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HM greetings to Emir of Kuwait

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Shaikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the anniversary of his accession to power. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, well-being and long life to Shaikh Nawaf. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions on Shaikh Nawaf as the people of Kuwait realise further aspirations of progress and prosperity. – ONA

16 agreements in various areas signed

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Wednesday signed at Al Alam Palace 16 agreements and memorandums of understanding in various areas. This came within the context of the current state visit of Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, UAE President to Oman.

The agreements and MoUs include a MoU in the field of energy between the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in Oman and the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure in the UAE. It was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Oufi, Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Suhail Mohammed al Mazrouei, UAE's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

SEE PAGES 2, 3 & 4

HM, UAE PRESIDENT HOLD BILATERAL MEETING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), held a bilateral meeting at Al Alam Palace on Wednesday morning.

During the meeting, the two leaders reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding the two countries and means of promoting them. They expressed their keenness to push these relations forward in various spheres to serve interests of the Omani and Emirati peoples.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs and HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Emirati side by Shaikh Hazza bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Shaikh Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Court, Shaikh Hamed bin Zayed al Nahyan, Member of Abu Dhabi Executive Council, Shaikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan and Shaikh Mohammed bin Hamad al Nahyan, Adviser of Special Affairs at the Ministry of Presidential Court.

— ONA

> The two leaders reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding the two countries and means of promoting them

HIS MAJESTY LEADS FAREWELL PARTY FOR UAE PRESIDENT

Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), left after a two-day state visit to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik led the farewell party at the Royal Airport, wishing the UAE President a safe return home. – ONA

Oman, UAE to jointly boost public and private sectors

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have affirmed their determination to motivate the government and private sectors to spearhead joint efforts to develop and diversify commercial exchange and investments. The action seeks to establish partnerships between the respective sectors towards the realisation of full integration between the two countries.

This was stated in a joint communique between Oman and the UAE, reading as follows: "Based on deep-rooted historical relations and fraternal bonds between the leaderships of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates and their peoples to further cement the distinguished bilateral relations, and — in response to a cherished invitation by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, conducted a state visit to the Sultanate of Oman — heading a high-level delegation on Tuesday and Wednesday."

DETAILS ON P2

Leaders affirm to stimulate government and private sectors

Bilateral cooperation to cover real estate, tourism, petrochemicals

Oman's ITHCA and ADQ to establish Joint Investment Fund

RO 5 bn deals signed by Oman Investment Authority and Emirates Holding

Deal signed for rail network

Oman Rail – developer and operator of the national railway network in Oman – and Etihad Rail, developer and operator of the national railway network in the United Arab Emirates, signed an agreement worth $3 billion (RO 1.160 billion) to establish "Oman Rail Company and Etihad Rail Company", owned 50-50 by the two sides, to design and operate a railway network connecting Sohar Port and UAE National Railway Network. The agreement was signed between Oman Rail Company – a subsidiary of Asyad Group, and Etihad Rail Company.

WEATHER MUSCAT: Max 32°C Min 27°C SALALAH: Max 29°C Min 26°C NIZWA: Max 38°C Min 25°C

PRAYER TIMINGS SUNRISE: 05:58 FAJR: 04:43 DHUHR: 12:02 ASR: 15:27 MAGHRIB: 18:02 ISHA: 19:12

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OMAN-UAE JOINT STATEMENT

Visit to strengthen bilateral relations

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have affirmed their determination to motivate the government and private sectors to spearhead joint efforts to develop and diversify commercial exchange and investments. The action seeks to establish partnerships between the respective sectors towards the realisation of full integration between the two countries.

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"The leaders of the two countries held in-depth discussions in a spirit of brotherhood and harmony. During the discussions, the two leaders reiterated their keen interest in strengthening cooperation in various spheres of common interest. They commended the existing coordination and cooperation in political, security, economic and cultural fields benefiting the two neighbouring countries.

"The two leaders underscored the role played by the Supreme Joint Committee and welcomed the effective communication between their highnesses and ministers in the two countries to discuss common issues and joint action to enhance bilateral relations in economic, commercial, investment, cultural, diplomatic, consular and educational fields, as well as the areas of environment, food security, advanced technologies and innovation, energy projects, renewable energy, industry, health and pharmaceutical fields.

"Bilateral cooperation also covers real estate development, tourism, petrochemicals, converting industries, supply chains, transportation, logistical partnership, information technology, financial technology, and everything that would enhance common benefits and interests and bring prosperity to the peoples of the two countries.

"The two sides also welcomed the signing of a number of memoranda of understanding on various aspects of bilateral cooperation.

"His Majesty the Sultan and the President of the United Arab Emirates have affirmed their determination to stimulate the government and private sectors to work towards the elevation of joint efforts to develop and diversify commercial and investment exchanges, and to establish partnerships in various sectors and between business owners, with a view to realising integration between the two brotherly countries.

"The two sides also exchanged views on matters, including issues on the regional and international arenas. They expressed resolve to coordinate in a manner that serves their interests and consolidates pillars of security and stability in the region and the world at large.

"His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik extended his sincere congratulations to His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan on the occasion of the United Arab Emirates' being proclaimed host of the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-28), which will be held in 2023.

"At the conclusion of the visit, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, as well as the Omani government and people for the warm welcome and sincere hospitality accorded to him, and his accompanying delegation. He wished the Sultanate of Oman further progress and prosperity." — **ONA**

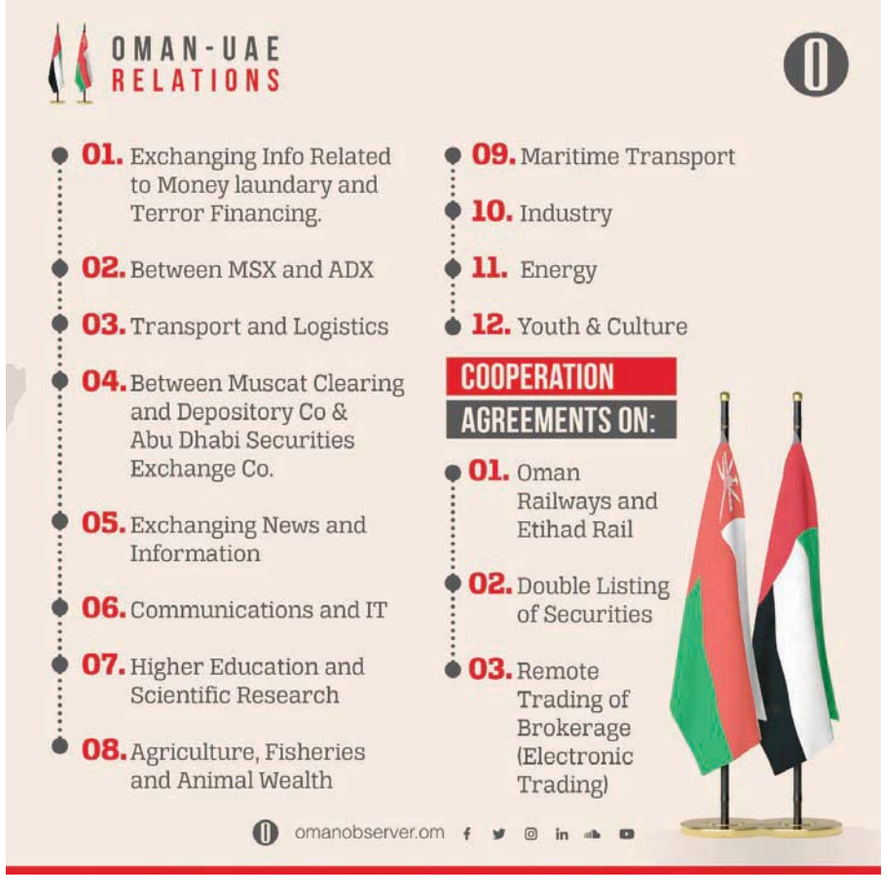
ROHM blends tradition with modernity in vibrant harmony: UAE President

MUSCAT: Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), visited the Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) on Wednesday, as part of his current state visit to the Sultanate of Oman. Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed toured ROHM during which he was briefed on the House, its facilities and shows, as well as its programmes and the latest equipment used in the world music shows. He also viewed the ROHM unique architectural designs creatively combining Omani architectural and cultural legacy with the modern architectural pattern.

ROHM staged a concert for the UAE President which was performed by the Steel Band and the Operetta Troupe of the Royal Guard of Oman (RGO).

At the conclusion of his visit to ROHM, Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan signed the Senior Visitors' Register. The UAE President expressed his happiness at visiting ROHM and enjoying the concert. He said ROHM blends tradition with modernity in a refined and vibrant harmony. The UAE President affirmed that the arts draw a global common language and a link connecting cultures. He added that arts are an important means of promoting human values, particularly communication, peace, tolerance and coexistence among peoples, which are the same values enjoyed by the Sultanate of Oman. **— ONA**

Oman and UAE sign agreements worth over RO 5 bn



MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and a number of United Arab Emirates (UAE) firms held talks and signed agreements and memoranda of understanding were concluded.

Oman Investment Authority and Abu Dhabi Developmental Holding Company (ADQ) unveiled an agreement worth RO 1 billion to establish investment ventures in priority sectors in the two countries. The two sides also earmarked initial investment opportunities to the tune of RO 3 billion and agreed to conduct feasibility studies.

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, OIA Chairman, said that these agreements reflect the OIA's efforts to attract foreign investments to the sectors designated in the 10th Five Year Plan.

Mohammed bin Hassan al Suwaidi, Managing Director and CEO of ADQ, said that the OIA constitutes a desire to build on historical ties between Oman and the UAE.

Oman and the UAE officials signed agreements and memorandums of understanding in energy, maritime transport, industry, youth and culture, agriculture and food safety, research and innovation. These were signed by Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Oman's Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Suhail bin Mohammed al Mazrouei, UAE's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

The Ministry of Information, represented by Oman News Agency (ONA), signed a memorandum of understanding with Emirates News Agency (WAM) in news and information exchange. It was signed by Ibrahim bin Saif al Azri, ONA Director-General and Editor-in-Chief, and Mohammed bin Jalal al Raisi, WAM Director-General.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the National Centre for Financial Information in Oman and the UAE Financial Intelligence Unit to counter money laundering and terror finance. It was signed by Colonel Abdulrahman bin Amir al Kiyumi, CEO of Oman National Centre for Financial Information, and Ali bin Faisal Ba'Alawi, Head of the UAE Financial Intelligence Unit.

A cooperation agreement was also signed between Oman Rail and Etihad Rail. It was signed by Abdulrahman bin Salim al Hatmi, CEO of Asyad Group, and Shadi Malak, CEO of Etihad Rail.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Omani Group for Communications and Information Technology "ITHCA Group" and Abu Dhabi Development Holding Company. It was signed by Atef bin Said al Siyabi, Deputy Chairman of ITHCA Group, and Mohammed bin Hassan al Suwaidi, CEO and Managing Director of Abu Dhabi Holding.

A memorandum of understanding was also signed between Muscat Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. It was signed by Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, and Said bin Hamad al Dhaheri, CEO of Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange.

An agreement was also signed for the remote trading of brokerage companies through electronic trading (Tadawul). It was signed by Al Salmi and Al Dhaheri. In the field of dual-listing of securities, an agreement was signed between Muscat Stock Exchange and Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange. It was signed by Al Salmi and Al Dhaheri.

— ONA

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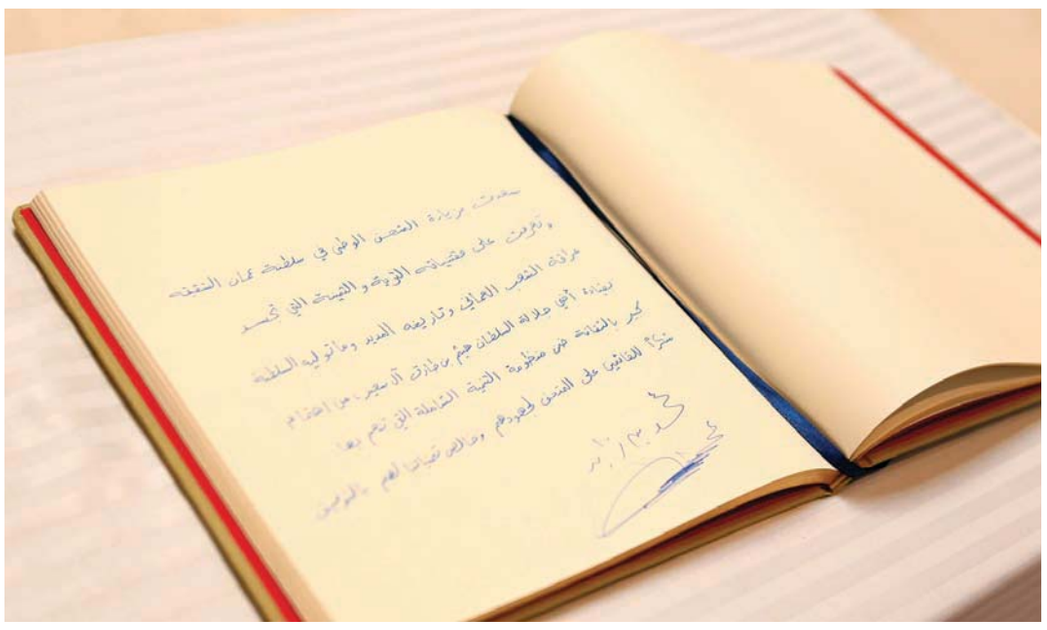

SHAIKH MOHAMMED PRAISES OMAN'S ATTENTION TO CULTURE

MUSCAT: Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on Wednesday visited the National Museum.

The UAE President was greeted upon his arrival by Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed and his accompanying delegation toured the museum and its galleries. He was briefed about the museum's galleries and important aspects of the history and civilisation of the Sultanate of Oman, namely the Land and the People Gallery, the Timeline Gallery and the Splendours of Islam Gallery.

The UAE President also viewed the collections loaned from the Louvre Museum Abu Dhabi. They include Iznik ceramics from the 16th century, in addition to the objects previously loaned by the National Museum for temporary display in the Louvre Abu Dhabi, which feature the historical treasure of Al Waqba that includes more than 400 silver dirhams dating back to the early Islamic eras.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed also went on tour of the Sultan Qaboos bin Said's Corner (the Dearest and Purest of Men) and viewed the original letter No 1 (Letter of Will) addressed by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to the Royal Family Council through the Defence Council.

