former premier Shinzo Abe, helping send Kishida’s approval ratings to the lowest since he took office in October.

Abe’s suspected killer has said his mother, a member of the church, was bankrupted by it and blamed the politician for supporting it. Founded in South Korea in the 1950s and known for its mass weddings, the group has come under criticism for its fundraising and other issues.

Since then, a dozen or so politicians from the conservative LDP have disclosed links to the church or affiliated organisations - such as speaking at events - highlighting a relationship with the fiercely anti-communist church that stretches back to the



Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida speaks during a press conference at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo on Wednesday. – AFP

**The Liberal Democratic Party’s longstanding links to the Unification Church has become a major liability for Kishida in the month following the killing of former premier Shinzo Abe**

Cold War. “We need to respect freedom of religion but it’s only natural that these groups need to obey laws and be dealt with if they veer from them,” Kishida told a news conference, adding he did not believe he had any connection with the church. “I don’t think the

Unification Church’s policies have unjustly influenced party policies,” he said.

Key cabinet members, such as the foreign and finance ministers, retained their posts, but some seven ministers who had disclosed links to the church were moved out of the cabinet.

Among those was Abe’s younger brother, Nobuo Kishi, who had been defence minister, although many had expected him to leave for health reasons.

The cabinet shake-up came earlier than analysts had expected, underscoring how quickly the issue has spun into a crisis for Kishida. “Criticism over the Unification Church caused a big drop in public support for the administration and stopping that decline was a big reason for bringing forward the reshuffle of the cabinet and major party positions,” said Shigenobu Tamura, a political commentator who previously worked for the LDP.

Kishida’s support had fallen to 46 per cent from 59 per cent just three weeks ago, public broadcaster NHK said on Monday, his lowest rating since becoming prime minister in October. — Reuters

# Sri Lanka protest camp clears out after crackdown against leaders

**COLOMBO:** Protesters in Sri Lanka who brought down the previous government announced they were dismantling their main demonstration site near the president’s office on Wednesday in the wake of a crackdown against their leaders.

The group led by university students and leftist parties said they were clearing out their tents along the Galle Face seafront promenade in the capital.

A spokesman said they had also withdrawn four court challenges against a police order for them to vacate the area that claimed their tents were a hindrance to nearby hotels.

Activists were seen taking down their tents and removing other structures they had put up supporting their struggle against the administration.

The demonstrations began on April 9 as a protest against shortages of essentials such as fuel, food and medicines in Sri Lanka’s worst ever economic crisis.

They peaked when tens of thousands poured into Colombo and overran Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s presidential palace on July 9, forcing him to flee and eventually resign.

Days after Rajapaksa fled



Protesters dismantle their tents from a seafront tent camp that became the focal point of months-long nationwide demonstrations, amid the country’s economic crisis, in Colombo, on Wednesday. – Reuters

to Singapore and announced his resignation, troops evicted protesters occupying the palace as well as the home and office of the prime minister.

Security forces were accused of using excessive force to evict the demonstrators, with more than 80 people suffering injuries that required hospitalisation.

Since then, dozens of activists have been arrested on charges of damaging state property.

A top trade union leader, Joseph Stalin, was released on bail on Monday following international criticism over his

arrest last week on a charge of causing \$90 worth of damage.

**GOTABAYA SEEKS THAILAND ENTRY**

Gotabaya Rajapaksa is seeking a new safe haven in Thailand as his Singapore visa runs out, a source and the Thai foreign ministry said on Wednesday.

“His Singapore visa runs out on Thursday,” a close associate of Rajapaksa said in Colombo.

“He had applied for an extension, but it had not come through as of Wednesday morning” — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KUTUPALONG

## 2 Rohingya leaders killed in Bangladesh camps

Two Rohingya community leaders were shot dead in one of Bangladesh’s refugee camps, police said on Wednesday, the latest in a string of killings in the settlements.

The sprawling camps house nearly one million Rohingya refugees that fled to Bangladesh after a military offensive in neighbouring Myanmar five years ago. Police spokesman Kamran Hossain said at least eight suspected Rohingya assailants shot Syed Hossain, 40, and Abu



Taleb, 35, at around midnight. “Both were rushed to hospitals where they were declared dead,” he said, adding that a manhunt was launched and security stepped up in the camps.

TUNIS

## Tunisian court halts president’s purge of judges

A Tunisian court has halted President Kais Saied’s dismissal of around 50 judges, a lawyer said on Wednesday, underscoring the continued independence of courts despite Saied’s moves to assume wider authority over the judiciary.

Saied dismissed 57 judges on June 1, accusing them of corruption and protecting terrorists - charges that the Tunisian Judges’ Association said were mostly politically motivated. The lawyer, Kamel



Ben Massoud, said that the Tunis administrative court had rejected the appeals of at least seven judges but blocked the dismissal of the others, pending a final ruling by a higher court.

ISLAMABAD

## Khan’s aide, TV channel face sedition charges

A close aide to Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Imran Khan and a local media house will face sedition charges, accused of inciting mutiny in the powerful military, the country’s interior minister said on Wednesday.

The charges were related to comments made by Khan adviser Shahbaz Gill and aired on ARY TV on Monday night, which the minister, Rana Sanaullah, said was a planned move to malign the military.

He said the accused would



face sedition charges for inciting mutiny in the military. “We’ve set up a special team to probe it,” he told reporters in Islamabad, adding, “It was a planned move to malign our institutions.”



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## In brief

NEW DELHI



### INDIA TO LIFT CURBS ON TICKET PRICES FROM AUGUST 31

India will remove the fare caps it imposed on domestic airlines in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic from August 31, the country's civil aviation ministry said on Wednesday, lifting restrictions on ticket prices. The government, in a rare move, had regulated fares by imposing a minimum and maximum band based on the flight's duration to prevent ticket prices from spiking due to pent-up demand arising from restrictions on air travel easing. The decision will bring relief to airlines including IndiGo, SpiceJet Ltd, Air India, and Vistara as well as new entrant Akasa Air, allowing them to price tickets freely.

ATHENS



### AROUND 50 MISSING AFTER MIGRANT BOAT SINKS OFF GREECE

Around 50 people are missing after a boat carrying migrants sank off the Greek island of Karpathos in the Aegean Sea, a coastguard official said on Wednesday. "According to the statements of 29 rescued people, there were 80 people on the boat, so up to 50 people are missing," he said. The Greek coastguard is searching for the missing following the shipwreck which happened after the boat left Turkey on Tuesday heading for Italy. The rescue effort included four vessels that were already sailing in the southern Aegean, two coastguard patrol boats and a Greek air force helicopter.

LONDON



### CHILDREN TO BE OFFERED POLIO BOOSTER AS SAMPLES FOUND

Around one million children in London will be offered a polio booster vaccine after the virus was detected in sewage samples across the capital, health officials said on Wednesday. "Following the discovery of type 2 vaccine-derived Poliovirus in sewage in north and east London," a targeted booster does would be offered to children between one and nine, said a health ministry statement. There have been no confirmed cases of the disease, but it has been found at an increasing number of sewage plants across the capital. It was first detected at an east London treatment works earlier this year.



Police officers inspect a residential house destroyed by a Russian military strike in the location given as Marhanets town, in Dnipropetrovsk region, on Wednesday. — Reuters

# Ukraine accuses Russia of using power plant as 'nuclear shield'

KYIV: Ukraine on Wednesday accused Russia of exploiting its position in a nuclear power plant it had seized to target a nearby town in a rocket attack that killed at least 13 people and left many others seriously wounded.

The town Ukraine says Russia targeted - Marhanets - is one that Russia has alleged Ukrainian forces have used in the past to shell Russian forces who are holed up at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant which they took over in March.

Ukraine and Russia have accused each other of imperilling the safety of the vast plant - Europe's largest - by attacking one another in its vicinity.

Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has urged both

sides to exercise restraint, warning of the "very real risk of a nuclear disaster."

And foreign ministers from the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries on Wednesday demanded that Russia immediately hand back control of the plant to Ukraine, something Moscow seems unlikely to do.

There was no immediate comment from Russia on the Ukrainian allegations of a rocket attack on Marhanets and Reuters could not independently verify the allegations.

Moscow says it does not deliberately target civilians in what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine aimed at pre-emptively safeguarding its own security against expansion of the NATO military alliance. Andriy

Yermak, President Volodymyr Zelenskii's chief of staff, accused Russia of launching attacks on Ukrainian towns with impunity from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in the knowledge that it was risky for Ukraine to fight back. "Eighty reactive rockets fired at residential buildings," Yermak wrote on the Telegram messaging service, referring to the attack on Marhanets.

"The terrorist nation is continuing to fight against civilians. The cowardly Russians can't do anything more so they strike towns ignobly hiding at the Zaporizhzhia atomic power station", he wrote.

Ukraine says around 500 Russian troops with heavy vehicles and weapons are stationed at the plant, where Ukrainian technicians continue to work.

### RUSSIAN OIL SUPPLY

Russian oil flows halted to parts of Europe should resume after Hungarian group MOL paid transit fees owed to Ukraine, officials and a minister said, providing a temporary solution to the latest disruption of Russian energy supplies.

Russian state-owned news agency RIA reported the pipeline monopoly Transneft planned to resume oil pumping through the southern branch of the Druzhba, or Friendship, pipeline at 1600 Moscow time (13:00 GMT).

On Tuesday, Transneft said Russian oil pipeline flows had been suspended to parts of central Europe since August 4 because Western sanctions prevented the payment of transit fees from Moscow to Ukraine. — Reuters

## Wildfires rage in France, thousands evacuated

HOSTENS: A wildfire was advancing through the Gironde region of southwestern France on Wednesday, destroying homes and forcing the evacuation of thousands of residents, some of whom had clambered onto rooftops as the flames got closer.

More than 1,000 firefighters backed by water-bombing aircraft were fighting the fire that has razed more than 6,000 hectares and is still burning out of control.

France, like the rest of Europe, is struggling with successive heatwaves and its worst drought on record. Dozens of wildfires are ablaze across the country, including at least four other major ones.

In the village of Hostens in the Gironde, police went door to door telling residents to leave as the fire advanced. Camille Delay fled with her partner and her son, grabbing their two cats, chickens and house insurance

## Europe to consider 'dose-sparing' to increase monkeypox vaccine

LONDON: Health officials in Europe are discussing whether to follow a move by the United States to stretch out scarce monkeypox vaccine supplies, with the World Health Organization calling for more data. There have been 27,800 monkeypox cases - largely among men who have sex with men - and 12 deaths worldwide this year.

Supplies of the key Bavarian Nordic shot, the only vaccine authorised to prevent monkeypox and a key part of the global public health response, are scarce, according to WHO and other government health agencies.

On Tuesday, the US backed using one vial of the vaccine to administer up to five separate doses - instead of a single dose - by injecting a smaller amount in between layers of the skin. The vaccine was designed to be injected into a layer of fat beneath the skin.

This so-called 'dose-sparing' approach has been tried before with other vaccines, including for polio and yellow fever, but evidence is limited on whether it could work for monkeypox.

"The European Medicines Agency (EMA) will discuss the possibility of a dose-sparing approach," an EMA spokesperson said. — Reuters

## Trump declines to answer questions in NY civil probe

NEW YORK: Donald Trump on Wednesday declined to answer questions under oath in New York over alleged fraud at his family business, as legal pressures pile up for the former president whose house was raided by the FBI just two days ago.

Trump said he had "no choice" but to invoke the fifth amendment, which allows individuals to remain silent to protect against self-incrimination under questioning.

In a statement Trump said "I declined to answer the questions under the rights and privileges afforded to every citizen under the United States Constitution," saying he took the advice from his legal counsel.