He also took note of objects that embody the Omani-Emirati relations, comprising the demarcation agreement between Oman and UAE relating to the boundary sector from Umm Al Zumul to Eastern Uqaydat, which was signed by the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said and the late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan, in addition to a single-edge curved sword (kittārah), presented by the late Shaikh Zayed bin Sultan al Nahyan to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said in 2004. The UAE President also viewed a Scale model of Qasr Al Hosn Fort at the Emirate of Abu Dhabi presented by the late Shaikh Zayed to the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said, on the occasion of the demarcation of the borders between Oman and the UAE in 1999.

The UAE President wrote in the Museum's visitors' diary, "I was pleased to visit the National Museum in Oman, and got acquainted with its rich and precious artefacts that embody the nobility of the Omani people, its ancient history, and the great attention Oman awards under the wise leadership of my brother, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to culture within the wide development system." He also thanked the museum's organisers for their efforts, and wished them success.

During his visit to the National Museum, Shaikh Mohammed was accompanied by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court. — **ONA**

OMAN AWARDED WHO EMTCT CERTIFICATION

Oman became the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean region to eliminate mother-to-child transmission (EMTCT) of HIV and syphilis. WHO awarded the certificate to Oman at an official ceremony held at Al Bustan Palace Hotel on Wednesday. – **ONA**

Workshop discusses methods to promote and protect human rights

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Omani Human Rights Commission hosted a workshop under the auspices of Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Diplomatic Affairs, in Muscat on Tuesday.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness about three international conventions on human rights namely the Convention against Torture, the Protection from Enforced Disappearance, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The workshop drew appreciation from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations.

The seminar was based on Article 97 of the Basic Law of the State, which states that the international treaties and conventions to which the Sultanate of Oman accedes are part of the country's law, and based on the Royal Decrees issued to ratify them, and within the framework of the Commission's competence with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Fahd al Aghbari, a member of the Lawyers Association, presented a paper which discussed the role of civil society institutions in protecting and promoting human rights enshrined in international conventions and agreements.

Yasmine Ashraf, human rights officer of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, presented human rights indicators related to the conventions.

Shatha al Zadjali, Director of the Department of Organizations and International Relations at the Omani Human Rights Commission, talked about the role of the Omani Human Rights Commission in following up and implementing the three conventions in the local and international spheres. "This seminar aimed to raise awareness about the provisions and contents of these agreements and the role of each party in following up the implementation of the provisions of these agreements."

The workshop was attended by 90 participants from governmental units and civil institutions.

The officer of the High Commissioner proposed establishment of a permanent national mechanism for the preparation of national reports, stressing the commitment of the Commission to cooperate in everything that would promote and protect human rights, and raise the efficiency of those working in this field.

School science lab staff undergo training in US

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The Ministry of Education and Pasco Company implemented a training programme on the use of electronic sensors in practical experiments recently. The trainees included eight science lab supervisors and technicians, curriculum specialists and teachers of physics. The programme took place in the state of California, USA.

Experts from Pasco Company trained participants to use electronic sensors in scientific experiments. They presented the latest technical laboratory equipment in the company. The participants toured the company's departments to learn about the stages of manufacturing electronic sensors, and learned about the new in the world of digital technology in science laboratories and the advantages this technology offers in teaching modern science curricula. On the sidelines of the training, the participants visited a school in California to learn about the modern technologies used in scientific experiments, and to see the school's laboratory designs.

Through the implementation of this programme, the Ministry of Education aims to raise the efficiency of science lab officials and to enable them to have scientific and practical knowledge in using the latest laboratory equipment.

Observer scribe's poetry collection released

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

A collection of poems written by Tobi Salins, who has worked as a senior journalist in the Sultanate of Oman for the past 14 years, has been released.

The book, 'Urangatha Janala' meaning the window that never sleeps, written in his native Malayalam language, contains 72 poems and captures life vividly on a wide range of themes: from the nostalgic recollections of an expatriate to the travails of human beings during the Covid pandemic.

The book was released by Loka Kerala Sabha member and well-known social activist Wilson George at a function organised by Kairali Vayanasala in Muscat on Tuesday. Indian Social Club's Kerala Wing convener Santhosh Kumar presided over the meeting. Literary wing coordinator K V Vijayan, author and teacher Radhakrishna Kurup were among those who offered felicitations. Kerala Wing co-convener Nitheesh Kumar proposed a vote of thanks.

Noted writer Haroon Rasheed made a scholarly review of Tobi's poems on the occasion, delving deep into their salient features. A good number of literary enthusiasts attended the function.

Tobi leaves Oman Daily Observer this month after serving as a senior editor of the English newspaper for 12 years. During his journalistic career spanning over three decades, Tobi has held senior positions in various newspapers both in India and Oman.

Prior to joining Oman Daily Observer, he had served Oman Tribune for two years. He started off his career in the New Indian Express, which he quit as Chief Sub-Editor 16 years later.

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

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

TENDER NOTICE NO. SCM/2022/4249

Engineering Consultancy Service for Oman Air Head Quarter 1 Extension Building

Oman Air is looking for a qualified and experienced contractor to execute the above project.

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

Please note that you should complete the online vendor registration to receive the tender documents and submit your proposal online. The last day for submitting proposals is 11th October 2022, before 12:00 pm.

For any query, please send an email to:
Khamis.Albahri@omanair.com or call Tel. No.: 24259729.

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الطيران العماني
OMAN AIR

Expect rains during weekend

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Low clouds hovered over parts of the coasts of the Sea of Oman — North and South Al Batinah and the eastern coasts of Musandam Governorate, and on parts of Al Buraimi, South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta governorates on Wednesday. Clouds of different heights also spread over the Governorate of Dhofar.

The formation of cumulus clouds began by the afternoon in parts of the Hajar Mountains, with chances of rainfall of varying intensity. There are also chances of thunderstorms, sometimes accompanied by active downward winds and hail and may lead to the flow of some wadis during the coming hours.

Sultanate of Oman
The Supreme Judicial Council

Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
40/2022	Detailed Design & Supervising Services for Services Building at Salalah Court Complex	22/9/2022	20/10/2022	First	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website:
(https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)

Bidders shall submit their bids electronically via the aforementioned website. An electronic bank guarantee certified by one of the banks operating in the country shall be delivered at a rate of (1%) of the bid value with each bid, valid for a period of (90) days from the date of submission of bids and addressed in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in The Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

1- *For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:*
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om).

2- *For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:*
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

North Korea fires two ballistic missiles on eve of Harris trip

SEOUL: North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles on Wednesday, Seoul's military said, just days after Pyongyang's last test and ahead of a visit to South Korea by US Vice-President Kamala Harris.

The launches, part of a record-breaking blitz of weapons tests this year by North Korea, came after Seoul's spy agency warned that Pyongyang was close to conducting another nuclear test.

South Korea's military said it had "detected two short-range ballistic missiles fired from the Sunan area in Pyongyang".

The missiles flew "around 360 kilometres at an altitude of 30 kilometres at the speed of Mach 6", Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement, adding that it was analysing the details of the launches.

"Our military has reinforced monitoring and surveillance and is maintaining utmost readiness in close coordination with the United States," it added.

Japan also confirmed the launches, with deputy defence minister Toshiro Ino saying North Korea's recent spate of missile tests were "unprecedented" in frequency.

"The repeated missile launches cannot be tolerated," he said. The latest launch comes after North Korea test-fired a short-range ballistic missile on Sunday.

Harris is due to arrive in Seoul on Thursday for a brief visit, during which she will go to the heavily fortified border between North and South Korea.

People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test at a railway station in Seoul. – **AFP**

The White House has said Harris' trip, which follows a visit to Japan, intends to underscore the importance of the alliance with Seoul.

Washington is Seoul's key security ally and stations about 28,500 troops in South Korea to help protect it from the North.

Last week, the nuclear-powered USS Ronald Reagan conducted joint drills with South Korea's navy in waters off the Korean peninsula.

Under Seoul's hawkish new President Yoon Suk-yeol, who took office in May, the two countries have boosted joint exercises, which they insist are purely defensive — but North Korea sees them as rehearsals for an invasion.

South Korean and US officials have been warning for months that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is preparing to conduct another nuclear test.

Earlier on Wednesday, Seoul's spy agency said Pyongyang appeared to have completed "a third tunnel at its Punggye-ri nuclear site", MP Yoo Sang-bum told reporters after a briefing from Seoul's National Intelligence Service. Pyongyang is likely to choose the window between "China's upcoming Communist Party Congress on October 16 and the midterm elections in the United States on November 7" for its next nuclear test, Yoo said.

North Korea, which is under multiple UN sanctions for its weapons programmes, typically seeks to maximise the geopolitical impact of its tests with careful timing.

The isolated regime has tested nuclear weapons six times since 2006. Its last and most powerful one in 2017 — which Pyongyang claimed was a hydrogen bomb — had an estimated yield of 250 kilotons. — **AFP**

4 Palestinians killed in Jenin army operation

TEL AVIV/RAMALLAH: At least four Palestinians were killed and more than 40 were injured in an Israeli army operation in Jenin in the West Bank on Wednesday.

Palestinian sources said Israeli soldiers surrounded the house of the family of a man who shot dead three people in a Tel Aviv shop in April.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said that in addition to the four killed, more than 40 were injured in an exchange of gunfire.

"Israeli security forces operated in the Jenin Camp to apprehend two suspects involved in shooting attacks," the Israeli army said in a statement.

"Earlier this morning, security forces operated in the Jenin Camp in order to apprehend two suspects involved in a number of recent shooting attacks."

The statement said that while surrounding the residence in which both suspects were located, "an explosive device detonated and the suspects opened fire toward the security forces. The security forces fired back according to standard operating procedures and the two suspects were both killed."

One of the suspects was "the brother of the activist who murdered three Israeli civilians in the shooting attack in Tel Aviv earlier this year," the statement said. Israeli soldiers also detained several other suspects in Judea and Samaria during the night, they said.

"Exchanges of fire between armed Palestinian activists and Israeli security forces in the Jenin area are continuing at present," the statement said.

Video footage of the scene showed dense smoke rising from rooftops. Three men were killed in the attack on Tel Aviv's busy Dizeng off Street in April, and five other people were injured when the attacker shot people in the bar. — **dpa**

Israeli vehicles drive during a raid targeting alleged activists in Jenin, in the north of the occupied West Bank. – **AFP**

Typhoon Noru tears across Vietnam and Laos

DANANG: Typhoon Noru tore roofs from homes and caused power outages across central Vietnam on Wednesday, with hundreds of thousands of people taking refuge, after the storm claimed at least 10 lives in the Philippines.

In Danang, Vietnam's third-largest city, high-rise buildings shook as the typhoon made landfall in the early hours of Wednesday, bringing winds of up to around 120 kilometres per hour, according to the national forecaster.

More than 300,000 people in Vietnam hunkered down in shelters overnight after experts predicted the storm would be one of the biggest to ever hit the country.

By Wednesday evening, it weakened to a tropical storm as it crossed into southern Laos, but forecasters in Vietnam warned of landslides and serious flooding in the typhoon's wake.

A man walks along the beach following the passage of typhoon Noru in Danang. – **AFP**

In tourist city of Hoi An, the Hoai River was close to bursting its banks, while the ground was littered with metal roof sheeting and fallen trees

The defence ministry has mobilised around 40,000 soldiers and 200,000 members, equipped with armoured vehicles and boats in preparation for rescue and relief operations, state media said.

In the tourist city of Hoi An, the Hoai River was close to bursting its banks, while the ground was littered with metal roof sheeting and fallen trees that had damaged cars and blocked roads. Several streets in the old town were under water. "The typhoon was terrible last night.

I could not sleep as the wind was so strong and loud," resident Nguyen Thi Hien said.

Around 300 houses in the coastal province of Quang Tri had their roofs blown off on Tuesday as the wind began picking up speed. "I heard the sound of fallen trees and signboards outside.

I was scared. But we were prepared so luckily the losses were not that bad." Residents rushed to clean up the debris early on Wednesday, with some shops already open and tourists walking the streets, taking pictures of the floodwater. Reshma D'Souza, from India, spent a frightening night in her hotel room.

At around 1 am, she said, she saw that the "wall was vibrating". "(It was) shaking, so I was just praying and I was so scared."

Airports and offices across central provinces began to reopen on Wednesday afternoon.

But key sections of the highway linking Hanoi in the north with commercial hub Ho Chi Minh City in the south remained closed due to landslides and floods, according to state media.

Noru hit Vietnam after slamming into the Philippines earlier this week as a super typhoon with winds of up to 195 kph, leaving 10 dead and eight missing, the civil defence office said. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

BEIJING

17 dead in northeast China restaurant fire

A fire at a restaurant in northeastern China on Wednesday killed 17 people and injured another three, according to local authorities.

The blaze broke out at 12:40 pm in an eatery in the city of Changchun, the local government said in a statement posted on the Weibo social media platform.

Firefighters "rushed to the scene" and completed search and rescue work by 3 pm, the statement said. "The injured have been sent to hospital for treatment while posthumous care for the victims is being carried out," it added. Authorities said the cause of the incident is under investigation. — **AFP**

RIYADH

Saudi Arabia's crown prince named prime minister

Saudi Arabia's crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, has been named prime minister, in a government shuffle announced on Tuesday.

The heads of other critical ministries, including interior, foreign and energy, remained in place, according to a royal decree from King Salman published by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Prince Mohammed, who turned 37 last month, has been first in line to succeed his father as king since 2017.

The prince is the architect of a wide-ranging plan dubbed "Vision 2030" to bring social and economic change to Saudi Arabia's economy. — **AFP**

KATHMANDU

Body of missing US ski mountaineer found

The body of top US ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson was retrieved from the Himalayas by a search team, two days after she disappeared on the slopes of Nepal's Manaslu peak.

Nelson slipped and went missing while skiing down the world's eighth-highest mountain after a successful summit with her partner Jim Morrison.

Morrison led the search operations and had left on Wednesday on a helicopter to resume efforts to locate her at an elevation of around 6,200 metres.

"They returned to the same area and found her body. They have now flown to Kathmandu," Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-La Nepal Trek, said. — **AFP**

In brief

COPENHAGEN

CONSERVATIVE GIVEN TWO WEEKS TO FORM SWEDISH GOVT

The clock began ticking in Sweden on Wednesday for Ulf Kristersson to form a government after his right-wing alliance narrowly won parliamentary elections earlier this month. The speaker of parliament granted Kristersson, who leads the conservative Moderate party, two weeks to negotiate with potential coalition partners.
Speaker Andreas Norlén set the deadline as October 15 and asked for an interim report on October 5. A four-party bloc that includes the nationalist Sweden Democrats won a slim majority of 176 of the 349 seats in Sweden's September 11 election. — **dpa**

ROME

ITALIAN ASTRONAUT IS FIRST EUROPEAN TO COMMAND ISS

Italian astronaut Samantha Cristoforetti has become the first woman from Europe to assume the role of commander of the International Space Station (ISS). Russian cosmonaut Oleg Artemyev handed over the station's symbolic "keys" to Cristoforetti, 45. The Italian follows in the footsteps of four previous European commanders. In the role, Cristoforetti is responsible, among other things, for the safety of her crew and ensuring close cooperation between those on board and colleagues on Earth. Cristoforetti, who was born in Milan, has been on her second tour of the space station since late April. — **dpa**

LONDON

BRITAIN BRACED FOR HEAVY RAINS, POWERFUL WINDS

Heavy rain and 60 mph winds are set to batter the UK amid the fallout from a huge storm in the US. Flooding may affect parts of the country on Friday after torrential downpours, while a jet stream bringing low pressure will swoop in from the west coast, leading to possible wind damage. Hurricane Ian has rapidly intensified off Florida's south-west coast with top winds of 155 mph, just short of the dangerous Category 5 status, with the Met Office suggesting its impact will be felt across the Atlantic. The forecaster said this will follow mostly sunny spells and a few scattered showers on Thursday. — **dpa**

A rubble at a railway yard of the freight railway station in Kharkiv, which was partially destroyed by a missile strike. – **AFP**

Putin likely to proclaim annexation of Ukraine

Ukrainian leader says Russian vote was a farce and tribune erected on Red Square proclaiming provinces are Russia

ZAPORIZHZHIA: Moscow was poised on Wednesday to annex a swath of Ukraine, releasing what it called vote tallies showing support in four partially occupied provinces to join Russia, after what Kyiv and the West denounced as illegal sham referendums held at gunpoint.

On Moscow's Red Square, a tribune with giant video screens has been set up, with billboards proclaiming "Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson - Russia!"

President Vladimir Putin could proclaim the annexation in a speech within days, just over a week since he endorsed the referendums, ordered a military mobilisation at home and threatened to defend Russia with nuclear weapons if necessary.

The Russian-installed administrations of the four Ukrainian provinces on Wednesday formally asked Putin to incorporate them into Russia, which Russian officials have suggested is a formality.

"The results are clear. Welcome home, to Russia!," Dmitry Medvedev, a former president who serves as deputy chairman of Russia's Security Council, said on Telegram, after the release of the results. Russian-backed authorities claim to have carried out the referendums over five days on territory that makes up around 15 per cent of Ukraine.

Residents who escaped to Ukrainian-held territory in recent days have told of people being forced to tick ballots in the street by roving officials at gunpoint. Footage filmed during the exercise showed Russian-installed officials taking ballot boxes from house to house with armed men in tow.

Russia says voting was voluntary and turnout high.

"This farce in the occupied territories cannot even be called an imitation of a referendum," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in video address overnight.

Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelensky, said that Ukrainians who helped organise the exercise would face treason charges and at least five years in jail. Ukrainians who were forced to vote would not be punished. Denis Pushilin, the Russian-installed leader in Donetsk, one of two Ukrainian regions Moscow had previously proclaimed independent states, said he was on his way to Moscow to complete the legal process of joining Russia.

"Now we are moving to a new stage of military action," he said, amid speculation that Putin is set to change the status of what he has so far called a "special military operation" to a counter-terrorism operation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would need to keep fighting until it had taken control of all of Donetsk. Around 40 per cent of the province is still under Ukrainian control.

The Russian annexation plan gathered pace as leaking gas bubbled up in the Baltic Sea for a second day after suspected explosions tore through undersea Russian pipelines on Tuesday.

The Nord Stream 1 pipeline, once the main route for Russian gas to Germany, was already shut but cannot now be easily reopened.

Nato and the European Union warned of the need to protect critical infrastructure from what they called "sabotage", though officials stopped short of saying who they blamed. — **Reuters**

Three rockets land in Baghdad Green Zone

BAGHDAD: Three Katyusha rockets landed in Baghdad's fortified Green Zone on Wednesday while Iraq's parliament voted to reject the resignation of speaker Mohammed Halbousi, Iraq's military said.

Seven security personnel were wounded in the attack, which took place amid a partial lockdown as parliament was convening. Security forces blocked bridges to the central Green Zone and imposed a curfew on buses, motorcycles and trucks.

Another rocket later fell near the Green Zone, where parliament and many government offices and foreign embassies are located, security sources said. There were no casualties.

Despite the tight restrictions, dozens of supporters of the powerful Moqtada al Sadr gathered in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, which lies outside the Green Zone, to protest against the parliamentary session.

A cameraman said around a dozen were seen throwing stones at security forces.

Sadr emerged as the biggest winner from an election last October but ordered his parliamentarians to withdraw after failing to form a coalition government after months of political deadlock. The Sadrists have called for fresh elections.

Halbousi, a politician who originally backed Sadr's efforts, has broken with him, arguing that efforts should continue on forming a government with other factions.

Earlier this year Halbousi's Taqaddum party and other Arab and Kurdish factions supported Sadr's efforts to form a government that would exclude rival groups.

However they did not follow suit when Sadr withdrew from parliament, and have instead considered entering a ruling alliance with the parties, according to officials on all sides of the political divide.

A large majority of parliamentarians voted on Wednesday against Halbousi's resignation, effectively endorsing his continuation in office.

The leader of a militia loyal to Sadr condemned Wednesday's rocket attack.

"We condemn and denounce the shelling of the Green Zone today and we stress the constitutional right to protest," Peace Brigades commander Abu Mustafa al Hamidawi said. — **Reuters**

Supporters of Moqtada run for cover from tear gas fired by Iraqi security forces amid clashes in Tahrir Square in Baghdad during a parliament session. – **AFP**

As hurricane nears, Floridians told to hunker down

SARASOTA: After days of preparation, Hurricane Ian on Wednesday began lashing Florida's Gulf Coast with powerful winds and drenching rain, prompting authorities to warn residents to hunker down as the eye of the Category 4 storm lurked just offshore.

At 7 am Eastern, Ian was around 130 km southwest of Punta Gorda, Florida, carrying maximum sustained winds of 250 km per hour, the US National Hurricane Center said. It upgraded Ian an to an "extremely dangerous" Category 4 hurricane, though it said the storm was expected to weaken somewhat after reaching land.

"The storm is here," Florida Division of Emergency Management Director Kevin Guthrie said at a news conference. "Stay indoors. Stay away from windows."

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis warned that people in four Gulf Coast counties were no longer safe to evacuate and urged residents to get off the roads and stay inside. "It's time to hunker down and prepare for this storm. This is a powerful storm that should be treated like a tornado was approaching your home," he said. "This is going to be a nasty, nasty day or two days. This is going to be a rough stretch."

Waves hit the Malecon in Havana after the passage of hurricane Ian. – **AFP**

Earlier this week, authorities told more than 2.5 million residents to evacuate their homes for higher ground. But some, like Mark Feinman, a professional musician in St Petersburg, chose to stay put. "There's absolutely no one on the roads here," Feinman, 36, said early on Wednesday. "The sky is this weird, ominous gray, and you can feel the wind gusts and the rain hits every little while. You can feel it in the air. My ears popped."

Feinman said he does not regret his decision to stay; he feels his house is secure, and fortunately for him, the storm jogged to the south of earlier forecasts, which showed it making a direct hit on the Tampa-St Petersburg area.

"We still expect it to get bad here. But I've boarded up, put down sandbags. We're stocked up on supplies.."

It was expected to crash ashore into Florida on Wednesday afternoon at about 2 pm in Charlotte County, about 100 miles south of Tampa and just north of Fort Myers.

The Miami-based National Hurricane Center warned that Ian would unleash wind-driven high surf, torrential rains that may cause coastal flooding of up to 12 feet along with intense thunderstorms and possible tornadoes. — **Reuters**

The amazing role of mothers

Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician and content creator

Despite loving your child and sparing no effort unturned for your child; still, that voice echoes in your head that you are not doing enough for your little one.

You look around and you find other mommies managing their kids perfectly; though apparently, however, enough to escalate your anxieties.

For a mother, this 'mommy's guilt' is always churning within.

According to a study published in Research Gate, mothers often describe experiencing guilt when thinking about living up to the 'good mother' ideal and when taking time away from their 'mother role obligations' to look after themselves.

Sometimes, it is the ideology that is woven around everywhere in societies and cultures that mothers are perfect; their role is deciphered so holy that there is no margin for any wrong in taking care of her children.

Albeit we forget at the end of the day, she is a human who has embraced motherhood for the first time in her life.

As the child is nourishing under her clement and mellow care, she is too sprouting as a mother.

Traversing and learning on this motherhood journey without any prior experiences, it is innate to err that should be given space for self-auto correction rather than judgments.

> EVERY CHILD IS DIFFERENT AND SO ARE THEIR LEARNING PACES. THE SAME GOES FOR MOTHERS AND THEIR CARE GIVING WAYS

How to get rid of this guilt feeling? As this is the prevalent emotion that hits all the mothers; so, if you too feel a bit this way, it is okay but do not let this be overwhelming. Don't be panicked when someone tells you their kid started crawling at 7 months and yours is not able to walk yet by the age of 12 months.

Or nursing mothers are better than formula-feeding mothers.

Every child is different and so are their learning paces.

The same goes for moms and their care giving ways.

No method is superior or inferior; hence do not fall into the trap of comparisons and underrating yourself.

Revisit your tribe, and pick up the right people that surround you who are your support system. People who do not measure your motherhood talent but understand that you will be weary, or your house will be messy or you need some time away from your kid too to regain your energy back.

You need to be at peace with yourself to be there for your kid.

Over and above all, your child is your biggest coup; for him, you are his entire world.

No criticism, no judgments can beat the acquisition that for him you matter unconditionally and you are an amazing mom!

Digital nomad hotspots grapple with housing squeeze

JOANNA GILL AND DIANA BAPTISTA

Among the glitzy new apartment buildings springing up in Mexico City's Juarez neighbourhood, fashionable coffee shops are taking the place of taco stands and English is replacing Spanish on signs and posters aimed at an influx of newcomers.

The remote work boom sparked by Covid-19 has lured large numbers of "digital nomads" from the United States to the Mexican capital and other cities, drawn in part by lower housing costs south of the border.

But their arrival has fueled some residents' anger - and protests - about gentrification, which they say is pricing local families out of their homes and leading to evictions in areas coveted by developers such as Juarez, Roma and Condesa.

"We're starting to see posters on the street saying that (digital nomads) aren't welcome, and people are getting very angry," said Sofia Ramirez, director of the think-tank Mexico 'Como Vamos'.

Landlords in some popular districts are increasingly opting to let their properties to foreigners via Airbnb at higher rates, locals and researchers say, putting them out of reach of most existing residents.

Of the roughly 10,000 apartments listed on Airbnb in Mexico City, the average price per night is 1,450 pesos ($72), while 95 per cent of Mexican workers earn less than 518 pesos ($26) per day, according to an analysis of data from advocacy group Inside Airbnb.

As the global nomadic workforce tops 35 million, according to a recent estimate by the ABrotherAbroad.com site, researchers and locals say authorities must take steps to protect residents from surging housing demand and ensure they see economic benefits from the shift.

"Digital nomadism wouldn't be a problem if it was regulated to generate the least possible damage to locals. However, we see one population being affected to benefit a different one," said Sergio Gonzalez from the 06600 Juarez Neighborhood Platform and Observatory, set up to shield local communities from gentrification.

In Portugal's capital, Lisbon - another hotspot for digital nomads - authorities have taken some measures to address a housing crunch caused partly by sizzling demand for short-term accommodation.

While Lisbon and Mexico City are relatively affordable for many foreigners, they were ranked the world's third- and fourth-least liveable cities based on local rents and wages, a recent study by CIA Landlord Insurance found. "Here you are at the heart of the problem," said Susana Peralta, gesturing to the Alfama district, a formerly working-class neighbourhood dotted with chic restaurants and bars dedicated to Portugal's traditional fado music.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation

Victorious Meloni faces early test of Italy's resolve on Russia

Jason Horowitz

The writer is the Rome bureau chief of *NYT* covering Italy, the Vatican and Greece

Throughout her time in the opposition to Prime Minister Mario Draghi's national unity government, Giorgia Meloni, the hard-right leader who is poised to become the next Italian prime minister after a strong showing in Sunday's elections, railed against everything from vaccine requirements to undemocratic power grabs.

But on the issue of Ukraine, perhaps the most consequential for the government, she unambiguously criticised Russia's unwarranted aggression, gave full-throated support for Ukraine's right to defend itself and, in a recent interview, said she would "totally" continue to provide Italian arms to the Ukrainians.

The same cannot be said for Meloni's coalition partners, who have deeply admired Russia's president, Vladimir Putin, and have often sounded like his apologists.

Just days before the vote, former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, once Putin's best friend among leaders in Western Europe, claimed that "Putin was pushed by the Russian population, by his party and by his ministers to invent this special operation," and that a flood of arms from the West had thwarted Russian soldiers in their mission to reach "Kyiv within a week, replace Zelenskyy's government with decent people and then leave."

The other coalition partner, Matteo Salvini, the leader of the League party, used to wear T-shirts with Putin's face on them and has for years been so fawning towards Russia that he has frequently had to reject accusations that he has taken money from Moscow.

Recently, with Meloni apparently uncomfortable as she sat beside him, Salvini doubted the wisdom of sanctions on Russia, which he said hurt Italy more than Putin's government.

> HOW MELONI NAVIGATES THOSE TENSIONS IN HER COALITION WILL NOW BE A KEY FACTOR IN THE EU'S STRUGGLE TO KEEP AN UNBROKEN FRONT AGAINST RUSSIA AS THE COST OF SANCTIONS BEGINS TO BITE IN WINTER

How Meloni navigates those tensions in her coalition will now be a key factor in the European Union's struggle to keep an unbroken front against Russia as the cost of sanctions begins to bite in winter.