"When your family, your company, and all the people in your orbit have become the targets of an unfounded, politically motivated Witch Hunt supported by lawyers, prosecutors, and the Fake News Media, you have no choice," Trump said.

"If there was any question in my mind, the raid of my home, Mar-a-Lago, on Monday by the FBI, just two days prior to this deposition, wiped out any uncertainty."

Trump earlier said on social media he was in the offices of New York Attorney General Letitia James, whose investigation is one of several active probes into the brash billionaire's business



Trump said he had "no choice" but to invoke the fifth amendment, which allows individuals to remain silent to protect against self-incrimination under questioning. — AFP

practices and other actions.

The former president took to his Truth Social platform to launch a barrage of attacks on James, branding her a "racist" attorney general who is "trying to 'get Trump.'"

James is conducting "a continuation of the greatest Witch Hunt in U.S. history!" Trump wrote. "My great company, and myself, are being attacked from all sides. Banana Republic!"

James suspects the Trump Organization fraudulently overstated the value of real estate properties when applying for bank loans, while understating them with the tax authorities in order to pay less in taxes.

Trump and his eldest children, Donald Jr and Ivanka, had been

due to start testifying under oath in July but the depositions were postponed due to the death of the former president's first wife.

The Trumps have denied any wrongdoing, and the former Republican leader has charged that the probe is politically motivated.

If James, an African-American Democrat, finds any evidence of financial misconduct, she can sue the Trump Organization for damages but can not file criminal charges, as it is a civil investigation.

Trump's son Eric hit out at James in a tweet on Wednesday, saying his father was sitting "for a deposition in front of the most corrupt Attorney General in the United States." — AFP



Firefighters use water cannon to extinguish a forest fire near Saint-Magne, southwestern France on Wednesday. — AFP

# On the menu at a UK restaurant: Carbon footprint



VALENTINE GRAVELEAU

The writer is a AFP journalist based in London

The menu at The Canteen in southwest England doesn't just let diners know how much a dish costs. They can also check its carbon footprint.

The carrot and beetroot pakora with yoghurt sauce is responsible for just 16 grammes of CO2 emissions. The aubergines with a miso and harissa sauce with tabbouleh and Zaatar toast caused 675 grammes of carbon dioxide.

As customers weigh their options, the menu at the vegetarian restaurant in Bristol includes a comparison with a dish that it does not serve: the emissions from a UK-produced hamburger.

"Three kilos for a burger, wow! I can't believe it," exclaimed Enyioma Anomelechi, a 37-year-old diner sipping outside in the sunshine.

The menu notes that a real beef burger's emissions is "10 times the amount of its vegan alternative".

The carbon footprints of businesses and consumers have

come under growing scrutiny as countries scramble to limit global temperature increases to 1.5 degrees Celsius and to achieve net-zero emission by 2050.

The Canteen became in July the first restaurant to agree to put its carbon footprint on the menu under a campaign spearheaded by UK vegan campaigning charity Viva!

The restaurant's manager, Liam Stock, called the move a way to "see what we are doing; to understand and improve ourselves".

The average British person has an annual carbon footprint of more than 10 tonnes, according to UK government figures.

Britain has set the ambitious goal of reducing harmful emissions by 78 per cent by 2035, compared with 1990 figures, in order to meet its international climate change commitments.

Switching to a plant-based diet is one of the most effective ways for an individual to reduce their

SWITCHING TO A PLANT-BASED DIET IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS FOR AN INDIVIDUAL TO REDUCE THEIR CARBON FOOTPRINT, SAY EXPERTS FROM THE UN'S INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE

carbon footprint, experts from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said in April.

The livestock industry replaces CO2-absorbing forests with land for grazing and soy crops for cattle feed. The animals also belch huge amounts of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

Whether diners will let carbon footprints influence their order choices remains to be seen, but Stock said the menu innovation has stoked interest and support.

"In England if you're a big chain restaurant, it's the law that you have

to have calories on (the menu)," he said.

"But a lot of people are saying... they're more interested in carbon."

While Anomelechi noted the "huge" difference in emissions between a hamburger and other dishes, he said he did not necessarily want to be burdened with knowing his order's calorie count or carbon footprint.

"When I go out to eat I just want to enjoy," he added, noting he would be more inclined to change his ways when grocery shopping.

Laura Hellwig, campaigns manager at Viva, said the carbon footprint figure should become compulsory.

"We are in a climate emergency and consumers have to be able to make informed choices," said the activist.

In her view, "most people would actually choose for the planet" if confronted with a comparison between the carbon footprint of a

meat-based meal and a vegan dish.

Stock said he knew his restaurant's dishes would score low carbon footprints, as most of his ingredients are sourced regionally.

"We didn't have to change anything," he said, while admitting some surprises, such as learning that imported spices drive up emissions.

To calculate the dishes' footprints, The Canteen sent its recipes and the source of the ingredients to a specialised company called MyEmissions.

It is able to calculate the carbon impact from "cradle to store", taking into account farming, processing, transport and packaging.

"If I was choosing between two dishes, maybe depending on how hungry I was, I might choose the one with a lower footprint," said Nathan Johnson, a 43-year-old diner at the restaurant.

That day, he opted for the chef's salad, which racks up 162 grammes of carbon. — AFP

## Floods lay bare social disparity in South Korea

HYONHEE SHIN AND HYEYEON KIM

Using a plastic bowl, Ha In-sik bailed water out of his lower ground apartment in the low-income housing district of Sillim in southwestern Seoul on Wednesday, where flooding caused by torrential rain forced his family to sleep at a nearby park.

The 50-year-old man, along with his wife and daughter, had collected home appliances, furniture, books and even cutlery, and put them outside to see what was salvageable.

The scene bore uncomfortable similarities with the sewage-flooded semi-basement flat depicted in the 2020 Oscar-winning South Korean film that was a tale of growing social disparity in Asia's fourth-largest economy.

The floods have caused inconvenience and monetary losses in the wealthier parts of the capital, like the glitzy Gangnam neighbourhood a few miles away.

But in places like Sillim, the floods have snuffed out what little hope desperate people like Ha had clung to in order just to keep going.

"I've got no money, nothing. But I had come here to live in this basement, as it was only option I had to live with my daughter," Ha said.

"But I'm hopeless now. Everything is gone, there's no help and I don't even have a spoon to eat food with."

Ha wasn't alone in his misery. Other residents in Sillim were scooping up water with large bowls or combing through the detritus to see whatever was still usable.

On Monday, three family members living in the neighbourhood, including a woman with developmental disabilities, drowned in their lower ground apartment.

President Yoon Suk-yeol visited Sillim a day later.

On Wednesday, Yoon apologised for the tragedy and called for measures to improve housing safety to protect old, poor or disabled people and families, like Ha's, whose homes were most vulnerable to flooding.

At least 10 people have perished as a result of the torrential rain that has swept across the northern part of the country since Monday, knocking out power, causing landslides and flooding roads and subways.

This week's deluge brought the heaviest rains in 115 years in Seoul, according to the Korea Meteorological Administration.— Reuters

## FBI search of Trump's home pushes long conflict into public view

MAGGIE HABERMAN, BEN PROTESS, MICHAEL S SCHMIDT, LUKE BROADWATER AND WILLIAM K RASHBAUM

The search carried out on Monday by the FBI at former president Donald Trump's Florida home, a law enforcement action with explosive legal and political implications, was the culmination of a lengthy conflict between a president proud of his disdain for rules and officials charged with protecting the nation's records and secrets.

On one side were officials from the National Archives, which is responsible for making sure all presidential records are preserved according to the law, and the Justice Department, which some people familiar with the inquiry said had grown concerned about the whereabouts of possible classified information and whether Trump's team was being fully forthcoming.

On the other was Trump, who, in apparent contravention of the Presidential Records Act, had taken a trove of material, including sensitive documents, with him to his home at Mar-a-Lago when he left the White House — and then, in the Justice Department's view, had failed to fully comply with requests that he return the disputed material.

After the investigation bubbled along largely out of public view for months, word that agents had arrived early on Monday at the gates of Mar-a-Lago with a search warrant raised new questions about Trump's vulnerability to prosecution and fueled further partisan division.

Trump's aides and allies intensified their criticism of the search on Tuesday, calling it unnecessary and asserting, without citing any evidence, that it was a brazen use of prosecutorial power for political purposes. On his social media site on Tuesday, Trump cast the search as part of "a coordinated attack" that also includes local and state



Former president Donald Trump arrives before speaking at a rally in Waukesha, Wisconsin on August 2.

IT IS CLEAR WHETHER THE SEARCH WAS CARRIED OUT SIMPLY TO ENSURE THAT THE DOCUMENTS AND OTHER MATERIAL WERE PROPERLY TURNED OVER TO THE ARCHIVES OR WHETHER IT WAS A POSSIBLE PRECURSOR TO A PROSECUTION OF TRUMP FOR MISHANDLING CLASSIFIED MATERIAL

prosecutors, alluding to investigations into him being carried out in Georgia and New York.

Christina Bobb, a lawyer and aide to Trump who said she received a

copy of the search warrant, told one interviewer that the agents were looking for "presidential records or any possibly classified material."

At the White House, President Joe Biden's press secretary said he had no advance word of the decision to carry out the search, and at the Justice Department, Attorney General Merrick Garland maintained public silence about the momentous step.

Despite Trump's suggestions that an army of agents raided Mar-a-Lago and stormed through his home, the FBI conducted the search on a day when Trump was out of town and the club was closed. The agents carried out the search in a relatively low-key manner, people with knowledge of the matter said; by some accounts, they were not seen donning the conspicuous navy-blue jackets with the agency's initials emblazoned on the back that are commonly worn when executing search warrants.

Another person familiar with the search said agents began going through a basement storage unit, where items such as beach chairs and umbrellas are kept. — *New York Times*

# Taliban torn over reforms one year after seizing power

EMMA CLARK, ABDULLAH HASRAT AND JAVED TANVEER

One year on from the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, some cracks are opening within their ranks over the crucial question of just how much reform their leaders can tolerate.

Infamous during their first reign for their brutal crackdowns on rights and freedoms, the group vowed to rule differently this time. On a superficial level at least, they appear to have changed in some respects.

Officials in Kabul have embraced technology, while cricket matches are cheered in full stadiums. Televisions were banned under the Taliban government's first incarnation, while Afghans now have access to the internet and social media. Girls are allowed to attend primary school and women journalists are interviewing government officials — unthinkable during the Taliban's first stint in power in the 1990s.

The group's hardline core, composed of battle-hardened veteran fighters, is against any significant ideological change that could be viewed as a sign of capitulation to their enemies in the West.

"You have one (Taliban) camp, which is pushing ahead with what they're seeing as reforms, and another camp that seems to think even these meagre reforms are too much," said Ibraheem Bahiss, an Afghanistan analyst with International Crisis Group.

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The United States and its allies — which had bankrolled Afghanistan for 20 years — have locked the country out of the global banking system and billions in frozen assets abroad, as they hold out for reforms from the Taliban.

Without significant progress, it is the Afghan people who suffer as the country reels under a massive economic crisis that has seen some families choose between selling their organs or their infant daughters.

On whether the Taliban are even capable of reform, analysts are wary that recent policy changes amount to little more than "tokenism".

"There are some cases where we could point to an evolution in policy, but let's be very clear... We're still looking at an organisation that has refused to move beyond very retrograde, dogmatic views," said Michael Kugelman, an Afghanistan specialist with the Washington-based Wilson Center think tank.

Most secondary schools for girls remain closed. Many women have been forced out of government work, while many fear venturing out and being chastised by the Taliban.