If she wavers, especially on sanctions, European leaders who have stood up to Putin all these months fear it could begin a major unraveling of resolve, widening divisions in the EU and between the United States and Europe.

"We are ready to welcome any political force that can show itself to be more constructive in its relations with Russia," the Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said after the Italian election results, according to the Russian news service Tass.

But analysts said Russia should not expect a change from Meloni anytime soon, believing that her position on Ukraine is credible and that the weak showing of her partners in the election will allow her to keep them in their place without blowing up their alliance.

"I put my hand today on fire that she is not going to bend," said Nathalie Tocci, the director of the Institute for International Affairs in Rome.

"She's very gung-ho about Russia."

Despite a widespread suspicion that political calculation lay behind Meloni's pivot during the campaign to less hostile positions on the EU and away from leaders such as Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary and Marine Le Pen in France, analysts judged that on the issue of Ukraine, Meloni was not likely to budge.

In the past, Meloni has admired Putin's defence of Christian values, which is consistent with her own traditionalist rhetoric.

But unlike other hard-right politicians and newbie nationalists, like Salvini, Meloni was raised in a post-fascist universe in Italy where Russia — and especially communist internationalists — represented an Eastern force that threatened the sanctity and peculiarities of Western European identities.

For Meloni it was less difficult to step away from the Putin adoration that swept the populist-nationalist right over the past decade.

During the campaign, she was happy to point out this difference with her coalition partners, as she was competing with them and it helped differentiate her and reassure the West of her credibility.

Pummeling the competition in Sunday's election will have made it easier to withstand any attempted pressure from Salvini or Berlusconi, who both failed to break into double digits in the polls and were thus left with little leverage.

That is not to say that Meloni faces no pressure at home for a more forgiving stance. Italy, a country with deep and long ties to Russia, has long had reservations about sanctions against Moscow and getting involved in foreign wars. — ***New York Times***

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Inspirational women: many out there!

SONIA AMBROSIO
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The epics of Queen Shamsaa, also known as the queen of Oman, have crossed my path. Reading about her role in the pre-Islamic era reinforced my views on the strength of Omani women.

We can start with Queen Shamsaa but there are also Khadija, Aisha, and many other inspirational women from the past and present who had the pulse of social and economic developments within their communities and the country. And, let us not forget the women who became a force in the days when the Omani men had to go abroad for long periods of time for work.

The historical background about women in Oman in the academic article "Renaissance returned Omani Women in Politics", by Maryam bint Said al Kharousiyah, is a gem.

The military and political roles of Moza Ahmad are well-documented. Her bravery in protecting Muscat and the throne is fascinating. Her audacity in testing the loyalty of her soldiers is awesome, especially when one considers women to be weak and gullible. Other inspirational women were Salima who had a solid political role in the 19th century, and Al Galia Nasser, who led armies, and is also known for her political skills in negotiation.

Could you ever possibly think that a woman would head a revolution in the country? Well, the literature says that Joukh bint Mohammed did just that: the Suwaiq revolution in 1830.

> TODAY WE HAVE AN INCREASING NUMBER OF GIRLS WORKING IN THE MEDIA, TECHNOLOGICAL SCIENCES, AND AVIATION, AS WELL AS PARTICIPATING IN EXTREME SPORTS, OR TRAVELLING ABROAD TO FURTHER THEIR EDUCATION IS ONLY NATURAL

Before the 1970s, when the country was isolated from the rest of the world, it experienced civil wars as well as economic and social problems. During that time, women stayed at home. Their roles had mostly been confined to marriage, motherhood, and domestic duties. The lack of education and poverty did not make them weaker. On the contrary, they proved themselves beyond any doubt. Having the men go abroad for long periods for work, the Omani women became mothers, fathers, and teachers, by taking care of the family. Though, still, nowadays, there are women in the rural and mountain areas that have a keen interest in entrepreneurship engagement — despite a lack of social or economic support.

The gap between the Queen Shamsaa era and the (re) integration of women in the country's development, starting in the 70s, is buried in the literature. Different versions may have obscured them due to a multi-faced tapestry of the social fabric — but the women were never weak.

The problem with bits and pieces of accounts is that sometimes details can be difficult to verify. History tells us that women in Oman went through various stages in which they rose and faded — not because they were incapacitated, but because they were undermined. At the beginning of the renaissance period, women had a great role, and one example is Sharifa bint Mohammed, who came from an upbringing familiar with sciences, journalism, and politics — and she made history by establishing radio broadcasting news in Swahili.

Looking back to better appreciate today when we have an increasing number of girls working in the media, technological sciences, and aviation, as well as participating in extreme sports, or travelling abroad to further their education is only natural. They have been reviving their merits. They are modern within their boundaries — and fulfilling their goals. They are more empowered than ever before thanks to social media. According to studies, social media has contributed to them becoming more involved in political and civil actions, and playing an important role in society. Indeed, social media has enabled them to stand out in a myriad of areas. Though, they didn't need social media to achieve their successes or to be bold in the past. It is enlightening to learn how women have been intrinsically part of Oman's history and development in all fields.

YOUNG ADMIRER

Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, reacts as she is presented with a posy of flowers by four-year-old Theo Crompton during a visit to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution Holyhead Lifeboat Station in Anglesey, north west Wales, on Wednesday. – **AFP**

UN urges action as mental health takes heavy toll on workers

NINA LARSON

Far more must be done to safeguard mental health on the job, the United Nations said on Wednesday, presenting new guidelines on how to lessen psychological strains linked to the workplace.

The UN agencies for health and labour published two documents filled with advice on how best to prevent and protect against mental health risks at work, warning that psychological distress is costly for individuals and society alike.

An estimated 12 billion work days are lost every year due to depression and anxiety, costing the global economy nearly $1 trillion, the World Health Organization and the International Labour Organization said.

"It's time to focus on the detrimental effect work can have on our mental health," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a joint statement.

"The well-being of the individual is reason enough to act, but poor mental health can also have a debilitating impact on a person's performance and productivity."

The UN health agency cautioned in June that nearly one billion people globally were living with a mental disorder before Covid-19 hit — and the pandemic has made this much worse.

Working-age adults are especially affected, with one in six suffering from a mental disorder at any given time, the WHO said. "The numbers are alarming," Manal Azzi, the ILO team lead on occupational safety and health, told reporters. "We have a huge responsibility ahead of us."

> AN ESTIMATED 12 BILLION WORK DAYS ARE LOST EVERY YEAR DUE TO DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY, COSTING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY NEARLY $1 TRILLION, THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION AND THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION SAID

The workplace itself is often a trigger for mental health woes, the two agencies warned.

In its fresh report listing 13 guidelines on how to counter the problem, the WHO highlighted that meaningful work can protect mental wellbeing, providing a sense of accomplishment, confidence and earnings.

But it stressed that harmful or poor working conditions, poor working relationships and unemployment "can significantly contribute to worsening mental health or exacerbate existing mental health conditions."

The workplace can also amplify wider issues that negatively affect mental health, like discrimination over gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability, the WHO pointed out.

The new guidelines cover measures to build workers' stress management, including mindfulness and physical activity.

But perhaps the most important ones revolve around the "organisational interventions" needed to prevent risks to mental health at work, including for the first time recommending training managers to prevent stressful work environments and respond to workers in distress.

Aiysha Malik, from the WHO's mental health and substance use department, told reporters it was essential to "stop people from experiencing risks such as very heavy workloads... being bullied, difficult relationships with colleagues or supervisors."

That needs to change, she said, or we will continue "experiencing difficulties with our mental health at work, no matter how many stress-management tools" we apply.

In addition to its new guidelines, the WHO and ILO published a joint policy brief, laying out practical strategies for governments, employers and workers, and their organisations to protect and promote mental health at work.

It also sets out how to support people with mental health conditions and help them participate and thrive in the workplace.

"As people spend a large proportion of their lives in work, a safe and healthy working environment is critical," ILO chief Guy Ryder said in the statement.

"We need to invest to build a culture of prevention around mental health at work, reshape the work environment to stop stigma and social exclusion, and ensure employees with mental health conditions feel protected and supported." — **AFP**

San Francisco International Airport food service workers carry signs as they strike outside of a terminal at the airport on Monday in San Francisco, California. – **AFP**

sport

Portugal's midfielder Bernardo Silva vies with Spain's forward Alvaro Morata (L) during the Uefa Nations League, league A, group 2 match at the Municipal Stadium in Braga. – **AFP**

SPAIN SNARE NATIONS LEAGUE SEMIS SPOT FROM PORTUGAL

BRAGA: Alvaro Morata's late strike snatched Spain a 1-0 Nations League victory over Portugal in Braga on Tuesday and sent them into the semifinals.

La Roja needed to win to finish top of League A Group 2, but struggled on another difficult night for the Euro 2020 semifinalists, until Morata's 88th-minute breakthrough.

Spain have not been able to hit top form in the internationals leading up to the Qatar 2022 World Cup, but this hard-fought victory provides a welcome morale boost.

Portugal had the better of the game but Spain brightened in the final stages, with the introduction of several substitutes, including Nico Williams, who headed across goal for Morata to gleefully turn in at the back post.

"When we had to stand up, we did," Morata told TVE. "If we had lost, it had to be giving everything we had on the pitch, and that's what we did.

"I'll remember the attitude of the team, we fought until the end. And Nico Williams, in his second game for the national team, was key and I put it over the line."

Spain will join Italy, Croatia and the Netherlands in the semis in June 2023, although attention now switches to the fast-approaching World Cup.

Luis Enrique made wholesale changes to the side that suffered Spain's first home defeat since 2018 against Switzerland on Saturday, retaining only four starters.

Morata was brought in to lead the line, while the Austrian coach rotated his entire midfield trio.

Spain still dominated possession, as their game plan demands, but to little effect as Portugal created the more dangerous openings.

Athletic Bilbao goalkeeper Unai Simon made a solid save to deny Ruben Neves and then another brilliant one to keep Liverpool striker Diogo Jota at bay.

With Portuguese confidence increasing, Bruno Fernandes lashed an effort narrowly off-target, celebrated prematurely by swathes of the stadium as the ball appeared to settle in the net.

Spain's forward Alvaro Morata (C,R) celebrates with teammates after his team's victory in the Uefa Nations League, league A, group 2 match against Portugal at the Municipal Stadium in Braga. Spain won 1-0. – **AFP**

Nations League 2022-2023: League A — 6th matchday

Results and standings — Teams qualified for the "Final 4"

GROUP 1	Sunday, Sept 25
Austria	1
Croatia	3
Denmark	2
France	0

GROUP 2	Tuesday, Sept 27
Switzerland	2
Czech Rep.	1
Portugal	0
Spain	1

GROUP 3	Monday, Sept 26
England	3
Germany	3
Hungary	0
Italy	2

GROUP 4	Sunday, Sept 25
Netherlands	1
Belgium	0
Wales	0
Poland	1

Standings	Pts	P	W	D	L	f	a	D
1 Croatia	13	6	4	1	1	8	6	2
2 Denmark	12	6	4	0	2	9	5	4
3 France	5	6	1	2	3	5	7	-2
4 Austria	4	6	1	1	4	6	10	-4

Standings	Pts	P	W	D	L	f	a	D
1 Spain	11	6	3	2	1	8	5	3
2 Portugal	10	6	3	1	2	11	3	8
3 Switz.	9	6		0	3	6	9	-3
4 Czech Rep.	4	6	1	1	4	5	13	-8

Standings	Pts	P	W	D	L	f	a	D
1 Italy	11	6	3	2	1	8	7	1
2 Hungary	10	6	3	1	2	8	5	3
3 Germany	7	6	1	4	1	11	9	2
4 England	3	6	0	3	3	4	10	-6

Standings	Pts	P	W	D	L	f	a	D
1 Netherlands	16	6	5	1	0	14	6	8
2 Belgium	10	6	3	1	2	11	8	3
3 Poland	7	6	2	1	3	6	12	-6
4 Wales	1	6	0	1	5	6	11	-5

Source: UEFA — AFP

UEFA NATIONS LEAGUE RESULTS ON TUESDAY:

LEAGUE A
GROUP 2
In Braga, Portugal
Portugal 0 Spain 1 (Morata)
In St Gallen, Switzerland
Switzerland 2 (Freuler 29, Embolo 30) Czech Republic 1 (Schick 45)

LEAGUE B
GROUP 1
In Krakow, Poland
Ukraine 0 Scotland 0
In Dublin
Republic of Ireland 3 (Egan 18, Obafemi 52, Brady 90+1) Armenia 2 (Dashyan 71, Spertsyan 73)

GROUP 2
In Tirana
Albania 1 (Lenjani 35) Iceland 1 (Anderson 90+7)

GROUP 4
In Solna, Sweden
Sweden 1 (Forsberg 42) Slovenia 1 (Sesko 28)
In Oslo
Norway 0 Serbia 2 (Vlahovic 42, A. Mitrovic 54)

LEAGUE C
GROUP 2
In Pristina
Kosovo 5 (Muslija 22, Rrudhani 45+1, Rashani 47, Muriqi 52, 84) Cyprus 1 (Roberge 81)
In Athens
Greece 3 (Pelkas 14, Masouras 55, Mantalos 80) Northern Ireland 1 (Lavery 18)

CHANGES PAY OFF

Just as they did against Switzerland, Spain failed to get a single shot on target in the first half, and after Simon made another good save from Cristiano Ronaldo early in the second half, Luis Enrique took action.

The coach sent on Pedri, Gavi and Yeremy Pino to try and give La Roja more inspiration going forward, although it was the hosts who almost broke the deadlock when Dani Carvajal deflected a strike narrowly over his own crossbar. The changes livened Luis Enrique's team up and they began to turn the tide, building momentum as the game reached its denouement.

Carvajal launched a crossfield ball into the area, with Williams' header leaving Morata with the simple task of firing into the empty net to put the runners-up of the last edition of the Nations League back into the final four.

An exasperated Ronaldo was denied by Simon at the death and Fernando Santos's Portugal left ruing their missed chances and wishing they had killed off Spain when they had the chance.

"We had many chances and Spain few, we are sad, we would have liked to have been in the finals," said Santos.

"Ronaldo had three or four chances that he would usually score, but he could not. That's football."

It was a disappointing end to a good run for Portugal, while Spain experienced the opposite sensation. After defeat by Switzerland and frustrating draws with Portugal and the Czech Republic in June, Morata's late winner provided relief for La Roja.