Simple joys such as music and card games are strictly controlled in the most conservative areas, while protests have been crushed and journalists regularly threatened or detained.

Demands from the West for an inclusive government were ignored, and the assassination of Al Qaeda's leader in Kabul last week underlined the Taliban's ongoing ties with terror groups.

It is from the Taliban's power base of southern Kandahar that the secretive supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada gathers his powerful inner circle of veteran fighters and clerics to impose a harsh interpretation of law.

And for them, ideological concerns outweigh any political or economic drivers to effect change.

"The needs of the Afghans remain the same as 20 years ago," Mohammad Omar Khitabi, a member of a council of clerics who advise Akhundzada in Kandahar, said.

His thoughts are echoed by Kandahar's Vice and Virtue Director Abdul Rahman Tayabi, another close aide of the supreme leader. "Our people do not have too many demands, like people in other countries might have," he said.

Afghan families were left stunned in March when Akhundzada overturned the education ministry's decision to reopen secondary schools for girls. Some analysts believe he felt uneasy over what could be seen by hardliners as an act of surrender to the West on girls' rights.— AFP



## ENTERTAINING THE CHILDREN

A clown carries a child during a show amidst the rubble of a building destroyed in the latest round of fighting between Israel and Palestinians, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. An Egypt-brokered ceasefire reached late on Sunday ended the intense fighting that killed 46 people including 16 children and wounded 360 in the enclave, according to Gaza's health ministry. — AFP

# ‘Why are we being ignored’, plead the hungry in Ethiopia’s Afar

AYMERIC VINCENOT

From a makeshift camp in Ethiopia's Afar region for people displaced by war, herder Abdu Robso stares in bewilderment at the food aid trucks rolling up the nearby hill towards Tigray.

"Why is this food going to Tigray and not feeding us," the hungry 50-year-old ponders as the World Food Programme convoy slowly winds along the dusty road linking Tigray and the port in neighbouring Djibouti where international aid arrives for the landlocked country.

Along with dozens of men, women and children in the camp in Erebti, an emaciated Abdu says he has been struggling to survive with almost nothing to eat.

The displaced claim they are being ignored while the world focuses on Tigray, the northernmost region ravaged by the brutal conflict that erupted between Tigrayan rebels and Ethiopian federal forces in November 2020.

Fighting has eased since the government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) each declared a truce in March but northern Ethiopia remains in the grip of a humanitarian crisis that has left millions in need of emergency aid.

In January, Abdu and his family had to hastily flee their hometown of Abala, about 60 kilometres away on the border with Tigray when the TPLF bombarded the area and advanced into Afar.

After days of walking and an hours-long truck journey, Abdu along with his wife and several of their 22 children reached a camp for displaced people in Afdera, hundreds of kilometres from Erebti.

But after the TPLF withdrew from Afar in April, the regional authorities told the displaced to return home, promising help.

Abdu and his family headed back to Erebti, where they are still waiting for aid.

"We answered the call and here we are with nothing," he said.

The residents of Erebti take shelter from the searing heat under plastic sheets stretched under trees on the edge of a dry riverbed that lies below the road.

Even as lunchtime approaches, the fires remain unlit. Children eat some fruit taken from the trees. The weakest sleep.

"Trucks carrying aid for Tigray pass here. What about us? What have we done wrong? Why is no aid coming here? We are also hungry," protests Aldim Abdela, a 28-year-old shepherd.

Mustapha Ali Boko says the TPLF knows how to mobilise the strong Tigrayan diaspora and its international

FIGHTING HAS EASED SINCE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE TIGRAY PEOPLE'S LIBERATION FRONT (TPLF) EACH DECLARED A TRUCE IN MARCH BUT NORTHERN ETHIOPIA REMAINS IN THE GRIP OF A HUMANITARIAN CRISIS THAT HAS LEFT MILLIONS IN NEED OF EMERGENCY AID

networks, built up during the 27 years that the party dominated national politics until Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power in 2018.

"The reason is that Tigray has a strong leadership and we (the Afar) don't," the 45-year-old says, complaining of "discrimination" by the international community.

In Erebti, he says, "some sleep on an empty stomach".

"People don't have medicines... they don't have food and water."

However, the WFP's country director for Ethiopia, Claude Jibidar, insisted: "WFP has continuously been delivering food to the Afar region. And I know that sometimes, it's less talked about but it is being done."

Across all of northern Ethiopia — Tigray, Afar and Amhara — more than 13 million people are in need of food aid, according to the United Nations.

In July, the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA said the situation in Afar remained "dire with alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition" due to the combined effects of drought and conflict, ensuing displacement, lack of market access, and high food prices.



The displaced claim they are being ignored while the world focuses on Tigray, the northernmost region ravaged by the brutal conflict that erupted between Tigrayan rebels and Ethiopian federal forces in November 2020. — AFP

Ali Boko says that the only aid has come from a local charity, the Afar Pastoralist Development Association.

APDA official Valerie Browning, an Australian nurse who is married to an Afar and has lived in the region for 33 years, says she has never seen such extreme conditions.

"No Afar wants the people of Tigray to starve. That's obvious, but on the other side, the world and the Tigray people and the government of Ethiopia should not want the Afar to starve... and the unfortunate thing is that this is happening," she says.

"The humanitarian situation is beyond crisis."

The people in Erebti say it is impossible to return to Abala.

It is now a virtual ghost town, abandoned by residents, its stores all empty, according to journalists who visited.

"I went to Abala, I saw that my house had burned down, all the houses had burned down," says Ali Boko. "Our homes are destroyed and our cattle have disappeared."

"The whole town has been looted," adds Abdu Robso.

The hospital has been wrecked, its doors and windows destroyed, and stripped of equipment such as resuscitation and X-ray devices, incubators, beds and mattresses.

Only a dozen families have returned.

Ali Mohammed says his daughter was wounded in the fighting, and so he was unable to go far.

"They took a lot of things from the house, my TV, my laptop..." says the 45-year-old farmer.

"Conditions are very harsh. The flour is full of weevils. We sift it, but when we eat it it tastes sour. We have no oil, no onions, we eat berbere (a local spice mixture) mixed with water. — AFP

# sport

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## OFA all set for Super Cup match in Salalah

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

The new domestic footballing season 2022/2023 will begin on Friday as the Super Cup match will take place between His Majesty's Cup champion and Omantel league title holder, Al Seeb, and the runner up of Omantel league, Al Nahdha. The match will kick off at 6:05 pm on Friday at Al Saada Sports Complex under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, in expected presence of officials.

Al Seeb, coached by Romanian coach Ilie Stan, will look forward to capture their first Super Cup title while Al Nahdha team, coached by the national experienced coach Hamed al Azzani, will chase up for their third title. The super cup match is back in action after two years of absence. Dhofar won the latest Cup in 2019 after beating Sur 4-0 in the match that was held at Al Rustaq Sports Complex on 13th September 2019.

Al Seeb and Al Nahdha teams are arrived to Salalah on



Wednesday with a welcoming reception from OFA team. Few warm up sessions are left for both teams to gear up and shape the final readiness ahead of the final super cup clash.

The Oman Football Association (OFA), the organiser, is all set to held the match as an official commencement of the season. OFA announced that the technical meeting and the pre-press conference of both coaches is scheduled on Thursday afternoon at the Millennium Resort Salalah.

The national umpire Yahya bin Ahmed al Balushi will officiate the opening match of the new season. The 29 years old was the referee for the Super Cup match in 2019 and he was among the umpiring squad of the HM Football Cup match in 2021/2022.

It is expected that during the podium ceremony, some laser and spot lighting shows with music will take place. Many valuable prizes and giveaways will be distributed for fans during the festival of Super Cup match including a sedan car and other awards.



## Sur Training Camp and Ranking Race puts sailors through their paces ahead of busy season of regattas

MUSCAT: Thirty young sailors arrived at the Oman Sail Sur Sailing School on Sunday August 7 to take part in a 14-day training camp as they prepare for a busy season of regattas, including the Arab Sailing Championships in October. Each day the sailors will be put through their paces with two sessions on the water to develop technique and boat handling skills, along with fitness and education in health and nutrition.

A Ranking Race will take place at the end of the camp to determine final positions for the regatta squads, bringing together sailors from all four of Oman Sail's Sailing Schools. Sailors from Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7, RS:X and iQFOiL windsurfing will be in attendance, and Optimist sailors will be able to learn from an expert Optimist coach and professional sailor in the second week.

Ahmed bin Nasser al Qasmi, Training Camp Project Manager, said, "We have a busy season ahead, culminating in the Arab Sailing Championships at the Barceló Mussanah Resort from 11-15 October, so we are working towards that date by preparing the sailors in the best way we can. Over the next two weeks, they will train together, learn from each other and the coaches and gain an understanding of how to become better sailors and stronger athletes.

He added, "The camp will be an exciting experience for the squads, and we look forward to seeing who rises to the challenge during the Ranking Race."

Approximately 50 sailors will take part in the Ranking Race, each competing for a place in the final Arab Sailing Championship team, which will take on sailors from 14 countries across the region.

## British track cycling team head to Munich much-changed since Tokyo

LONDON: Britain's track cycling team head to Munich for the European Championships barely recognisable from the squad that topped the medal table at the Tokyo Olympics 12 months ago.

Only five of the 18 riders who travelled to Germany competed at the Izu velodrome while three of the four sectional head coaches have changed in the last year and the one remaining - women's endurance coach Monica Greenwood - will be at her last event before stepping down.

Fresh faces at the mid-point of an Olympic cycle are not unusual and several big names missing here - Dame Laura Kenny, Katie Archibald, Elinor Barker and Ryan Owens among them - are expected back. But the overhaul in the coaching ranks points to bigger changes.

Sir Jason Kenny's appointment

as men's sprint coach made the most headlines, while Australia's four-time world champion Kaarle McCulloch has taken over the women's sprint team and Monica's husband Ben Greenwood has replaced Iain Dyer as men's endurance coach. Monica's replacement has not yet been named.

"It's been busy!" performance director Stephen Park said of the turnover. "As with athletes, there are certain times where you kind of have a change in the guard."

"There are some people within our team who we've maybe felt were getting longer in the tooth, maybe they've got a way of working that we don't think is necessarily appropriate with the direction of the culture that we want. Equally, there are others who have taken other opportunities to move on."

Speaking to riders during the

Commonwealth Games it was clear several appreciated hearing fresh voices, though the women's endurance squad will be sorry to lose Monica Greenwood, only appointed last year but already stepping back as she continues to race on the road herself.

The new coaching team is an inexperienced one. Ben Greenwood spent three years working in British Cycling's academy before stepping up in March, but both Kenny and McCulloch are in their first coaching roles since retirement.

With qualification for the Paris Olympics starting next year, they must hit the ground running.

"Clearly they don't have the years of coaching knowledge and coaching experience that some of our outgoing coaches have," Park added. "We've got work to do to support them as we go through that programme, but I think the

spirit and the mood in the camp was fantastic."

Given the changes, Park warned Great Britain must "manage our expectations accordingly" looking ahead to Paris, though the Scot said much the same before watching his team dominate across all disciplines in Tokyo.

While track undergoes an overhaul, the BMX freestyle squad is headed by Olympic medallists Charlotte Worthington and Declan Brooks, and mountain bike champion Tom Pidcock targets European glory ahead of his main target in the world championships at the end of the month.

Munich will be the second time the European Championships of several sports have been brought together as one event, four years on from the 2018 Games jointly hosted by Berlin and Glasgow.

— dpa





# Oman Cricket to host Asia Cup 2022 Qualifiers

MUSCAT: The Qualifiers of the Asia Cup 2022 will be hosted by Oman from August 20 to 24, 2022 at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat. UAE, Kuwait, Hong Kong and Singapore will be competing for a single berth in the marquee event which includes test playing nations India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan.

Expressing his delight by this decision of the ACC with co-ordination with Sri Lanka Cricket, Pankaj Khimji, Chairman of Oman Cricket and Vice-President of the ACC,

said, “ We are indeed grateful on being chosen as hosts to stage the Qualifiers of the Asia Cup 2022. We assure Oman to be at the top of its hospitality and its facilities for all the teams in the Qualifiers. We also offer sincere thanks to ACC and SLC to select Oman as the venue for the Qualifiers of ACC’s marquee event.”

Teams for the Qualifiers of the Asia Cup booked their berth contesting in the ACC Western Region 2020 - UAE and Kuwait hosted by Oman and ACC Eastern Region 2020 - Singapore and Hong Kong hosted by Thailand.

## Australian cricket captain Lanning takes indefinite break

SYDNEY: Australian women’s cricket captain Meg Lanning on Wednesday said that she will take an indefinite break from the game to “spend time focusing on myself”.

The record-breaking 30-year-old made the announcement just days after leading her all-conquering team to Commonwealth Games gold.

“After a busy couple of years I’ve made the decision to take a step back to enable me to spend time focusing on myself,” Lanning said in a statement.

“I’m grateful for the support of CA (Cricket Australia) and my team-mates and ask that my privacy is respected during this time.”

Commonwealth Games gold in Birmingham capped a hectic two-and-a-half-year string of successes for Australia and Lanning which included a World Cup triumph earlier this year.

“We’re proud of Meg for acknowledging that she needs a break and will continue to support her during this time,” Cricket Australia women’s head of performance Shawn Flegler said.

“She’s been an incredible contributor to Australian cricket over the last decade, achieving remarkable feats both individually and as part of the team,” Flegler added.

“The welfare of our players is always our number one priority and we’ll continue to work



with Meg to ensure she gets the support and space she needs.”

Debuting at 18, Lanning’s skill with the bat shattered records from early on, holding the mark

for the most centuries in women’s one-day international cricket.

Becoming skipper at 21, she has led the side 171 times.

The loss of Lanning comes

ahead of Australia’s T20 tour of India in December and after the departure of head coach Matthew Mott, who led the team for seven years. — AFP

## Afif hits unbeaten 85 as Bangladesh post 256-9 in Zimbabwe ODI

HARARE: Middle-order batter Afif Hossain top scored with an unbeaten 85 for Bangladesh in a dead-rubber third one-day international against series winners Zimbabwe in Harare on Wednesday.

The tourists, who also lost the preceding Twenty20 series, made 256-9 in 50 overs after being put in to bat by star run-getter Sikandar Raza, standing in as captain for the injured Regis Chakabva.

Hossain faced 81 balls and struck two sixes and six fours as seventh-ranked Bangladesh — eight places above Zimbabwe — sought to regain some pride at the end of the six-match visit to southern Africa.

Opener Anamul Haque was the other visiting batsman to post a half-century, scoring 76 before edging a Luke Jongwe delivery outside off stump to debutant wicketkeeper Clive Madande.

Like Afif, Anamul scored quicker than a run a ball in his innings, which included four sixes and six fours at Harare Sports Club.

A cautious 39 from Mahmudullah Riyad was the other significant Bangladeshi knock as they reached their lowest total in the series having scored 303 runs in the first ODI and 290 in the second.

Jongwe and Brad Evans took two wickets each for Zimbabwe, who have won nine of 10 ODI and T20 matches since former captain Dave Houghton began a second stint as coach in June.

— AFP





# SERENA RETIREMENT HERALDS SUNSET OF SPORT’S GOLDEN ERA

**UNITED STATES:** Serena Williams’ decision to bow out has left tennis staring at the beginning of the end of the sport’s golden era, a dreaded but inevitable prospect that has long been on the horizon.

The American, who will turn 41 next month, said that the countdown has begun for her to quit playing and devote more time to her family and business. “She’s box office,” former British number one Greg Rusedski summed it up on Sky Sports.

“She’s carried women’s tennis for the last two decades with her sister Venus as well, you’ve obviously had other great players around them, but she brings your non-tennis fan to the sport.

“If you know absolutely nothing about tennis, you know the name Serena Williams. She’s iconic and we’re losing an icon of our sport and she will be truly, truly missed.”

But it will not just be a loss for women’s tennis. She could well be the first in a series of ageing greats to call time on their playing careers in the near future.

Like Williams, the triumvirate of Roger Federer, Rafa Nadal and Novak Djokovic, have also dominated tennis for the last two decades and revolutionised the sport, drawing in new and old fans and a long line of sponsors.

All four of them continue to lure fans to the stands, mobile and television screens even after two decades on the tour, while their commercial pull still mesmerises brands and advertisers.

Injuries to Williams, Federer and Nadal in recent years have raised the ‘retirement’ question time and again fans and pundits have wondered how the sport would cope with the prospect of losing their most marketable athletes.

Federer, who turned 41 this week, has had multiple knee surgeries in the last two years and has not played a competitive match since going down in the quarterfinals of last year’s Wimbledon.

The 20-time major winner has only committed to playing at his hometown tournament in Basel and the Laver Cup later this year and it remains unclear if the father of four would be ready to commit to the rigours of the tour again.

At 36, Nadal is relatively younger but a chronic foot issue forced the Spaniard to contemplate retirement last year and in 2022 after he won a men’s record 22nd major title at the French Open, playing with numbing injection before each match in Paris.

A radio frequency treatment eased pain in his foot and allowed him to play Wimbledon but the left-hander does not know whether the injury will flare up again.

The 35-year-old Djokovic is the youngest among the lot and undoubtedly the fittest; and appears to be the best bet to keep the flag flying for tennis’ older generation.

The Serbian won his 21st major title at Wimbledon last month and has made it clear that he does not lack motivation in chasing more silverware.

While the so-called ‘Big Three’ of the men’s game have continued to stave off the younger generation when it comes to major success, Williams’ tennis career has been less productive in the past couple of years.

Her last Grand Slam triumph came in 2017 and she has not won a WTA title since lifting the ASB Classic in Auckland at the start of the 2020 season.

Despite all that, Williams has remained the biggest draw in women’s tennis whenever she takes the court. — **Reuters**



## Motor racing-Piastrì’s stance has knock-on effects for other teams

**LONDON:** Oscar Piastrì’s rift with Alpine has also forced a change of plan at Williams and could have a knock-on effect around the Formula One paddock.

While the main focus has been on Renault-owned Alpine and McLaren, who both want the 21-year-old Australian to drive for them next season, tail-enders Williams have had to reassess their next step.

Alpine’s original plan was to loan their reserve, and last year’s Formula Two champion, to Williams for at least a year and possibly more until he returned as Fernando Alonso’s replacement.

The principle was the same as when Mercedes placed George Russell for three seasons at Williams to learn the ropes before bringing him back as team-mate to seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton.

Talks were so far advanced that the Australian had a seat fitting at Williams and a contract for 2023 was drawn up between the two teams, with Alpine having already agreed Piastrì’s salary.

Then Alonso decided to race for Aston Martin next year and Piastrì, offered the Alpine seat, said no -- with a McLaren deal apparently more tempting.

Piastrì would have replaced Canadian Nicholas Latifi at Williams, the only driver on the starting grid who has yet to score a point in 13 races this season, alongside British-born Thai Alexander Albon.

Latifi brings sponsorship and could potentially retain the seat, with many of the potential replacements lacking such financial clout.

With Alpine currently fourth in the championship and Williams last, the seat spurned by Piastrì is the more attractive.

If Alpine do not take McLaren’s soon-to-be-discarded Australian Daniel Ricciardo, then they may be in the same market as Williams.

One possibility who stands out is current Formula E champion and 2019 Formula Two title-holder Nyck de Vries, a Mercedes F1 reserve who has already taken part in Friday first practice with Williams.

De Vries, 27, is also looking for a seat for 2023, with Mercedes pulling out of Formula E after selling their championship-leading team to McLaren.

Williams have 21-year-old American Logan Sargeant on their books, with team boss Jost Capito saying last month that he saw the F2 driver as a prospect for the future, but it may be too early for him.

— **Reuters**

## CAF launches new Super League to boost clubs

**NAIROBI:** The Confederation of African Football (CAF) on Wednesday launched a new lucrative \$100 million Super League aimed at injecting financial muscle to the cash-strapped clubs on the continent.

Twenty-four clubs, yet to be decided, will take part in the first edition, which has the backing of world governing body FIFA and will be played between August 2023 and May 2024.

CAF president Patrice Motsepe, who announced the new competition, did not say if it would replace CAF’s existing Champions League and the second-tier Confederation Cup.

“The African Super League is a very important initiative. One of the major problems in Africa is finance,” said Motsepe at the launch held in the northern Tanzania town of Arusha.

“The Africa Super League is one of the most exciting developments in the history of African football and the objective in terms of what we are trying to achieve is very clear, to make sure African club football is world class and competes with the best in the world.

“Our intention is to use the \$100 million as prize money and to do that every year in the African Super League, so that the club which wins gets \$11.5 million,” he added.

Hamdi Meddeb, the chairman of four-time Champions League winners Esperance Tunis, claimed before the launch that sides would be better not to play in the current top-tier competition due to costs.

“Africa is a huge continent



and sometimes we have to charter flights at a cost of more than \$100,000 each,” Meddeb said.

“When we won the Champions League (in 2018 and 2019), more than half the prize money was spent on bonuses and allowances for the squad and the technical staff. Those are contractual obligations.”

Motsepe said CAF will use some of the 50 million dollars from the Super League to make football attractive and ensure the best players remain in Africa and improve the quality of the sport on the continent which has lagged behind other parts of the world.

“Each of the 24 clubs that will take part in the initial tournament will receive an annual contribution of three-and-half million dollars to buy players, pay for transport and player transfers,” Motsepe said.

Motsepe appealed to African governments to help with the construction of CAF-approved stadiums to ensure every club play their football in their own countries.

Not everyone is excited about the Super League with Cape Town City FC owner John Comitis calling it a “super silly idea”.

“The Super League will kill African club football,” he warned.

“You can switch off the lights on the domestic leagues.”

— **AFP**

# business

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## Dhofar Governor reviews OQ’s strategic and investment projects

BUSINESS REPORTER  
SALALAH, AUGUST 10

The Governor of Dhofar, HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, paid a visit to OQ, the global integrated energy company, assets in Dhofar Governorate on Wednesday. During his visit, he was briefed on the assets and investments of the company.

His Highness listened to a detailed explanation of the Group’s investments, namely the Methanol and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) plant, Salalah Ammonia, Gas Pipeline Network, logistics, and the social investment projects.

He was also briefed on the Group’s contributions towards promoting self-sufficiency in its products, through export of the surplus to global markets and its support to the government’s economic diversification policies and plans. He was also updated on the Group’s role in enhancing the In-Country Value (ICV) through its projects, which enrich local markets and foster small and medium enterprises (SMEs), as well as the operations and plans to increase production.

He toured the various OQ assets and was also briefed on the Methanol Plant central control unit.

Lauding the Group’s achievements and ambitious plans, he said: “I am happy that my visit to OQ today has provided me with the opportunity to closely monitor the Group’s investments in Dhofar Governorate. I am highly impressed by the investment projects taking shape in the energy and petrochemical sector in this precious part of our dear homeland.”

“The progress made in the development march under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is the outcome of the sincere efforts and hard work made to augment the growth of our national economy in order to meet the desired aspirations and goals,” he added.