"This is a wonderful sport in which winning is the best antidote to any depression or sadness," said Luis Enrique.

"Portugal are a top, top, top team. In the first half I insisted, maybe too much, on having the ball, and we did. It's evident we'd prefer to play the passes in their half.

"(But) the first half was necessary to show that the ball was ours, and in the second we had the sensation that the goal would come. We're in the final four again and it's a great joy."

— **AFP**

Serbia's Novak Djokovic trains during the Tel Aviv Watergen Open 2022 in Israel's Mediterranean coastal city of Tel Aviv. – **AFP**

Djokovic hoping for similar 'emotional' send-off to Federer

TEL AVIV: Novak Djokovic wants to replicate Roger Federer's emotional farewell by having all his tennis rivals present when he brings down the curtain on his own career.

Federer played his final top-level tennis match in last week's Laver Cup when partnering long-time rival and friend Rafael Nadal in the doubles competition.

Djokovic and Andy Murray, two of Federer's other great adversaries,were also part of the 41-year-old's side at London's O2 Arena.

Despite boasting an all-star cast of talent, Team Europe fell to a first ever defeat against Team World, yet it was Federer's teary send-off that made the headlines.

And Djokovic, who has no current plans to retire, would like to share a similar moment at the end of his playing days.

"It was just a very touching, very emotional moment," Djokovic told reporters on Wednesday ahead of Thursday's last-16 match against Pablo Andujar at the Tel Aviv Open.

"Seeing his kids and his family, it got me emotional as well. I also must say I was thinking about how it would look for me when I say goodbye to tennis.

"There is definitely one thing that I will wish to have, other than, of course, my family and the close people in my life, I would love to have my biggest rivals and competitors there.

"Because it added something more special; it added more importance to that moment."

Federer retires as a 20-time Grand Slam winner — one fewer major title than Djokovic, who is himself one behind men's record holder Nadal.

With Federer now out of the picture, Djokovic says Nadal remains his biggest rival on the court.

"We played the most matches against each other of any other rivalry in the history of tennis," he said. "The rivalry is very special and keeps going.

"Hopefully, we'll get a chance to play against each other more times. Because it's exciting for us and also for tennis fans and sport fans around the world." — **dpa**

23 countries vie for honours at Asian Amateur chess

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

The Asian Amateur Chess Championship competitions will start on Thursday under the auspices of Ahmed bin Mohammed al Humaidi, Head of Muscat Municipality.

The championship will see 204 men and women players from 23 countries in action at the Sultan Qaboos Indoor Hall.

The event is organised by the Oman Chess Committee in cooperation with the Asian Chess Federation and Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

On Wednesday, the arrival of all the participant teams in the tournament was completed, Bahrain, India, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Palestine, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Syria, UAE, Yemen, in addition to the Sultanate of Oman.

The organising committee held a meeting on Wednesday at the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. They discussed all the technical,

administrative and logistical arrangements that contribute to achieve a successful version of the Asian Chess Championship.

On Thursday, the technical committee of the tournament will meet to approve the lists of players and the schedule of the tournament, and actual competition will start at five in the afternoon, and will continue until Sunday.

The tournament will apply the Swiss system, with nine rounds, and 90 minutes for each player, in addition to an additional 30 seconds for each move, according to the International Chess Federation rules. The organising committee has allocated cash prizes, medals and cups for the top place winners.

GlamHomes CT look to go big with international ties

MUSCAT: GlamHomes Cricket Team, which is going to be participating in the A-Division league of the Oman Cricket, starting from October 15, did a massive launch event with Indian Ambassador Amit Narang as the chief guest.

The event was attended by the top management of more than 50 corporate companies. The team is managed by B&M Events and its owner Imran Behlim was all praises for the growth of the team.

GlamHomes is the new title sponsor for the team from this season and its owner Idris Solanki suggested that he had big plans to invest for the development of this team to unbelievable heights. "Cricket is my passion and we have a very good side. I expect the best of players in Oman to drop a sweat, just with the thought of playing with us. We are a very balanced side and we expect to dominate."

Indian Ambassador Amit Narang said, "I am more than impressed by the growth of cricket in Oman in the last 5 years. Already a lot of international teams have started to consider Oman just like their home ground. Should international franchises come into Oman, it would be a massive boost. Our best wishes to the entire team and we hope this upcoming season is a major factor for growth of this team."

GlamHomes look to go international

The team management announced at the event that they had contacted a lot of international franchises last year, in an effort to unite with them. This has resulted in few of the franchises responding back after over 6 months and they have asked to restructure the team, based on the guidelines provided by them.

Currently, the team is all focused in implementing these suggestions, so that it can be the first ever international franchise in the future.

Benefits of going international

Team Co-owner Pranav Mehta suggested that, a tie up with these international franchises would be a massive boost. "Not only in terms of us being able to interest bigger sponsors, but with the addition of their players, who would give us a massive boost because of their experience. This tie-up would make us a specialised cricket club and hence we will target to participate in the intra-club championships, which are already a popular aspect in our neighbouring countries. The most important aspect is that, our players would get a lot of exposure and self-belief."

How would the international franchises benefit?

Team Co-owner Ahmed Khan suggested that, "From my perspective, globalisation and diversification is of prime focus to major organisations in this world. These big league franchises have a lot to gain with these tie-ups. To start with, these teams have in-house professional hired for through the year, which can be delegated to the smaller leagues. It would also allow them to throw in their benched players into stable waters, before they get their opportunities into the rough waters."

What all franchises are interested?

5 ½ to be specific. It all started with 1 Indian and 1 Pakistani franchises. But the news has spread quickly and now we have 2 Indian, 2 Pakistani and 1 Bangladeshi franchise as well. There is a sixth franchise as well, but we haven't been able to have a clear conversation with them.

Pranav Mehta added, I wouldn't be wrong in stating that, last season, we were the only team that has played players, who are current playing international franchise cricket. Namely, Inzamam Ul Haq, Kashif Ali and Dean Foxcroft. All these 3 players were actively involved with Kashmir Premier League and Pakistan Super League.

Past Performances

This team was launched in 2019 by previous Indian ambassador to Oman, Munu Muhawar.

In the first season 2019-2020, the team finished fourth in 50 Over A-division League and was on the top when T20 tournament was called off.

In the second season (2020-2021), the team finished as champions of 50 over A-Division league and it was on top of T20, when that was discontinued. The team was promoted to premier division last season (2021-2022) where it gave an unexpected performance and stunned a lot of people. It became the first team to win almost 10 games in a season, for a team that was promoted from A-Division league and playing without a single local international player. The best of its performance came in the T20, where the team finished fourth.

The team is about to announce its advisory board very shortly, which would consist of top professionals and business personals. "This would not only give a wide perspectives on things, but also allow us to take good quality calculative decisions. This was one of the requirement for the international franchise and we feel that it's something that we should have got in place from day 1," Pranav added.

Superb Brazil hammer Tunisia

RAPHINHA SCORES BRACE IN ILL-TEMPERED FRIENDLY

Brazil's forward Neymar (C) celebrates with his team-mates midfielder Lucas Paqueta (L) and forward Raphinha (R) after scoring his team's third goal during the friendly match between Brazil and Tunisia at the Parc des Princes in Paris. **– AFP**

PARIS: Rampant Brazil destroyed 10-man Tunisia 5-1 in a friendly on Tuesday with Raphinha scoring twice and setting up another goal in their last game before the World Cup.

It was another dominant performance by the South American giants who beat Ghana 3-0 on Friday, giving their fans plenty of reasons to be excited by their young team heading into Qatar where they will bid for a record-extending sixth world title.

Raphinha opened the scoring in the 11th minute with a brilliant header from the edge of the area over goalkeeper Aymen Dahmen. However, Tunisia equalised seven minutes later with an opportunistic header by Montassar Talbi from a free kick. Brazil were back in front a minute later though when Raphinha found Richarlison ghosting behind the defence and the striker fired a low shot between the keeper's legs.

During the goal celebrations a banana was thrown from the stands towards the Brazil players, who have been vocal against racism after Vinicius Jr was racially abused by Atletico Madrid fans before their derby against Real Madrid this month.

The Brazilian FA (CBF) released a statement "vehemently repudiating yet another episode of racism in football".

"The fight against racism is not a cause, but a fundamental change to wipe this type of crime from the planet. I insist on saying that the punishments need to be more severe," Brazilian FA president Ednaldo Rodrigues said.

Richarlison said racism would continue if there was no punishment handed out.

"As long as they keep 'blah blah blah' and don't punish, it's going to continue like this, happening every day and in every corner," he added. Brazil extended their lead through a Neymar penalty in the 29th minute after Aissa Laidouni held Casemiro back.

Raphinha scored his second with a precise low shot from the edge of the area in the 40th after a lightning counter-attack.

Two minutes later, Tunisia defender Dylan Bronn received a straight red card for a foul on Neymar.

With victory assured, Brazil eased off in the second half as manager Tite sent on several substitutes.

Flamengo forward Pedro, the biggest sensation in the Brazilian league this season, came on and netted the fifth with a superb first-time shot from the edge of the box in the 74th.

Brazil will open their World Cup campaign against Serbia on November 24 and also face Switzerland and Cameroon in Group G. **— Reuters**

Mercedes-AMG Petronas F1 driver Lewis Hamilton gestures during a news conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ahead of the Singapore GP. **– Reuters**

Failure to win this season not end of the world: Hamilton

KUALA LUMPUR: Seven-time Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton said on Wednesday he does not see it as "a dry spell" or "end of the world" if he fails to win a race this season.

The Briton has struggled all year in his Mercedes and ahead of Sunday night's race in Singapore is well out of the running for another world title, with Red Bull's Max Verstappen on the cusp of retaining his crown.

It is a far cry from last season, when the two went head to head for the title in the final race, and Hamilton and Mercedes are yet to take a chequered flag this term.

"I do not look at it as a dry spell. I feel this year has been a year of growth. It has been a good experience for all," Hamilton told reporters in Kuala Lumpur.

"There are six races (left) so there's six opportunities and we will try to get a win, but if we do not do well, I do not think it is the end of the world.

"We will get back to the top."

The 37-year-old called this "one of the toughest seasons" of his career, having wrestled with a car that has suffered from porpoising — bouncing at high speed — and been found wanting against the dominant Red Bulls.

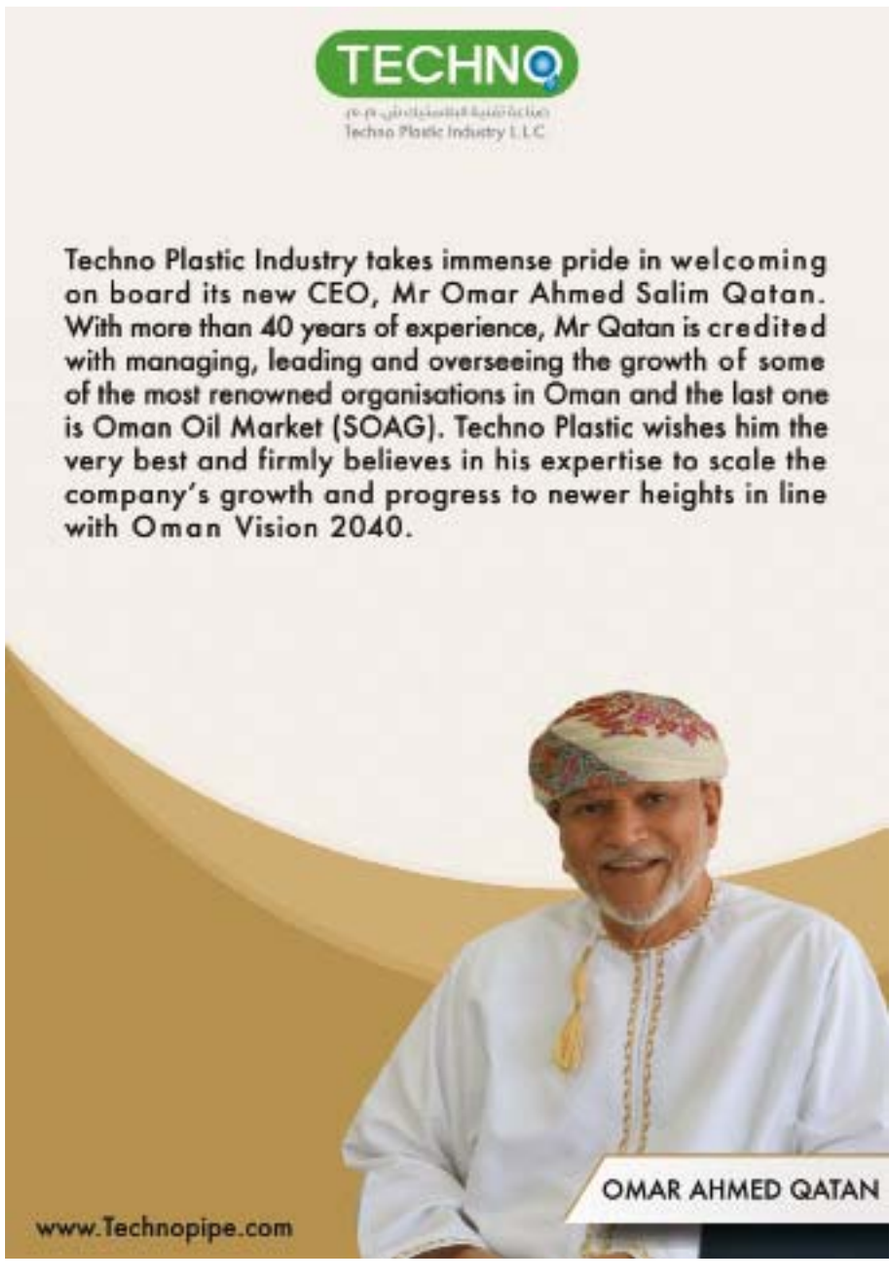
"We just need to understand the car," Hamilton added.

For all that, along with team-mate and fellow Briton George Russell, Mercedes are battling with Ferrari for second in the constructors' championship.

"Our goal is a second placing. Hopefully, in the next six races, we will do well," he said.

Earlier, Mercedes signed an agreement to extend their title sponsorship with Malaysian oil giant Petronas with a multi-year contract until at least 2029.