He pointed out that the industrial plants, which are a source of pride for all, reflect the

role played by talented Omanis to maximise the ICV and promote the growth of all economic and business sectors in all regions of Oman.

The Governor of Dhofar also praised the great role played by national cadres in realising these huge achievements, which will undoubtedly contribute to raise the ICV, promote the growth of SMEs and enhance Omanisation rates.

He affirmed that the government would spare no efforts to provide OQ Group with the necessary resources to complete future projects that serve the development process and open up new horizons for development and prosperity of the country.

“I am really happy with the developments here as they reflect the great efforts made by OQ Group to promote manufacturing industries, add value to its projects and enrich local markets, he noted.

“We hope that these investments would contribute to achieving a qualitative leap for the national economy, creating job opportunities and promoting creativity and innovation. I am sure that the investments and projects completed in Dhofar Governorate would enhance the efforts made in the energy sector in the Sultanate of Oman in accordance with Oman Vision 2040,” he concluded.

For his part, Talal bin Hamid al Awfi, CEO of OQ Group, expressed his happiness over the visit of His Highness the Governor of Dhofar to the Group.

“His Highness’s visit will have a great positive impact on the Group and its employees. The visit will give us the motivation to carry out more investment projects in Dhofar. The visit is a good example of true public-private partnerships (PPPs),” he added.

“OQ Group investments in Dhofar Governorate covers oil and gas exploration, refinery and petrochemical industry, gas networks, logistics, trading in crude oil and its derivatives, and alternative energy,” he stated.

## Asyad Group signs decarbonisation partnership with 44.01, a start-up

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

Asyad Group, Oman’s integrated logistics Group, has penned a strategic decarbonisation partnership with 44.01, a local environmental start-up, to further advance shared CO<sub>2</sub> removal ambitions.

This initiative comes in line with the Group’s sustainability commitments to ensure decarbonisation, waste management and biodiversity across its operations as part of the Environmental Stewardship pillar.

The partnership echoes the national efforts to reduce emissions by 7 per cent by 2030 under the Paris Agreement. Thus, both parties will work together on opportunities to remove carbon emissions in the logistics sector and contribute to the development of a sustainable logistics industry in Oman.

Implementing emerging carbon removal technologies, Asyad Group will work with 44.01 to capture the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and convert them into rock permanently through the process of mineralisation across.

This collaboration indicates the extended efforts for further decarbonisation in the logistics sector. The partnership also envisages using biofuels from 44.01’s sister company, Wakud, to help decarbonise Asyad’s existing



logistics assets.

Following on its business growth strategy centred around private sector partnership and engagement, the Group’s collaboration with 44.01 will offer Asyad access to innovative solutions and open new opportunities for 44.01, enhancing its competitiveness and introducing its services to the global market.

On this occasion, Essam bin Nasser al Sheibani, Group VP Sustainability, Asyad Group, said: “Asyad firmly believes in the creation of a growth model that is increasingly oriented towards group sustainability and focusing on promoting clean energy whilst monitoring all GhG emissions and reducing waste and pollution through environmental management systems.”

“Our partnership with 44.01

goes hand in hand with the rapid progress that the logistics sector is witnessing and our role in positioning the Sultanate of Oman to be at the forefront of new sustainable technologies globally,” Al Sheibani added.

The Group Sustainability VP also highlighted, “As key highlights on our environmental agenda, we aim to tap opportunities in the areas of the energy transition, that represent the future, combined with CO<sub>2</sub> capturing and storage, the green and blue hydrogen value chain, renewables and decarbonised sustainable mobility products.”

“Our collaboration with 44.01 translates the Group’s strategy to empower local SMEs and boost research and development activities in the sector,” he concluded.

Both Asyad Group and 44.01

intend to identify opportunities for potential point source capture of carbon dioxide in connection with Asyad’s logistics fleet and undertake studies in relation to local carbon removal projects. This includes exploring potential operational sites where carbon removal activities can be showcased.

Talal Hasan, Carbon General, 44.01, said: “The transport and logistics sector will see a drastic shift towards sustainability in the coming decade. We are humbled that Asyad has chosen us as a technology partner to contribute to achieving the national decarbonisation agenda under the Paris Agreement. The work we will do together will have a direct impact on reducing carbon emissions. We see this partnership as a big win for Oman.”

## MENA region records 359 M&A deals worth \$42.6 bn in first quarter

KEY TRENDS: Top five MENA target countries by deal value were UAE, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Oman

MUSCAT: The MENA region recorded 359 M&A deals worth \$42.6 billion during the first six months of 2022, according to the EY MENA M&A Insights report.

The increase in M&A activity represents a 12-per cent year-on-year (YoY) rise in deal count, driven by continued post-pandemic economic growth across the region fostered by high oil prices and growing confidence in corporate boardrooms.

According to the report, domestic deals contributed 48 per cent and 33 per cent of the total M&A deal volume and value respectively over the six-month period.

Although fluctuating crude



prices, economic uncertainty and disruptions to global markets provided marginal impetus, deal activity was significantly driven by involvement of private equity (PE) or sovereign wealth funds (SWF).

M&A activity involving PE and SWFs accounted for 35 per cent and 38 per cent of the total deal volumes and values respectively in the first half of 2022.

Among the domestic PE or

SWF deals, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was the most favoured destination with 18 deals, while the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was the most active acquiring region with 27 deals.

The report also revealed that deals involving government-related entities (GRE) saw a total deal value of \$16.9 billion in the first half of 2022, accounting for 40 per cent of total disclosed deal value.

Interesting to note that GRE led deals have declined from an average of 62 per cent of value in the prior years to 40 per cent of value signalling an increased participation by the private sector in regional deals.

Brad Watson, EY MENA Strategy and Transactions Leader, says: “Despite the global economic uncertainty, we are continuing to witness a positive trajectory in M&A activity across the MENA region as economic diversification initiated by governments continue to buoy interest in strategic transactions. Fiscal reforms, particularly in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, aimed at strengthening cooperation between the public and private sector, are increasing the appetite of investors, while government-led initiatives across the board are supporting the region’s burgeoning start-up ecosystem that further increase deal activity.”



## Excellent response for Bank Muscat kiosk at Salalah Eat Festival

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat has been greatly encouraged by the excellent turnout at its stall at the ongoing Salalah Eat festival. Designed to create a memorable experience with a number of events and performances, the inaugural Salalah Eat Festival got off to a great start at the Hawana Resort in Salalah on August 4 with the participation of well over 50 MSMEs.

The festival concludes on August 13, on Saturday.

With a number of fun activities including a Fan Zone Photo Booth, raffle draws, a Kids' Arena, face painting and a Game Booth, the Bank Muscat stall was one of the most visited stalls at the festival.

The bank also took the opportunity to showcase its Limited Edition Visa Prepaid Card to visitors, who could easily apply for up to 3 of these cards through their Mobile or Internet banking. Visitors to the stall were particularly excited by the fact that the bank is raffling away an iPad everyday, with as many as 10 iPads to be given over the course of the full festival.

All that visitors have to do to participate in the daily raffle draw is to apply for a Prepaid card through their mBanking app and show the proof of application at the bank's stall. They will then receive a raffle ticket, which automatically entitles them to a chance in the draw. With the festival drawing to a close soon, visitors have been reminded to take advantage of the ongoing promotion, and participate in the daily raffle draw at the earliest.

Bank Muscat, which is the Official Banking Partner, is also facilitating the participation of a number of its Najahi Business Banking customers at the festival. Over the past many years, Bank Muscat has successfully supported a number of initiatives and events that strengthen tourism and other national development priorities.

It must be noted that the bank has supported the Tour of Salalah, the Tour of Oman, Muscat Festival and the Salalah Festival, all of which have drawn thousands of visitors from across the world to the Sultanate of Oman.

# Shell Oman expands operations along Batinah Expressway, Rusayl

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

Shell Oman Marketing Company (SOM) announced the opening of new service stations, bringing its total network size to 205 strategic sites across the Sultanate of Oman.

SOM has inaugurated phase one of its third integrated service station on Batinah Expressway in Saham which is part of an earlier agreement signed with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, which stated to build four integrated service stations on the Batinah Expressway, three of which have been successfully inaugurated on this pivotal highway as follows: Saham Expressway service station in July, Twin Hoor service station in Suwaiq in June, and Liwa Expressway Service station earlier in March, respectively. The remaining service station in Suwaiq is scheduled to open within a few weeks.

In addition to these mega sites, another service station, Rusayl Industrial, has opened in the Wilayat of Al Seeb to serve motorists arriving from the Muscat



Expressway and Al Mawaleh.

"Service stations serve motorists' needs beyond simply refuelling their vehicles - we believe in the importance of providing our customers with a full integrated journey through an evolving range of quality fuels, a welcoming and comfortable break, and a retail experience that offers them convenience, quality, and choices of energy solutions and non-fuel retailing.:"

"The first phase of these stations will provide a range of fuel products including our best performance and efficiency fuel; Shell V-Power, that will enhance our customers' cars performance

and clean up their engines, alongside Shell Mogas 95, Shell Mogas 91 and Shell Diesel. The Batinah Expressway and Rusayl stations are positioned in strategic locations where we intend to cater to the ever-evolving demands of our customers," said Khalid al Awaisi, Mobility General Manager at Shell Oman.

"The second phase of the new service stations on the Batinah Expressway will include a large commercial building that will house our popular convenience store - Shell Select, Shell Café and several other outlets and prayer spaces for both men and women. Prioritising customer

convenience, the stations also have a dedicated lane for trucks and will also offer a wide range of Shell car care services. Through an inclusive list of amenities, SOM seeks to establish these service stations as a one-stop hub to provide motorists on the Expressway with everything they need to make their life's journeys better," Al Awaisi said.

The Shell service stations on Batinah Expressway will also feature sustainability and energy efficiency solutions, including Shell Recharge service for Electric Vehicles as well as built-in solar panels, high insulating properties along with water recycling systems.

## Omega unveils Novelties 2022 in Mall of Oman

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

Omega recently unveiled the new 2022 collection of their watches at its exclusive boutique in Mall of Oman to the rapturous attention of watch lovers who keenly went through the stunning new array of watches.

The new collection included the Seamaster Ultra Deep with the 2022 version of it seeing the release of seven new models of Omega's Ultra Deep Collection. Watch connoisseurs enjoyed going through the six models from the Ultra Deep collection which was been built in brand-new O-MEGASTEEL, thus once again showcasing to the watch lovers the brand's leadership in the production of advanced materials.



The Seamaster Professional Diver 300M watch was also seen back in the 2022 collection but this time it was bolder than ever with a wave-pattern dial in a striking shade of green. The 42 mm watch in stainless steel sported a uni-directional rotating bezel with a polished green ceramic ring with Grand-Feu white enamel diving scale.

Driving the beautiful new Seamaster Diver 300M with green polished ceramic dial was Omega's

Co-Axial Master Chronometer Calibre 8800 with a special luxury finish. On the other hand, the Seamaster Aqua Terra models from the 2022 collection were all about colour, with a range of new dial shades that tracked a smooth transition from Aqua to Terra. And for those who wanted more colour options, they could choose larger sized models in 38 mm with dials in Atlantic Blue, Bay Green, Sandstone, Saffron and Terracotta or 34 mm editions with dials in Sea Blue, Lagoon Green, Sandstone, Shell Pink and Lavender.

Launched first in 1952 and then beautifully re-designed in 1982, the Constellation collection continued to shine even brighter in the collection showcased for 2022.

Among the new models for

2022 that were displayed was the Constellation 41mm star performers with all the new dials clasped by the famous Constellation claws.

Materials on offer were stainless steel, stainless steel and 18K yellow gold, and stainless steel and 18K Sedna Gold. Ceramic bezels in polished blue, black or brown; displayed Roman numerals filled with white enamel or Omega Ceragold, depending on the model.

Omega's beautiful new Constellation 28mm additions to the Constellation family revealed its softer side and feature pastel dials in a choice of four colours: Blush Rose, Patchouli Blossom, LIVE in action. Apart from FIFA Qatar match tickets, customers will also get Comprehensive Service up to 50,000 km and 1 Year Insurance. The campaign ends on November 4.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way. No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership award', 'Family Like Care' Service award, and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award.

# Kia launches all-new Carens recreational vehicle in Oman

MUSCAT: Reliable International Automotive, the dealers for Kia in Oman recently launched the all-new globally-admired Carens in Oman. The recreational vehicle (RV) sports the sophistication of a family mover and the sportiness of an SUV in one compelling package. The three-row Kia Carens is designed for modern families. It is comfortable and spacious with the longest wheelbase in its class.

"The Kia Carens embodies our design philosophy and is creating a new industry benchmark for family vehicles," said Yaser Shabsoh, Chief Operating Officer at Kia Middle East and Africa.

"It successfully combines a bold design with a sophisticated personality and style, unique aesthetics, high-tech features, and safety for the whole family. We are certain that the Kia Carens will fulfil the needs of every modern family in both their daily and leisure life."

The Kia Carens is equipped with 114 HP, 1497 cc MPI, Euro 4

engine with 14.7 kg.m. torque. This is paired to a CVT for smooth and thrilling drives.

The exterior of the Kia Carens embodies the company's latest design philosophy - 'Opposites United.' The SUV-like exterior design shows the confidence and innovation of the Kia Carens. The LED DRL in the headlamps is designed based on Kia's new signature lighting concept - 'The Star Map'.

The interior of the Kia Carens is based on the design pillar - 'Joy for reason' - which creates happiness through a combination of a warm and relaxing aesthetic. On the Kia Carens, these elements feel combined thanks to plenty of thoughtful styling details. The sophisticated interior features soothing colours, plenty of storage space with a layout designed to put all occupants at ease. The One Touch Easy Electric Tumble in the second-row ensures easy ingress and egress of the patrons in the car. The second row also features



recline and slide functions for utmost comfort. In addition to the optimum space and recline functions, the third-row seats can also be flattened in the boot to ensure maximum cargo space.

The car also incorporates cooling cup holders and Easy Push Retractable cup holder.

The dashboard has a wide high-gloss black panel that accentuates the overall design, while the door

trims look stylish and are uniquely designed for offering storage space. Inspired by airplane seats, all three-seat rows in the Carens combine comfort with aesthetics by matching materials, patterns and colours in an elegant manner. The centre switches are uniquely designed so that they highlight the smart experience the Carens offers.

The features in the Carens include 8" audio display, Android

auto & car play, roof-fused 2nd & 3rd AC vents, power windows, radio with USB control, 5 USB C Type charger interfaces, driver's seat height adjuster, one touch tumble electric folding 2nd row seats, tinted glass and more.

The Kia Carens offers a number of active safety features. It is equipped with engine immobiliser, child anchor (ISO FIX), driver and front passenger airbags, anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic stability programme (ESP), Vehicle Stability Management (VSM), Hill-Assist Control (HAC), Downhill Brake Control (DBC), Brake Assist System (BAS), tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS) and rear parking assist system.

Customers looking forward to experiencing the all-new Kia Carens, are encouraged to visit the nearest Kia showroom. Besides this, on buying the all-new- Carens, customers can get a chance to win a fully paid trip to watch FIFA World Cup event

in Qatar. Kia customers buying a brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, LIVE in action. Apart from FIFA Qatar match tickets, customers will also get Comprehensive Service up to 50,000 km and 1 Year Insurance. The campaign ends on November 4.

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# Yemeni delegation visits Madayn

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

Hamad bin Hamoud al Qasabi, Acting CEO of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn”, received at the headquarters of Madayn a delegation headed by Hassan al Kbous, Chairman of the Board of Chamber of Commerce and Industry at the Capital Secretariat in the Republic of Yemen.

The meeting discussed ways to strengthen and develop economic and investment ties between the two sides, as well as highlighted the available investment opportunities



in the industrial sector.

The delegation was also introduced

to the incentives and facilities

offered by Madayn to investors and

business owners across Madayn's

network of industrial cities.

## Sur Oasis Incubator welcomes first batch of entrepreneurs, innovators

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 10

Sur Oasis Incubator in Sur Industrial City has recently welcomed the first batch of start-ups and innovators representing food and beverage industry, software and information technology, and training and consultancy fields.

Managed and operated by the Industrial Innovation Academy and supported and financed by Oman LNG, Sur Oasis Incubator offers training programmes, business accelerators and workspaces to support and empower entrepreneurs and innovators in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

Officials at the Industrial Innovation Academy, which pertains to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates “Madayn”, introduced the incubated companies to the incubation advantages, facilities and services that will

be offered by the Academy during the year-long incubation period.

The officials also highlighted the projects undertaken by Sur Industrial City and its plan to connect the incubated companies with the operating factories and projects in the industrial city.

During the event, a training workshop was delivered on social media management strategy with the aim of developing the skills of the incubated companies to effectively manage their social media platforms.

Moreover, the companies were also briefed on the role played by incubation in accelerating the growth of startups. It is worthwhile to mention that the Industrial Innovation Academy is working on five key programmes, one of which is the ‘Innovation Programme’, which aims at developing and supporting innovative services and products.



## The dollar in business transactions



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

THE RISE IN THE VALUES OF LOCAL CURRENCIES, SUCH AS THE DOLLAR AND ANY OTHER GLOBAL CURRENCIES, HELPS TOURISTS OBTAIN BETTER EXCHANGE RATES WHEN PURCHASING LOCAL CURRENCIES

Will the world continue to acquire the greenback during the coming decades within the framework of the financial and monetary policies that some countries follow in dealing with their local currencies in the global trade?

Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, we have followed some decisions of the Russian government to price its oil and gas exports with the “ruble.”

There was talk that Saudi Arabia would price its oil sold to China in the Chinese yuan, and that Russia, China and Iran would conduct trade deals in their local currencies. There is no doubt that such decisions will have some negative impacts for the US currency in the long run, especially if oil producing and industrial countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa adopt these policies as well.

In the interim, the US currency will continue to have its strength in the global economy, and in international trade, especially in the pricing of some vital raw materials,

while there are many countries in the region and abroad that set their annual financial budgets based on the US currency. Many investors take sanctuary in the US dollar during times of turmoil in the world.

Recently, the US dollar has witnessed an increase in its value in comparison with other currencies as a result of the Federal Reserve Board raising the interest rate in response to inflation witnessed in America and other countries in the world.

On the other hand, the rise in the values of local currencies, such as the dollar and any other global currencies, helps tourists obtain better exchange rates when purchasing local currencies. This reduces their travel expenses.

But local products manufactured in those countries are affected as a result of their high prices, and thus industries will be impacted as well. During the past period, some US industries witnessed a decline in sales, while requiring consumers to pay larger amounts to buy them.

Any rise in local currencies has adverse effects on sales, especially in countries that depend on the major currencies in the world such as the dollar, euro, yen and other well-

known currencies. This is what we find today in global markets and their impact due to the lack of liquidity, and the high cost of borrowing due to high interest rates, as is the case in the US. We also find in the world that the values of primary commodities and raw materials are witnessing a significant increase due to the high prices of oil and gas besides wheat, most of which are priced in the US currency. While such goods are costlier, it has positive benefits for foreign workers who can remit more to their countries of origin.

Recently, the value of the Russian currency shot up as a result of the decision to sell Russian oil and gas, which helped it achieve many financial advantages.

This decision comes due to the sanctions imposed by the US, as well as European countries, on Russia due to the crisis with Ukraine.

Moscow is earning tens of billions of dollars per month from energy sales to consuming countries.

These decisions will have negative effects on transactions in US dollars in the event that other countries decide to price their important products in their local currencies.

## From great moderation to great stagflation



NOURIEL ROUBINI

The writer is a Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University's Stern School of Business, is Chief Economist at Atlas Capital Team

The world economy is undergoing a radical regime shift. The decades-long Great Moderation is over.

Coming after the stagflation (high inflation and severe recessions) of the 1970s and early 1980s, the Great Moderation was characterised by low inflation in advanced economies; relatively stable and robust economic growth, with short and shallow recessions; low and falling bond yields (and thus positive returns on bonds), owing to the secular fall in inflation; and sharply rising values of risky assets such as US and global equities.

This extended period of low inflation is usually explained by central banks' move to credible inflation-targeting policies after the loose monetary policies of the 1970s, and governments' adherence to relatively conservative fiscal policies (with meaningful stimulus coming only during recessions). But, more important than demand-side policies were the many positive supply shocks, which increased potential growth and reduced production costs, thus keeping inflation in check.

During the post-Cold War era

of hyper-globalisation, China, Russia, and other emerging-market economies became more integrated in the world economy, supplying it with low-cost goods, services, energy, and commodities. Large-scale migration from the Global South to the North kept a lid on wages in advanced economies, technological innovations reduced the costs of producing many goods and services, and relative geopolitical stability allowed for an efficient allocation of production to the least-costly locations without worries about investment security.

But the Great Moderation started to crack during the 2008 global financial crisis and then during the 2020 Covid-19 recession. In both cases, inflation initially remained low given demand shocks, and loose monetary, fiscal, and credit policies prevented deflation from setting in. But now inflation is back, rising sharply, especially over the past year, owing to a mix of both demand and supply factors.

On the supply side, the backlash against hyper-globalisation has been gaining momentum, creating opportunities for populist, nativist, and protectionist politicians. Public anger over stark income and wealth inequalities also has been building,

leading to more policies to support workers and the “left behind.” However well-intentioned, these policies are now contributing to a dangerous spiral of wage-price inflation.

Making matters worse, renewed protectionism (from both the left and the right) has restricted trade and the movement of capital. Political tensions (both within and between countries) are driving a process of reshoring (and “friend-shoring”). Political resistance to immigration has curtailed the global movement of people, putting additional upward pressure on wages. National-security and strategic considerations have further restricted flows of technology, data, and information. And new labour and environmental standards, important as they may be, are hampering both trade and new construction.

This balkanisation of the global economy is deeply stagflationary, and it is coinciding with demographic aging, not just in developed countries, but also in large emerging economies such as China. Because young people tend to produce and save, whereas older people spend down their savings, this trend also is stagflationary.

The same is true of today's geopolitical turmoil. Russia's war in Ukraine, and the West's response to it, has disrupted the trade of energy, food, fertilisers, industrial metals, and other commodities. The Western decoupling from China is accelerating across all dimensions of trade (goods, services, capital, labour, technology, data, and information). Other strategic rivals to the West may soon add to the havoc. Iran crossing the nuclear-weapons threshold would likely provoke military strikes by Israel or even the United States, triggering a massive oil shock; and North Korea is still regularly rattling its nuclear sabre.

Now that the US dollar has been fully weaponised for strategic and national-security purposes, its position as the main global reserve currency may begin to decline, and a weaker dollar would of course add to the inflationary pressures. A frictionless world trading system requires a frictionless financial system. But sweeping primary and secondary sanctions have thrown sand in this well-oiled machine, massively increasing the transaction costs of trade.