— AFP



business

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE
4,486.033

CRUDE OIL PRICE
Oman Crude $ 83.71
Brent Crude $ 86.32
Light Crude $ 78.41

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Oman Rail and Etihad Rail to build $3bn rail network

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Oman Rail, the national developer and operator of railway networks in the Sultanate of Oman, signed an agreement with Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the UAE National Rail Network, to jointly establish an equally-owned company, Oman-Etihad Rail Company. The newly created entity will hold an overall investment power of $3 billion to design, develop and operate a railway network connecting Sohar Port to the UAE National Rail Network.

LANDMARK VENTURE: NEW JOINT OMAN-ETIHAD RAIL COMPANY TO CONSTRUCT 303-KM RAILWAY LINE CONNECTING SOHAR PORT WITH ABU DHABI

Oman Rail, part of Asyad Group, was represented in the signing ceremony by Eng Abdulrahman bin Salim al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad, and his counterpart Eng Shadi Malak, CEO of Etihad Rail.

Under this agreement, the new company — Oman-Etihad Rail — will lay the groundwork and workplan for the project, including its financial mechanisms and schedule.

The company will also handle the design, development, and operation of the rail network, which connects Suhar and Abu Dhabi, in line with the standards of the two countries.

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OIA, ADQ identify multibillion dollar investment opportunities in Oman

Stronger ties: ADQ and Oman Information, Communication and Technology Group (ITHCA) sign an MoU to establish an AED 592 million venture capital fund to invest in the Sultanate of Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
ABU DHABI, SEPT 28

On the sidelines of Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the UAE, visit to the Sultanate of Oman, ADQ, an Abu Dhabi-based investment and holding company, discussed a range of investment opportunities with Oman Investment Authority (OIA), across a variety of sectors aimed at contributing to increased economic cooperation and trade between both nations.

ADQ and OIA recently entered into an AED 10 billion (approx. RO 1.05 bn) partnership agreement to facilitate investments between the UAE and Oman in sectors of mutual priority and interest. Additionally, ADQ and Oman Information, Communication and Technology Group (ITHCA), a wholly owned subsidiary of the OIA, signed an MoU to establish an AED 592 million (RO 62.06m) venture capital fund to invest in high growth technology companies in the Sultanate of Oman.

The parties also identified preliminary investments to be assessed further that are worth over AED 30 billion (approx. RO 3.15 bn) in new projects within Oman across target sectors including hydrogen, solar and wind power generation, green aluminium, and steel, as well as water and electricity transmission lines.

ADQ is also exploring investment in other sectors that include but are not limited to food and agriculture, logistics, technology and healthcare. This is in line with ADQ's ambitions to expand its power, water, and industrial platforms throughout Oman to capture synergies that achieve long-term and sustainable value creation for both nations.

Mohammed bin Hassan al Suwaidi, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer at ADQ, said: "As part of the UAE's longstanding bilateral relationship with Oman, we discussed several potential strategic opportunities that can unlock significant synergies and value through joint collaboration across key industries in the Sultanate. Today's engagement builds on our recent efforts and commitment to develop tangible investment partnerships in key markets, such as Oman, that complement our investment strategy and growth aspirations. We are confident that this visit reinforces the significant economic potential of ADQ's partnership with OIA."

Abdulsalam al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said: "Our partnership with a like-minded institution, such as ADQ, showcases our shared commitment to building long-term sustainable relationships.

"Our discussions today will not only create a platform to enable us to explore mutually beneficial co-investment opportunities, but facilitate knowledge sharing to strengthen our respective organisations' investment platforms."

As a strategic partner to the government, ADQ undertakes value accretive co-investment programmes with key regional partners through its Sovereign Investment Partnerships platform. These partnerships accelerate investments that unlock mutual value across ADQ and its portfolio businesses.

ADX signs MoU with Muscat Stock Exchange to expand relations

BUSINESS REPORTER
ABU DHABI, SEPT 28

The Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX) and the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, that aims to build on the strong foundations for a closer partnership and exchange visions and experiences between the two parties in various fields of common interest.

The MoU, which was signed during the visit of Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, President of the UAE, to the Sultanate of Oman, builds on the foundations of the close partnership between the two parties and aims to increase collaboration in a wide range of areas to serve their common interests.

The agreement is aligned with ADX's commitment to supporting the UAE's strategy for economic diversification and growth to promote prosperity in the country.

Saeed bin Hamad al Dhaheri, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, commented: "The signing of this MoU reaffirms both Abu Dhabi's and ADX's commitment to establishing a regional network for knowledge and information sharing which is intended to bolster liquidity and mutual long-term economic growth with our regional partners.

"The signing of the MoU between ADX and MSX, which is aligned with the GCC's efforts in promoting financial integration, aims to further develop the investment and capital markets landscape between the two countries by adopting the highest standards of regulatory best practices in both markets.

"To this end, ADX will continue in its successful efforts to date in establishing close working relationships, cooperation and collaboration with regional and international financial markets."

On this occasion, Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (MCD), said the agreements and memoranda of understanding will enhance the levels of cooperation between the two markets, and it is hoped that they will have positive repercussions on strengthening the bonds of relations between all components of the capital sector in the two countries.

He emphasis that this cooperation will open the way to create many investment opportunities for all investors, support economic development, benefit from the experience of the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange, and strengthen brotherly relations between the two countries, hoping that the qualitative and distinguished relations between the two countries' markets will continue.

Al Salmi also expressed his hope that all concerned parties will benefit from the multiple opportunities and broad prospects of cooperation offered by these agreements and memoranda of understanding, which can be built upon in various sectors, leading to the prosperity of the economy in the two countries and benefiting all parties.

The MoU aims to enhance bilateral cooperation and information sharing in a number of areas, including advisory services, training, development of systems and promotion of integration. It also provides a channel of direct communication between the two parties, for the exchange of legal and technical information, sustainability and ESG.

ADX also signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Muscat Clearing & Depository Company SAOC (MCD) for dual listing of securities on both markets and to further develop clearing and central depository functions in the two markets, allowing each party to obtain the required permits and approvals to collaborate, and to establish joint working committees on issues of common interest.

ADX also signed a separate agreement with MSX to promote cooperation on dual listing of securities across the two markets.

The agreement sets out the legal foundations for such transactions and unifies and defines the required operational, administrative and technical procedures to achieve effective cooperation and coordination.

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Maisarah holds 3rd Sharia Supervisory Board meeting

MUSCAT: Maisarah Islamic Banking Services – BankDhofar's Shari'a-compliant window – recently held its third Sharia Supervisory Board (SSB) meeting in 2022.

The meeting was attended by SSB members: Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali al Shihri — Chairman, Shaikh Azzan bin Nasser al Amri — Deputy Chairman, and members of the board Dr Abdul Rub bin Salim al Yafei, Dr Amin Fateh and Shaikh Hilal bin Hassan al Lawati, along with SSB's Secretary Shaikh Abdul Hakim bin Osman.

Agenda of the meeting covered various topics pertaining to Maisarah's product development, acknowledgement of the previous SSB meeting decisions, in addition to reviewing Shari'a reports of some branches, and approval of changes in some services and products to facilitate the procedures and meet the customers' needs.

The meeting was also attended by members of Maisarah's management, Sharia audit and compliance teams who emphasised on maintaining highest Sharia standards throughout the design to the delivery of all Maisarah's products, services and financial solutions.

The SSB members expressed their satisfaction towards the internal Sharia audit and compliance system applied by Maisarah and hailed its commitment to abide by Islamic banking guidelines.

Since the launch of its operations in 2013, Maisarah has set its vision to be the best Islamic banking services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, demonstrating a high degree of product innovation with an expansive range of Sharia-compliant financial solutions that cater to the needs of retail and corporate customers.

As part of its future growth plan, Maisarah continues to distinguish itself by focusing on outstanding service quality, developing and launching new innovative products, and investing in technology to provide the best customer experience through an expanding network of branches, ATM/CDM facilities and digital banking platforms.

Sohar International participates at Injaz Oman's 'Student Company' closing ceremony

MUSCAT: In accordance with the national goals to build a knowledge-based economy, Sohar International has stayed committed to promoting initiatives that contribute to knowledge sharing. The bank has recently participated at the Injaz Oman closing ceremony of the 11th edition of the 'Student Company' programme and competition.

Being the Gold Sponsor for the 11th edition of the programme, the bank has announced the winner of Sohar International award for the 'Best Video Advertisement' at the closing event. Organised at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), the closing ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais bin Tarik al Said, Vice-Chairman of the Oman Olympic Committee and was attended by senior officials from the public and private institutions participating in the programme. Mohamed bin Mahfoodh al Ardhi, Chairman of Sohar International, commented: "The Omani youth are the future of the country and will play an instrumental role in driving the nation's progress. Through the years, Injaz Oman has played a vital role in enriching the lives of students by helping them acquire the needed skills to start their own ventures and thrive in a competitive market. Marketing is a critical component for any business, and we believe that this award will be a motivation for young entrepreneurs to develop strategic marketing roadmaps, and execute them in line with their respective business objectives.

As a bank that is strongly aligned with Oman Vision 2040 that prioritises education as a key sector to achieve sustainable growth, Sohar International will continue to spearhead campaigns that harness innovation and promote critical thinking amongst the youth. As a bank that believes in nurturing a skilled local workforce while inculcating the right saving mindset amongst the youth, this initiative resonates with Sohar International's vision to aid in the development of the education sector."

IHG staffer wins 'Engineer of the Year 2022' award

MUSCAT: Viji Kunjachan, Area Director of Engineering, InterContinental Muscat and IHG InterContinental Hotels Group – Oman, has been awarded the 'Engineer of the Year 2022' by Hotelier Middle East.

The record-breaking 1,100 nominations were narrowed down to 230 short-listed nominees from 18 countries to choose winners in each category. The Hotelier Middle East Awards 2022 was held at the JW Marriott Marquis Dubai recently, and saw 500 of the region's very best hoteliers out in force.

Viji is a seasoned engineering professional with over three decades of proven results and a wide range of proficiencies relevant to the hospitality industry. About 25 of his 32-year-long professional career in the Middle East has been with the IHG InterContinental Hotels Group.

As Projects Manager he completed the major renovation of guest rooms and other public areas at a total investment of $15 million, which enhanced the guest experience.

Bank Nizwa hosts Islamic finance knowledge series

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to raising awareness of Islamic finance among the masses as well as sharing the latest trends, developments and achievements of the sector, Bank Nizwa, the leading and the most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, conducted a session on Islamic Finance in collaboration with Bahla charitable team, in the Governorate of Ad Dakhiliyah under the patronage of Shaikh Ibrahim al Haddabi, Deputy Wali of Bahla.

Delivered by Shaikh Majid al Kindi, Chairman of the Sharia Supervisory Board, the session shed light on the benefits of Shari'a-compliant financial tools and services to the attendees.

The bank's renowned "Islamic Finance Knowledge Series (IFKS)" aims to educate people about Islamic banking and its principles across the Sultanate of Oman.

With the popularity of adopting Islamic banking solutions in the Sultanate of Oman, IFKS are constantly gaining an audience by hosting induction sessions to encourage individuals to select sharia-compliant products and services and enable them to make wise financial decisions.

Benefit with comfortable drives in the spacious Ford Expedition SUV

MUSCAT: The Ford Expedition is an ideal choice for those looking to make the most of every journey with their family that too with space and comfort.

The Ford Expedition ranks well when it comes to space, comfort, features and capability. Offering pure driving thrill is a 3.5-litre EcoBoost engine with standard Auto Start-Stop plus a class exclusive new 10-speed automatic transmission.

The Expedition offers best-in-class fuel economy and power, with up to 375 horsepower and 637Nm torque available.

Making every drive a joy are the driver-assist technologies, high-strength, aluminium-alloy body and redesigned high-strength steel frame for rugged off-road and strong towing capabilities. In terms of safety, Ford has thoughtfully equipped the Expedition with impressive safety features.

It includes collision avoidance detection system that helps drivers avoid other vehicles or pedestrians, while available Blind Spot Information System helps monitor blind spots outside the driver's immediate view. In addition, Expedition offers connectivity technologies and convenience features, including – Wireless charging, SYNC 3, Power in every row: With four 12-volt power points, six USB chargers and a 220-volt power outlet that lets passengers stay charged and connected; Advanced cargo manager with an adjustable shelf, and Panoramic Vista Roof. The Ford Expedition also offers the best towing capability of any full-size SUV, together with features such as Pro Trailer Backup Assist, which makes backing up a trailer as easy as turning a knob. Plus, an available power liftgate makes loading cargo easy.

The Expedition has impressive space that can comfortably seat up to 8 people with their luggage. This full-size SUV makes modern family adventures more comfortable during short and long trips alike.

The Expedition is the first full-size utility SUV to feature a sliding second-row seat with tip-and-slide functionality, providing easy access to the third row without the need to first remove a child safety seat. Once in the third row, even adults will appreciate more legroom and reclining seats.

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

Please log on to www.fordoman.com, or www.facebook.com/FordOman or www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel or www.instagram.com/ford_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

Oman Tax Authority affirms plan for launch of second phase of Digital Tax Stamp scheme

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 28

Ahead of the rollout of the second phase of its Digital Tax Stamp initiative, the Tax Authority of the Sultanate of Oman has urged importers of tobacco products and spirits to obtain excise tax stamps from it to be supplied to their overseas principals for affixing on their goods before they are shipped into the country.

The scheme, which came into effect on June 30, 2022, aims to strengthen regulation of the import, trade and sale of excisable products, as well as optimise the collection of excise tax on these goods.

Under laws that came into force in mid-2019, Oman began levying an excise tax ranging from 50 to 100 per cent on a range of merchandise, notably cigarettes and tobacco products, alcohols and spirits, carbonated and energy drinks, and pork products. The list of excisable goods was broadened in October 2020 to include a wide range of sugar-sweetened drinks, canned juices and other ready-to-drink beverages.

By introducing digital stamps – also known as digital tagging – Oman's authorities hope to, on the one hand, clamp down on any illicit import and sale of excisable goods in the country, and on the other, ensure that the excise tax payable on these products is fully recovered in a streamlined fashion.

"Starting from September 19, 2022, importers and local manufacturers will be able to request digital stamps to be sent to manufacturers to put on molasses and other tobacco products," the Tax Authority announced in a recent post.