On top of it all, climate change, too, is stagflationary. Droughts,

heat waves, hurricanes, and other disasters are increasingly disrupting economic activity and threatening harvests (thus driving up food prices). At the same time, demands for decarbonisation have led to underinvestment in fossil-fuel capacity before investment in renewables has reached the point where they can make up the difference. Today's large energy-price spikes were thus inevitable.

Pandemics will also be a persistent threat, lending further momentum to protectionist policies as countries rush to hoard critical supplies of food, medicines, and other essential goods. After two and a half years of Covid-19, we now have monkeypox. And owing to human encroachments on fragile ecosystems and the melting of Siberian permafrost, we may soon be dealing with dangerous viruses and bacteria that have been locked away for millennia.

Finally, cyberwarfare remains an underappreciated threat to economic activity and even public safety. Firms and governments will either face more stagflationary disruptions to production, or they will have to spend a fortune on cybersecurity. Either way, costs will rise. @Project Syndicate, 2022

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## An event that measures power and beauty

Camels and horses have a legendary role in Arab history and they are renowned in Arab history for their legacy as racing animals. In the Wilayat of Ibra, camels and horses came together for a traditional racing performance which the public can watch and join for free... **P20**

## Depp to return as face of Dior's Sauvage cologne after winning suit

**IT SMELLS LIKE** things are looking up for Johnny Depp. The "Pirates of the Caribbean" alum, 59, seems to still be on an upswing after winning his defamation suit against ex-wife Amber Heard earlier this

summer, in part thanks to the multi-year contract he just signed with Dior, TMZ reports.

The reportedly seven-figure deal will see the three-time Oscar nom -who originally signed with the



fashion house in 2015 — resume his role as the face of the company's Sauvage scent for men, the outlet has learned.

Dior Beauty took to Instagram on Monday, in a partnered post with Depp, to share fashion photographer Greg Williams' black and white stills of him ahead of recently taking to the stage with Jeff Beck in Paris.

"Fearless yet human, just like Sauvage," the caption reads.

The images shot by Williams will reportedly be utilised in a new campaign for Dior, insiders told TMZ.

Though Depp's ad for the cologne disappeared from TV following Heard's allegations of abuse, they eventually returned to the small screen even before Depp's win.

The former couple's tumultuous relationship took centre stage earlier

this year in a weeks long defamation trial that set the Internet ablaze with all their dirty laundry as Depp sought \$50 million and the "Aquaman" star, 36, sought \$100 million in a counter suit.

A Virginia jury in June found that Heard's 2018 *Washington Post* op-ed - in which she identified herself as "a public figure representing domestic abuse," though she never named Depp — warranted Depp receiving \$10 million in compensatory damages and \$5 million in punitive damages. The verdict was ultimately lowered to \$10.35 million.

Meanwhile, Heard's countersuit - which focused on claims by Depp lawyer Adam Waldman that her allegations against the actor were a hoax - awarded her \$2 million in damages. — **tca/dpa**

### READ

#### THE PIGEON HAS TO GO TO SCHOOL!

BY MO WILLEMS

*Pigeon deals with the anxieties of going to school for the first time.*



### SEASON IT WITH SNICKERS

Snickers bar fans will be able to enjoy the taste of their favourite snack on almost anything, as the candy bar has been transformed into a seasoning. B&G Foods announced on Monday that the Snickers flavour profile of chocolate, caramel and peanut is available nationwide to consumers in its new Snickers Shakers Seasoning Blend. — **dpa**



### TRAVEL TALES

A 2CV (deux-chevaux) car drives past tourists in front of the Sacre-Coeur Basilica in Montmartre Paris' district. — **AFP**





# At a Jakarta crosswalk, Indonesian teens take to the catwalk

A PEDESTRIAN CROSSING turned viral catwalk has become a site for Jakarta's young fashionistas to express themselves, while attracting the disapproval of police in the traffic-clogged Indonesian capital.

The informal downtown gathering has drawn sartorial adventurers from across the suburbs of the metropolis, including from Citayam, leading it to be dubbed "Citayam Fashion Week".

And with their poses and struts all being shared on TikTok and Instagram, some Citayam pioneers have found instant fame, earning modelling jobs, endorsements and an army of adoring fans.

"I feel like this is the place where I can express my style and create content. It is so much fun because there are so many people and I can meet new friends here. I don't even want to go home," 18-year-old student Ricat Al Fendri said.

He and some friends had taken a morning train to the central meeting spot, tucked between sleek skyscrapers and trendy cafes, to flaunt their outfits for the day.

Police, who previously moved to ban the use of the crosswalk as a runway, now regularly shout through a loudspeaker to ward the crowd off the street.

But that does not deter girls who don wide-legged jeans and colourful sunglasses — and boys in leather jackets, stylish sneakers and faux-fur coats — from filming their struts for social media.

Some of the more enthusiastic teenagers have been caught sleeping on the area's sidewalks at night after missing the last train home.

"We have the right to hang out here. It's a public space and for

me, it's a great stress reliever from school exams," said Al Fendri.

**COPYCAT CROWDS**

The outfits on display have begun to draw crowds, with news of the phenomenon spreading by

word of mouth in the megacity of 30 million people.

Saera Wulan Sari, a 15-year-old school dropout from North Jakarta who makes a living selling clams, comes to watch the crowds with her friends.

"I am always amazed by other

people's outfits, they are so much cooler than me and their clothes are very stylish," Sari said.

The gathering has been likened to a smaller version of Tokyo's famed Harajuku fashion district.

The movement has become so popular that copycat gatherings have spread elsewhere in Java — Indonesia's most populous island — in cities such as Semarang and Bandung.

And its viral fame has attracted attention from celebrities and influencers, as well as public officials including President Joko Widodo, who said young people should be able to express themselves creatively.

**IT'S BEAUTIFUL**

Local brands are now starting to take note and capitalise on the momentum by advertising their products and endorsing the "stars" of the movement, providing free clothes, shoes, and publicity.

"Teenagers are searching for their identity and they need recognition and validation. These teens saw that the quick and easy way to earn them is through likes and shares," Devie Rahmawati, a social affairs expert from the University of Indonesia said.

"Marginalised teenagers used to resort to violence or illegal racing, now they choose fashion instead. This is a positive thing and I think it's beautiful."

For many, the booming street fashion scene has also become an affordable arena for fashionable experimentation, set against the backdrop of the city's most affluent district.

Teenagers from poor households who cannot afford designer outfits can join the gathering without judgement, Khairul Badmi, a 22-year-old aspiring actor, said.

"To be a part of Citayam Fashion Week, you don't have to wear certain outfits or brands that empty your wallet," he said. — AFP



## CHANGING WORLD

# National Trust: Hot, dry UK conditions hitting wildlife, landscapes



**HEATWAVES AND** prolonged dry weather in Britain are damaging landscapes, gardens and wildlife, the country's National Trust has warned.

Reports from sites the charity cares for show lichen and mosses that normally thrive in the damp atmosphere of rare temperate rainforest in Lydford Gorge on Dartmoor are shrivelling, and heather is struggling to flower on Dunwich's lowland heath in Suffolk.

Wildfires have broken out in beauty spots in Cornwall, Devon and Norfolk.

Water features in some historic gardens dried up in July's heatwave, bats were found disorientated and dehydrated in the daylight at Wallington in Northumberland during the hottest days, and a waterwheel that powers a flour mill in Cambridgeshire has had to stop turning due to low river flows.

The National Trust said the summer's exceptional conditions were awake-up call to cut the greenhouse gas emissions that are driving climate change, and to adapt to the impacts already being caused by rising temperatures.

The science has been saying for decades.

"But even with years of planning, some of the effects are stark, and we are still learning of the precise impacts extreme weather events like this can have."

"What we can do, is adapt. At the Trust we're taking action to make sure our sites are ready for future changes, from making our landscapes rich in nature, our rivers cooler and our gardens more resilient to helping our buildings cope with excessive heat."

He also urged the next prime minister to put action to cut the emissions driving climate change at the top of their to-do list as the next round of global climate talks, Cop27, approaches in November.

The National Trust also said extreme weather had resulted in rangers at deer parks spending more time making sure deer were hydrated and sheltered and apple saplings at the Trust's biggest tree planting project at Wimpole in Cambridgeshire baking in the heat, though they survived. Exceptionally low moisture levels in the soil have raised concerns more young trees may need to be



This year so far in England has been the driest in decades, with drought looming.

Temperatures soared to record highs in July, surpassing 40C for the first time for the UK, and are expected to climb to the mid 30s in some places this week - prompting a four-day amber warning for extreme heat from the Met Office.

Climate change caused by human activity such as burning fossil fuels is already making heatwaves more intense and frequent, and scientists also warn rising temperatures make extremes such as drought more likely.

The National Trust said it was responding to the ongoing hot, dry conditions with short-term measures including giving the dehydrated bats water using tiny pipettes and moving them into a cooler, darker spot, stopping mowing, and discouraging barbecues.

It is also implementing longer-term strategies such as selecting drought-resistant plants in its gardens, increasing tree cover and shade, and creating wetlands to hold more water in the landscape to curb flooding and reduce the impact of drought.

Some of those projects are already bearing fruit, the National Trust says. At its Holnicote Estate in Somerset, where beavers which engineer the landscape to create wetlands were reintroduced in 2020, the wet habitats are still thriving despite low river levels, the charity said.

Keith Jones, national climate change adviser for the National Trust, said: "We shouldn't be surprised by these temperatures, it's what

replaced.

A Victorian steam yacht gondola that ferries tourists across Coniston Water in the Lake District was forced to stop sailing in the record-breaking heat, as the engine room hit unbearable temperatures.

Fires broke out at Zennor Head in Cornwall, closing part of the South West Coast Path, at Morden Hall Park in London, destroying part of a meadow, and at Bolberry Down in Devon where a gorse fire continued to reignite for two months.

Richard Millar, head of adaptation at the UK's advisory Climate Change Committee, said: "We have long known that climate change is making UK heatwaves more frequent and more intense."

"These amplified heatwaves are just one of the impacts on the UK's significant cultural heritage sites and landscapes."

"Addressing these impacts requires conservation and heritage planning to be undertaken on the basis that the UK's climate is changing."

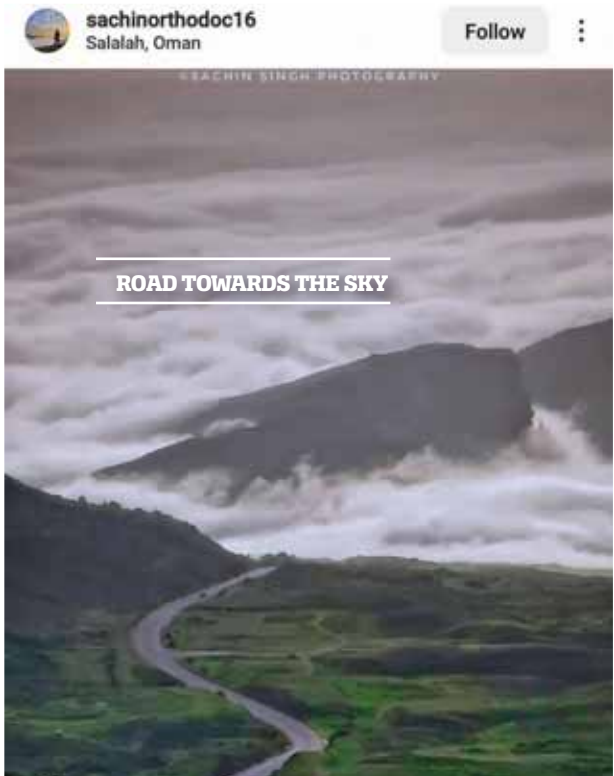
National Trust teams are planting for a drier future, such as at Felbrigg Hall, in Norfolk, which has a new drought-tolerant garden and Cliveden in Berkshire, with more than 2,000 lavender plants in the famous parterre over the coming weeks.

The charity is introducing 20 million new trees by 2030, creating 3,000 hectares of new trees along water courses to help cool water temperatures and returning rivers to their natural shape and function. — dpa



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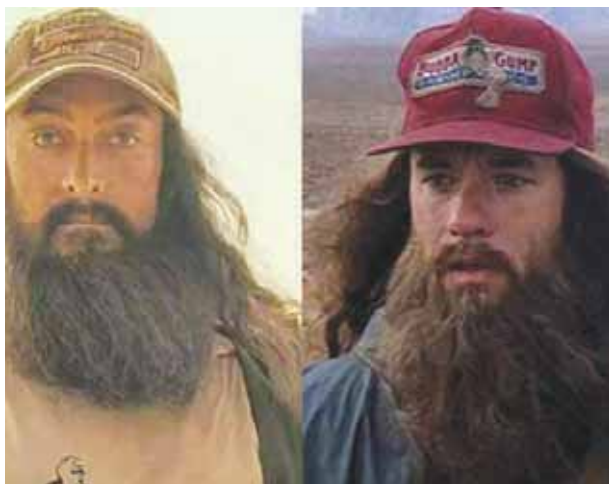
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## AROUND THE WORLD

### MOVIES

# Bollywood seeks boost with 'Forrest Gump' remake



ONE OF INDIA'S biggest stars is banking on a remake of Hollywood feel-good hit "Forrest Gump" to revive the fortunes of Hindi-language Bollywood, after a string of weak box-office showings. Aamir Khan's "Laal Singh Chaddha", an adaptation of the 1994 US classic starring Tom Hanks, hits cinemas on Thursday ahead of India's 75th independence celebrations.

Disappointing takings for other Bollywood A-listers have cast a pall over an industry still recovering from Covid-19 lockdown losses when many in movie-mad India turned to streaming giants like Netflix and Disney+ Hotstar.

The adaptation keeps several iconic scenes from the original — which netted six Oscars, including for Best Picture — such as a floating white feather, ping-pong playing and lots of running.

Box of golgappas

But there are several changes, with Gump's "box of chocolates" line becoming "Life is just like a golgappa. Your tummy might feel full, but your heart always craves more."

Golgappa is a popular Indian snack, while the second half of the saying — "you never know what you're gonna get" in the original — draws from a common Hindi phrase.

The film promises to take people through India's history in the same way Gump stumbled through and influenced major US events like the Vietnam War. This could irk Indian right-wing critics who have already called for a boycott of the film because of comments made by Khan in 2015 that were deemed to be unpatriotic.

Khan, the star of megahit "Dangal" (2016), and screenwriter Atul Kulkarni were coy in sharing what Indian historical settings would be featured.

Kulkarni would only say that his script was a "beautiful story about a beautiful country called India through a beautiful person called Laal Singh".

Khan, 57, admitted that he initially put off reading Kulkarni's script, uncertain it would be possible to adapt such a "cult classic".

"It's like saying we are remaking 'Mughal-e-Azam' and 'Mother India'. It's not a wise thing to do," he said, referring to two Indian classics.

"But when I heard the script, I understood he's done it. It was a moving experience for me. I really loved it. The moment I heard it I wanted to do this."

Bollywood star Kareena Kapoor, 41, who plays Singh's lifelong friend Rupa, based on Robin Wright's Jenny Curran, said the plot was "timeless" with a love story at its core.

"I wondered how they would play around with such an iconic film," added Naga Chaitanya, a Telugu-language star from the southern film industry "Tollywood" who plays Bala, an adaptation of Gump's shrimp-fishing Vietnam comrade Bubba. "But the way they have conceived the film for Indian cinema is unique." — AFP

### TOURISM

# Tourists return but Easter Islanders draw lessons from Covid isolation



DURING MORE than two years of the coronavirus pandemic, Easter Island was closed to tourism — forcing inhabitants to turn to a more sustainable way of life and relearn forgotten skills.

Now that the island's borders are open once again, local people, including the Rapa Nui indigenous population, want to resist the temptation to return to their pre-pandemic lifestyle.

"The time has come that the ancients predicted," Julio Hotus, a member of the Easter Island council of elders, said.

Hotus said the Rapa Nui people's ancestors had warned about the importance of maintaining food independence because of the risk the island faced of one day becoming isolated, but that recent generations had ignored the warnings.

Before the pandemic, the island's food supply was almost exclusively provided by Chile.

Easter Island lies 3,500 kilometres (2,100 miles) off the west coast of Chile and is world renowned for its monumental statues of human figures with giant heads, called moai.

With a population of just 8,000, it used to attract 160,000 tourists a year — "an avalanche" according to Hotus — but in March 2020 Easter Island closed its borders over Covid.

NO TOURISTS, NO INCOME

Olga Ickapakarati used to sell small stone moai figurines to tourists but once she was left without an income, she turned to agriculture and fishing to survive, just as her ancestors had lived before contact with European explorers.

"We were all left with nothing, we were left in the wind ... but we began planting," Ickapakarati said.

She took advantage of a programme that delivered seeds before the island was shut off from the outside world.

Ickapakarati planted spinach, beets, cilantro, chard, celery, basil, pineapple, oregano and tomatoes.

What she didn't eat, she shared with neighbours, just as many families did in creating an island-wide support network.

"All the islanders are like this. They have good hearts. If I see that I have a surplus of something, I give it to another family," said Ickapakarati, who lives with her children and grandchildren.

This new focus on sustainable living does not mean an end to tourism on Easter Island.

Last week, the first airplane of tourists for 28 months landed on the island, to much excitement from the locals desperate to see new faces.

But there will be no immediate return to the two flights a day of yesteryear. There will be just two a week for now, although the number will gradually increase.

Large hotel chains have decided to stay closed. "We will continue with tourists, but I hope that the pandemic has taught a lesson that we can apply for the future," said Hotus.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AT RISK

Another thing the pandemic did was to create awareness of the necessity to look after natural resources affected by climate change, such as water and energy.

Carved from volcanic rock by the Polynesian Rapa Nui people between 1200 and 1500, there are more than 900 on the island, which measures 24 kilometres by 12 kilometres.

The statues can measure up to 20 metres in height and weigh more than 80 tonnes.

Most remain at the quarry where they were originally carved but many others were carted to coastal areas to look inland, presumably for ceremonial purposes. — AFP

## A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

# Your children and social media!

REMARKABLY, wherever you go or look around you, you see that most children and adolescents spend more time than ever using social media, as the number of hours they spend on the Internet has increased sharply during the last period, especially in the wave of the pandemic previously!

These increases are likely a reflection of the difficulties families have experienced in school and social interaction throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. But in real, my concern is a boom in social media use among children or teens, even though these platforms require users to be at least thirteen due to a law banning companies from collecting data from children.

On the other hand, some may not be surprised by this, especially since such raised emerged during the pandemic and from there children resorted to screens for entertainment and communication with friends, as many of them did not have school or personal activities. Perhaps what worries me at this point is the huge number of children who use social media when they are their age, which is frightening — if I may say — in the long run, especially since these social media applications are not designed primarily for children!

True, the increase in platform usage was not necessarily a cause for concern in and of itself. For instance, when children used the platforms to connect with friends during a pandemic, that was probably a good thing. But what I would like to point out here is that

the use was not mainly to keep in touch with peers. So it is the duty of parents to take into account that most teens, for example, spend more hours watching videos and perhaps more hours playing, therefore only a few minutes a day when they video chat with friends!

Here's a fact. It's important to consider what kids don't do when they spend a lot of time on screens and those platforms. Surely we should worry if it's replacing activities, such as sleep, family time and housework for instance. So this is certainly a real concern to look at!

As such, parents may now want to sit down with their children and create a technical agreement, if I may say so, outlining various details including when and where children can use the platforms and software and for how long? Perhaps most importantly, parents should have regular conversations with their children about social media. I believe that parents should also explain the importance of privacy and that what children share will reflect on them and their reputation.

In the end, parents should try to use platforms to communicate with their children. When adults use platforms with their children, they have an opportunity to share their values and expectations. So, just as you take care of them while you're in any picnic or travel, you have to protect them while they're swimming on social media!

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# art & life

## Local Scene

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## An event that measures power and beauty

By Kabeer Yousuf  
Photos by Anbar al Maskari

It turned out to be a scintillating show of beauty and power when scores of camels and horses came together for a traditional racing performance in Ibra. Organised by locals, it showcased the best performing horses and camels of the Wilayat and even has attendees from the nearby wilayats.

The popular sport saw camels compete at speeds of up to 64 kilometres per hour on tracks specially built for the race to the rounds of applause of the cheering crowd.

Camels and horses have a legendary role in Arab history and they are renowned in Arab history for their legacy as racing animals. The once the "ship of the desert", camels are equally needed for people on land as well as in deserts.

Oman's best horses showcased their beauty and might in the performance that saw hundreds of locals, foreign racing aficionados who gathered to cheer the participating teams to come with flying colours.

"We witnessed the best of horses vying each other showcasing their wilderness as well as the beauty at the horse race and show in Ibra. The horse and camel show was a treat to the lovers of traditional racing in the country as the world is showing victory over the Covid-19," said Anbar al Maskari, a tour operator associated with the show.

Entry to the horse race festival, which was held at the Ibra grounds was free, which was truly made use of by the visitors, according to Al Maskari.

Asked about the role of camels in Oman culture, Al Maskari said these beautiful animals, which have been a means of travel, food and shelter, have also played a vital role in the region over thousands of years, impacting all aspects of daily desert life. Camels are also used for entertaining, celebrating and competing in festivals and special events.

Statistics released by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources suggests that Oman has nearly 2,000 horses of various kinds. Out of them, more than 350 are purebred Arabian horses, 150 thoroughbreds and 1,500 indigenous breeds. The Sultanate of Oman has a well-maintained horse riding culture, rearing horses is one of the popular hobbies of the citizens, and equestrian activities are a part of their traditional sports and passion. Many Omanis take pride in keeping horses and take part in eque-

trian activities regionally and globally.

Annual races are being held in the Sultanate of Oman's royal stables and the culture is prevalent in almost all the wilayats.

The Unesco, in its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, mentioned Oman's 'Ardhah', meaning 'the day of the festival' which is practised using the horses and camel across many regions of Oman. A festival that enhances human bonds, and unites minds, is a festival when people gather around the racecourse to watch shows by horse and camel riders that reflect the skills of Omanis in dealing with and taming the animals. Traditional arts such as the reciting of traditional poems also accompany the demonstrations. Alardhah starts with a display of traditional acts, such as horses and camels lying down, riding standing up, joining hands with another rider at great speed, and other similar actions. This is followed by a display of horses and camels draped with decorative clothing and beautiful silver sets. Alardhah is associated with many social occasions in Omani society, such as religious and national celebrations. The practice is an integral part of the society's culture in rural and urban areas and reflects great skill as well as people's devotion to the care of animals. Alardhah involves both men and women and is an opportunity for traditional bands and craftspeople to display their talents. At the community level, Omanis organise Alardhah on various social occasions, which involve young people. Civil organisations also play a key role in transferring the related skills, and horse groups at the university teach students equestrian skills and how to perform Alardhah. During the cooler months from September to March, Oman holds a traditional National Camel Race Festival annually and is organised by the Royal Camel Corps and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Oman Camel Racing Federation. For several centuries, camel and horse racing competitions have been held across the country and it continues to be an integral part of the country's tradition and social fabric.