The announcement comes ahead of the Authority's October 14, 2022 deadline requiring importers and distributors to ensure that imports of cigarettes and tobacco products must be digitally tagged as a perquisite for their entry into Oman. This deadline marks the rollout of the second phase of the Digital Tax Stamps initiative. In the third phase, which comes nto effect from February 1, 2023, all tobacco products will be barred from import, distribution or sale within the country if they lack the prescribed digital tax stamps. The digital tagging programme is proposed to be expanded in future phases to cover other excisable products.

Oman's oil exports to Japan grew by 252.8 per cent in August

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman's production of crude oil and oil condensates increased by 10.3 per cent until the end of August 2022, reaching 257,034,700 barrels, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude oil production alone recorded an increase of 13.9 per cent during this period, while oil condensate production fell by 1.7 per cent until the end of August compared to the same period in 2021. The average price of Omani crude oil also increased by 40.4 per cent until the end of August 2022, to reach $95.3, per barrel, compared to $67.9 per barrel at the end of August 2021.

The monthly average price of oil rose last August by RO 5.3 per barrel compared to July.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman's total oil exports witnessed an increase of 15.4 per cent until the end of August 2022 compared to the same period of the previous year.

Oman's oil exports to Japan grew significantly by 252.8 per cent to reach 8,410,800 barrels until the end of August. Oil exports to South Korea also increased by 68.7 per cent during this period.

On the other hand, Oman's natural gas production — including imports — witnessed an increase of 4.8 per cent to reach 35.268 million cubic metres.

Data issued by the NCSI indicated an increase in natural gas consumption in industrial areas by 13.3 per cent, industrial projects by 8.1 per cent, and oil fields by 1.6 per cent, while gas consumption in power plants decreased by 1.8 per cent.

Oman Rail and Etihad Rail to build $3 billion rail network

FROM PAGE 13

Built on the historic and strategic relations between the two countries, this major joint venture is an extension of the long-standing collaboration of Oman Rail and Etihad Rail, who both seek to create new prospects in the infrastructure, transport, and logistics industries by connecting the two countries via rail.

The two parties aim to unlock new opportunities by strengthening commercial exchange and social cohesion, connecting key urban centres, facilitating travel between communities and providing seamless transport solutions between economic and industrial zones in Oman and the UAE.

The much-anticipated 303-km railway will primarily link Suhar to Abu Dhabi and will feature the best international safety, security, and environmental standards, to provide faster and safer passenger and freight services. The passenger trains are designed to reduce travel time from Suhar to Abu Dhabi to 1 hour 40 minutes, and from Suhar to Al Ain to 47 minutes, travelling at a maximum speed of 200 km/h. Meanwhile, the freight trains will run up to 120 km/h.

Employing cutting-edge transport and rail technology, the railway network between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates will boost the growth of the national economy in both countries.

It will also improve the efficiency of supply chain, facilitate cross-border trade by linking commercial ports to the railway network, boost market competitiveness and reduce the total cost of supply chains.

With multiple stakeholders set to reap the benefits of this mega project, the railway will provide a host of investment opportunities and support contracts to the private sector.

The new transport system will create job opportunities across sectors, develop the national human capital of both countries and kick off a new age of innovation.

On a wider scope, the project will stimulate tourism activities between Oman and the UAE, strengthen the competitiveness of the two countries in global trade and solidify their positions as logistics hubs for import and export to regional markets.

Underlining the impact of this landmark agreement, Eng Abdulrahman bin Salim al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad, explained: "adding a new railway capability to our logistics sector will offer trade and logistics companies outstanding investment opportunities and empower manufacturing and industrial activities to quickly expand beyond borders.

The envisioned network will complement our comprehensive set of ports and logistics assets, augment our competitiveness and open faster access to global markets."

"The railway also promises huge strategic economic and social gains as it promotes a more diverse robust national economy, upgrades infrastructure and logistic services, drives forward travel and tourism, and ultimately improves the quality of life for communities on both sides of the borders by supporting the various strategic initiatives of the governments of Oman and the UAE," Al Hatmi added.

11th edition of IGCF kicks off in Sharjah

HAMMAM AL BADI
SHARJAH, SEPT 28

The 11th edition of International Government Communication Forum (IGCF) kicked of at Expo Centre Sharjah on Wednesday and will continue till September 29. The forum was held under the auspices of HH Shaikh Sultan bin Ahmed al Qasimi, Deputy Ruler of Sharjah, Chairman of Sharjah Media Council, and in presence of a number of their Highnesses, officials and media representatives.

The two-day forum, organised by the International Government Communication Centre (IGCC), discusses a number of topics most of which are the challenges that face government communication sector.

As many as 160 senior public officials, thought leaders and government communication experts took part in the forum. Held under the theme 'Challenges and Solutions', the forum discussed the innovative solutions to overcome challenges posed to the sector by present and future trends.

HH Shaikh Sultan bin Ahmed al Qasimi, in a speech delivered during the opening, said, "The Emirate of Sharjah has been able, through strengthening the role of the family, developing institutions for childhood and youth, and building a media apparatus that provides useful and useful, to deal with a range of challenges arising from openness, the spread of extraneous values, and rapid technological advancement. This led to some behaviours and morals infiltrating society that are contrary to our principles."

Financial crimes can hurt investment inflows

HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

Nobody denies that financial crimes pull down the credit rating of countries, and reduce the volume of foreign investments. Thus, a business environment characterised by a lower financial crime rate can attract greater foreign investments.

In the Gulf region there are the strict measures taken to combat financial crimes. But at the same time, white collar criminals try to launder their money and transfer it to safe havens, such as conflict zones, or those impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic, and so on – trends that contribute to an increase in global inflation rates and the emergence of signs of a global recession and other developments.

Clean money always looks for an environment characterised by political stability and security, free from complications, bureaucracy, corruption and terrorist groups.

The Gulf region is characterised by security and political stability, and endeavours, as much as possible, to commit to implementing international conventions to combat money laundering and terrorist financing. All the countries of the GCC are among the first countries to adhere to the United Nations Convention against Organised Financial Crimes, as they always seek to update their laws and legislations in this regard.

By having such laws in place, they ensure the provision of conditions that must be adhered to by operating banks to enhance the role of the global financial system, and to adhere to the forty recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force.

This requires verifying client data, such as validating their identity, maintaining records, and following up on suspicious transactions in global money transfers, and so on. The countries of the region are bound by bilateral and multilateral agreements for cooperation and mutual interaction in this regard.

At the same time, they are working to introduce further improvements and freezing suspicious accounts in cooperation with central banks and affiliated banking and financial institutions.

Also, the countries of the region have established national committees to combat money laundering and terrorist financing, which include many representatives of the relevant ministries and regulatory authorities, with the aim of following up on these issues and taking measures that can limit money laundering operations in its various forms.

Allowing financial crimes to spread in any country will result in multibillion dollar losses for institutions and companies. Today, the types of financial crime also include the manipulation of commercial transactions and the practice of tax fraud on some international banking institutions.

This requires the detection of perpetrators who make illegal gains, practice tax fraud and make gains through credit cards, electronic fraud, securities fraud, and the announcement of commercial bankruptcies.

Economic and commercial fraud can have an unhealthy impact on economies, while contributing to a reduction in the quality of goods and services provided to consumers. It also leads to the aversion of international companies from investing, and exposes other institutions in the field of banking, insurance and others to financial losses.

Finally, modern technologies today play a major role in cross-platform fraud. Fraudsters can resort to various ways to gain the trust of victims to get their money and then launder it into clean economies.

ADX signs MoU with Muscat Stock Exchange to expand relations

FROM PAGE 13

As part of the growing relationship, MSX will be joining the 'Tabadul' platform, which was created by ADX in collaboration with Bahrain Bourse (BHB) to connect regional exchanges. Established on the mutual market access model, Tabadul enables investors to trade directly on the onboarded exchange through local authorised brokers.

Securities listed on MSE will therefore be available for trading on the platform along with securities listed on ADX and BHB, in a step that will promote economic growth, build regional partnerships, increase liquidity and drive sustainable growth in stock markets in the region.

Classifieds

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End for the scent tree?

Peter Groenendyk, professor at the Department of Plant Biology at the State University of Campinas raised an alarm saying there is an imminent danger of the 'commercial extinction' of incense production which means the viability of the incense production and extraction from the natural forests could not be economically viable anymore in the medium term, in some decades... **P20**

Dior turns heels and corsets into 'ironic power dressing'

WOMEN HAVE SPENT centuries trying to liberate themselves from heels and corsets, but the latest Dior collection at Paris Fashion Week on Tuesday presented them as a sort of "ironic power dressing".

An outspoken feminist, Dior's womenswear designer Maria Grazia Chiuri said the corsets, crinolines and other historical items, inspired by 16th-century French queen Catherine de Medici, remained modern and functional despite their appearance.

"The idea that amused me was that there are elements in the clothes that create a regal imagination," Chiuri said ahead of the show.

She presented the spring-summer 2023 collection against the backdrop of a grotto in the Jardin des Tuileries on the second day of Paris Fashion Week.

With dancers twisting in the background, the show sought to bring a "baroque party" atmosphere, reflecting the key inspiration of the collection.

Short in stature, Italian aristocrat Catherine de Medici was a pioneer of platform shoes to give her more height, and used structured silhouettes to create a more imposing presence when she arrived at the court of France in the 1530s on her way to becoming queen.

The corsets in Dior's new collection were not hidden — "They're an object to play with and have fun," said Chiuri.

The basket-like dresses have a "functional" dimension, she added, intended to mimic the power dressing trend of the 1970s and 1980s.

There was also plenty of embroidery and lace, which Catherine de Medici made sure were produced in large quantities by French royal artisans.

Even the venue for Tuesday's show was a nod to the Italian aristocrat, who organised parties in the Jardin des Tuileries.

As usual, the Dior show attracted a slew of stars including K-Pop superstar Cha Eun-woo, Australian model Elle Macpherson and US actor-director Maggie Gyllenhaal.

Chiuri said she was well aware that there was not a party mood in the world right now, but said this was all the more reason to take a playful tone with fashion.

"In this heavy historical moment, fashion is the only place where we can still play — that's what I wanted to do at the moment," she said.

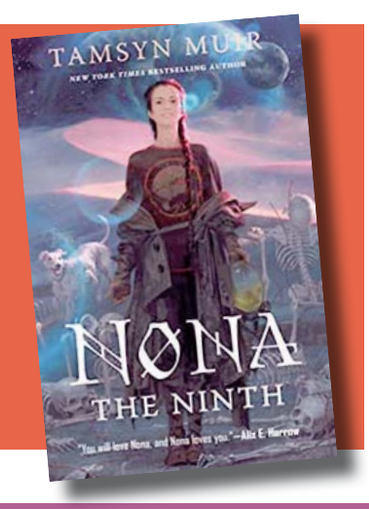
"The situation is tragic, we have to find motivation to work." **—AFP**

READ

NONA THE NINTH

BY TAMSYN MUIR

Six months after waking up in a stranger's body, Nona is torn between living an ordinary life or saving those around her from strange forces.



THE BOND APPEAL

An Aston Martin DB5 stunt car from the film "No Time to Die" is displayed during a photocall ahead of the "Sixty Years of James Bond" auction at Christie's auction house in London. **— AFP**

THE GOLD MASK

The gold burial mask of the ancient Egyptian Late period Pharaoh Psusennes I (Pasebakhaenniut, reigned 1047–1001 BC), originally found by French archaeologist Pierre Montet in the king's intact tomb NRT III in 1940 in the site of ancient Tanis in northern Egypt, and currently on display at the Egyptian Museum in the centre of Egypt's capital Cairo during the celebrations of World Tourism Day and the 200th anniversary of Egyptology by the decipherment of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. **— AFP**

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A bull elephant roams in Kimana sanctuary Kajiado south sub county. — **AFP**

Drought is killing Kenya's endangered wildlife

BY AYENAT MERSIE

KENYA'S WORST drought in four decades has killed almost 2 per cent of the world's rarest zebra in three months, and 25 times more elephants than normal over the same period.

It is starving Kenya's famed wildlife of normal food sources out in the open and driving them into deadly conflict with people as they roam wider, to the edges of towns and villages, in a desperate search for sustenance.

Without interventions to protect wildlife, or if the approaching rainy season fails again, animals in many parts of the East African country could face an existential crisis, conservationists say.

"It's a serious threat to us," said Andrew Letura, a monitoring officer at Grevy's Zebra Trust (GZT).

Grevy's zebra, which are larger than a standard plains zebra and have narrower stripes and wider ears, are the rarest in the species: there are 3,000 left in the world, 2,500 of which are in Kenya.

Drought has killed about 40 Grevy's since June - which is how many would be expected to die over a whole year, said Letura, squinting under the searing sun at Samburu National Reserve in Kenya's arid north.

"If we are losing 40 within three months, what would that mean to the remaining population?"

GZT has begun to feed Grevy's zebras hay poured over a mix of molasses, salt and calcium, helping to reduce but not eliminate deaths, the trust says.

The situation in southern Kenya is also bleak.

"Rangers have counted eight times as many animals dead or too weak to stand, compared to a normal September. The Amboseli Trust for Elephants have recorded 50 elephants dead or missing," said Benson Leyian, chief executive of Big Life Foundation which works with local landowners to protect conservation areas and open rangelands of the Amboseli Ecosystem.

In the Kitenden Conservancy nearby, the stench of rotting animal carcasses is so strong that some tourists have started to wear protective masks, a ranger there said.

Some wild animals are dying at the hands of people.

"We're seeing a five-fold increase in incidents of people poaching for bushmeat, as compared to other dry seasons," said Leyian.

Save the Elephants, meanwhile, said it is finding a growing number of elephants killed by guns or spears, but with their tusks intact - a sign that they fell victim to conflict with humans in populated areas, rather than to poaching.

The crisis isn't attributable to drought alone, experts say. Overgrazing by livestock is depleting rangelands and making it harder for ecosystems to recover from drought, said David Daballen, field operations chief for Save the Elephants.

> THE CRISIS ISN'T ATTRIBUTABLE TO DROUGHT ALONE. OVERGRAZING BY LIVESTOCK IS DEPLETING RANGELANDS AND MAKING IT HARDER FOR ECOSYSTEMS TO RECOVER FROM DROUGHT'
> DAVID DABALLEN, SAVE THE ELEPHANTS

Even thinking about the possibility of the next rains, which are expected in October-November, failing is frightening, said Letura of GZT.

"The situation is already bad. But that would make it a serious crisis," he said.

"The first words anyone says now is that they are praying for rain." — **Reuters**

Two Big Life rangers record the carcasses of a giraffe in Kimana Sanctuary in Kajiado south sub county. — **AFP**

CHANGING WORLD

In Canada's Arctic, Inuit traditions help combat youth depression

FILLETING A FISH, lighting a fire or building an igloo: In Canada's Arctic, Inuit youth are being encouraged to connect with their culture in an attempt to prevent severe depression and save lives.

A dozen teenagers and young adults gather around instructor Alex Flaherty. They don't want to miss any of the traditional hunter's precise gestures as he carves a fish or lights a fire.

"Our culture has changed so much in the last 50 years when people used to live in igloos... the change is happening so fast, (and) we are losing our culture," he says.

Flaherty blames the societal shifts for a series of social ills such as violent crime, substance abuse and a high rate of suicide.

Hoping to help remedy these problems, he's taken hundreds of teenagers hiking, camping and hunting in the vast tundra in the past three years.

In addition to keeping alive Inuit culture, his government-funded Polar Outfitting programme also aims to bolster young people's mental health and teach them to adapt to a changing climate — in a region that is warming much faster than elsewhere.

Flaherty says he takes mostly youth aged 12 to 20 years old, "because that's when their lifestyle starts changing (and) when they need help."

In the summer, they hike across the rocky, windswept lands near the bay city of Iqaluit that is home to some 7,000 residents — and is accessible only by plane most months.

They also learn to make fishing nets to catch Arctic char and to navigate and survive in the pristine but unforgiving environment.

In the dead of winter, when sunlight is reduced to just a few hours per day, they will go out on the ice to fish, and build igloos.

NOT JUST ABOUT FISHING

At 22, Annie Kootoo is the oldest in the current class. She gushes with joy after spending 10 days in the wilderness.

"I did a lot of activities that I don't usually do, and it's been very helpful for my mental health," she says.

Chris Laisa, a 14-year-old echoes the sentiment. "I feel great," he says after a lesson.

"It was fun because I learned how to fillet a fish, how to prepare it."

Flaherty, standing nearby, adds that it's "not just about fishing. It's about clearing your mind, being outdoors and sharing with others."

In the Nunavut territory of northern Canada, where the average age is 28, young people are deeply affected by the isolation and intergenerational traumas caused by past colonial policies.

Like many Indigenous peoples in Canada, the Inuit are haunted by memories of being forced into residential schools where they were stripped of their language and culture, and abused by teachers and headmasters.

Here the suicide rate is much higher than the rest of the country — 76.6 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020 compared to 10.1, according to Statistics Canada.

Camilla Sehti, the Nunavut government's head of mental health and addictions services, goes through a long list of what's contributed to the crisis: "It's just so many factors."

Healing, she says, "starts with reconnecting people to their culture."

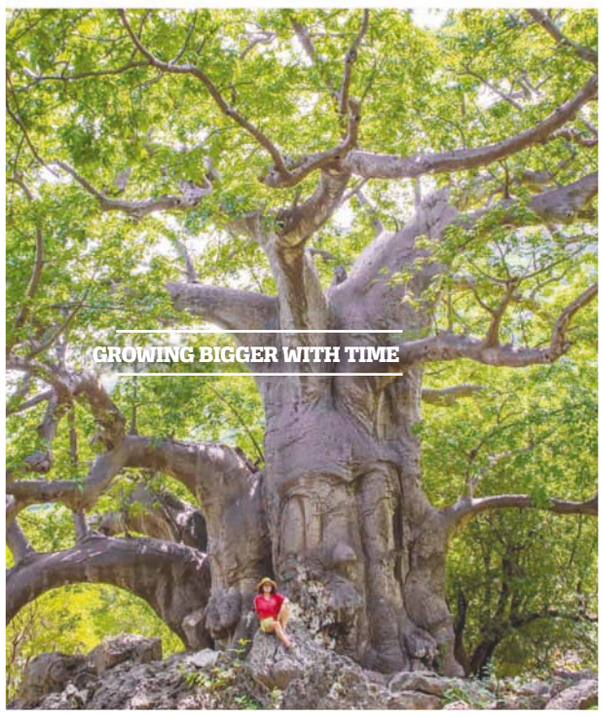
"I think colonisation had a huge impact on this territory and the ability for people to feel connected to self," she explains, describing new mental health initiatives that emphasise "family, culture and community."

After losing her best friend two years ago, Minnie Akeeagok started posting warnings on social media about depression and suicide.

"Everybody in Nunavut knows someone who has committed suicide or faced mental health issues. I personally know more than five," the 18-year-old said.

"We need more resources, more accessibility within the mental health field in Nunavut," she says, noting that in the far off communities of this Arctic territory the situation is even more dire. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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AROUND THE WORLD

FASHION

Young Black designer dresses Colombian vice-president in 'resistance' fashion

ESTEBAN SINISTERRA, a young Black fashion designer from Colombia's largely-poor Pacific region, is dressing Vice-President Francia Marquez — the first Afro-Colombian woman to hold the post — in what he calls "resistance" fashion.

Sinisterra, whose colourful patterned dresses for Marquez have drawn international attention, grew up in the municipality of Santa Barbara Iscuande, in Narino province, where he says many young people have few opportunities to escape involvement in the country's ongoing internal conflict.

His background has commonalities with Marquez, a former housekeeper and environmental activist, who grew up in the poor municipality of Suarez, in Cauca province, and faced death threats for her opposition to gold mining.

"In one way or another her history and my history are similar, so I think there was a very lovely spark there," said Sinisterra, 23, who now lives in the city of Cali and studies social work in addition to his job as a designer.

"First we accept and recognise that we have roots that connect us — which is Africa — but taking into account those roots we also express the territory where we're from, the Colombian Pacific," said Sinisterra, who learned his craft from his aunt and grandmother.

"Each and every one of Francia's outfits evokes that," Sinisterra said. "It is being able to show that this is who we are... so for me fashion, my fashion, is resistance."

The 40-year-old Marquez, who mentioned her ancestors in her oath of office, is slated to lead a new equality ministry if the government can win congressional approval for its creation. — Reuters

CHANGING WORLD

Sudan traditional wind instrument trumpets harvest time

NEAR THE LUSH fields of his village in Sudan's southern Blue Nile state, Youssef Ismail has crafted a traditional horn-like instrument used for generations to usher in the harvest season.

"We make new wazza instruments every year," Ismail, in his 70s, said about the wooden wind instrument that is often longer than a grown man.

"We learned this craft from our parents."

He assembled pieces of the conical gourd plant, meticulously cut and washed, to create a long trumpet with a bell-shaped end which produces a bright, loud and festive sound.

In the village of East Ganis, like in some other Blue Nile communities, "we use it to celebrate the harvest season", which typically begins in November after the wet season, Ismail explained.

Agriculture is a major economic sector in Sudan, a country of 45 million people and one of the world's poorest. About 43 per cent of its labour force works in agriculture which makes up 30 per cent of the economy according to UN and World Bank estimates.

After more than 120 people were killed in clashes over access to land in Blue Nile state in July, the wazza was also played to celebrate a halt in violence, resident Ahmed Idriss said.

Little is known about its history, but the wazza "has strong links to rituals performed by the communities of the Blue Nile", explained Mohammed Soliman, a music professor at Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Dafallah Ali Mustafa, 51, founder of the Sudanese Traditional Music Centre in the capital's twin city of Omdurman, has reserved pride of place for the wazza.

Wazzas, which are particularly common among the ethnic Funj people in Sudan's south, vary in size, with some as long as two metres (6.5 feet).

The size of each instrument determines its tone range, and wazza players perform in a band of up to 13 members.

The band leader "usually plays the smallest instrument", Soliman said.

Some of the players would also use animal horns to tap their wazza for percussive effect.

Ismail, himself a member of a wazza band, said he expects future generations will carry on the tradition.

"We taught our children how to make and play the instrument," he said. "They will keep it alive after we are gone." — AFP

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

The trick: Balance yourself!

WHEN YOU go to a place, especially in some closed spaces, you easily notice those around you who are constantly staring at the mirror, perhaps taking care of their general appearance.

Here you may wonder, does he check himself in the mirror for purposes of making sure he looks okay or does he look in the mirror and see himself as if he were two different people – one sees and the other is seen or is visible to those around him?

This might be confusing to some but looking at oneself in the mirror and the intention, to me, are both important. Is it not true that you must be observing things around you to survive, but you must also monitor yourself and be monitored by others so that you have a consistent sense of self-concept? Interestingly, we all know that without supervision, you will hit a car or starve to death. Without being noticed, you will have no history or sense of why you do what you do.

The idea here is really a matter of balance for our convenience – if we are looking for it honestly! Unfortunately, most of us spend a lot of time observing, constantly thinking about ourselves and how others see us.

We look in every mirror – if I may say so! We check our tags on social media and we're obsessed with our identities... or aren't we?

Hence, you should always focus on the world outside of yourself because it is linked to happiness, while focusing on yourself and how others see you can lead to an unstable mood. Is it reasonable for your joy to rise and fall, depending solely on whether you see yourself positively or negatively in a certain moment? Therefore, I see that this instability with time is difficult to bear and it is no wonder that it is associated with anxiety and depression.

And here I certainly don't mean to ever eliminate yourself, but you can increase your happiness by adopting conscious practices like not judging anything too quickly. The rule here is to take a watch of the world and turn it inward. For example, if you said (this is awful), you just made a judgment about your feelings – which means you are now watching yourself (and assigning a negative mood to something out of your control).

However, some of life's most intimate experiences come when you can monitor your journey without expecting some outside gain. Here dedicate one day and see for yourself. Start the morning by saying: I don't know what this day will bring, but I will accept it (because it is a blessing from God). Spend the day focusing on things outside of yourself, resisting judgments and avoiding anything self-referential. You can even get in your car and go on a day trip without a specific destination!

Thus, each of us can intentionally alter the scale of time we spend as observers and as objects of watch, even without doing something ridiculous!

In the end, thinking of yourself as an observer is better for your happiness and guidance, than engaging in the fact that you are the one who falls in the circle of attention and observation and that this obsess over you permanently. Unfortunately – as I said earlier – many people constantly think about themselves and how others see them. Many have become obsessed with their identities... so relax, get out on that trip and don't forget to save your way back!

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

End for the scent tree?

BY SAMUEL KUTTY

Used for millennia as a perfume, cure-all plant medicine and once prized more than gold, frankincense which was an integral part of Omani culture and a mainstay of the farmers, appears in trouble.

Studies warn that the alluringly musky scent of this Unesco-inscribed Boswellia sacra trees thrive in the terrain of Oman's southern province of Dhofar are under threat of extinction.

"The trees that produce the raw material of frankincense may disappear", warns a report by Brazil-Arab News Agency (ANBA), adding, "with older trees dying fast and no young ones coming up to replace them, the frankincense woodlands will soon disappear".

"There is an imminent danger of 'commercial extinction' of the incense production, as we've shown in published studies. And by that we mean that viability of the incense production and extraction from the natural forest could not be economically viable anymore in the medium term, in some decades", Peter Groenendyk, professor at the Department of Plant Biology in the State University of Campinas, told ANBA.

Over the millennia, frankincense has been a symbol of Arab countries like the Sultanate of Oman and an economic mainstay of farmers in Somalia and Sudan. The sap is the raw material of incense, but its trees are endangered due to overexploitation.

Virtually all Omani frankincense is harvested from Boswellia sacra trees that grow wild in the searing Dhofar desert, and are owned by the local tribes. The harvest begins in April as rising temperatures cause the sap to flow more easily.

The plants are also grown in a few countries in the Middle East and Africa like Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia. In Ethiopia, traditional sapping methods are used. They belong to different species from the same genus, Boswellia", Groenendyk said in the interview.

From the trunk of trees native to the Middle East and North Africa, a sap is tapped. This fluid, which hardens and becomes a resin, is used to manufacture the incense that is burned in religious celebrations and in the homes of those who love its aroma.

The sap is called frankincense and came to prominence in countries like Oman, which is called the Land of Frankincense on the United Nations World Heritage List.

"The one that grows in the Middle East, which probably has the one with the more ancient or classic exploration is Boswellia sacra. But the main source of incense nowadays is Boswellia papyrifera that grows in different countries in Africa," he opined in the interview.

Traditional sapping methods are used in countries like Ethiopia, a country Groenendyk has visited. There he saw the use of Mngaf, a hatchet that opens small areas on the tree barks.

"As a reaction to these injuries, the trees produce sap to basically seal the injury. After drying, the resin is collected to be used as incense. I believe that extraction in other places is done similarly," he explained, adding that some regions in Brazil have trees from the same family, Burseraceae, whose sap is collected in a similar manner.

"In Oman, we saw that the populations of Boswellia are declining and that this is a problem that takes place throughout the species distribution," said Groenendyk, who has also an article published in media outlets like the *Journal of Applied Ecology*.

Furthermore, the researcher ponders that resin extraction is not the main issue, as the loss of habitat and the conversion of forest to crops or grazing lands can be a larger threat. Such issues have reduced the populations of Boswellia sacra, the "original" incense species, in such a way that there are no more products in the Arabian Peninsula.

The species has also been included as an endangered species on the list of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the researcher points out.

In a message sent to his colleague Groenendyk, researcher Frans Bongers, who visited Oman earlier this year talked about what he saw in the country.

The ANBA reports that Bongers visited several regions in the country to carry out a survey of Boswellia and revealed that there are still sites with a good or reasonable number of trees. There are places where these plants become food for camels. But in more remote areas where access is more difficult, there are still seemingly healthy trees.

The researcher says that the resin extraction is still not careful enough, which can affect the plant populations.

The beginning of the use of resin for manufacturing incense is unclear, but the activity is at least millennial. "It was already used in classical times and there were caravans of incense coming from the Arabian Peninsula to Greece and Rome," the researcher says, pointing out that there is another record in the Bible, which mentions incense as one of the gifts from the Magi to baby Jesus.

What is certain is that the resin is economically and socially important in the countries that manufacture it. "For incense harvesters and local populations, it is a major source of income support. Frankincense is used in the production of cosmetics and perfumes, as well as religious and cultural rituals, like the coffee ceremony," the researcher stressed.

In Brazil, some companies import the resin to manufacture incense, as is the case of Milagros, which produces 35 types of incense from resins of different origins, including Arab countries like Oman, Sudan and Somalia.