

HM condolences to Egypt President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Abdel Fattah el Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, regarding the victims of the Egypt church fire. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sympathies to President Sisi over the victims of the fire accident which broke out in the Abu Sifine Church in Giza Governorate, Egypt. – ONA



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REAL BEGIN
TITLE DEFENCE
WITH A VICTORY



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OMAN FISHERIES SET
FOR COMMERCIAL
OPERATIONS



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REIMAGINING
THE MANY USES
OF A DATE PALM



MUSCAT

RO 3.5M SOHAR LOGISTICS STATION

Sohar Logistics Station for inspection of agricultural, fishery, live-stock and foodstuff consignments in the Governorate of North Al Batinah was opened. The project cost RO 3.5 million. The facility will benefit the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Al Buraimi and Musandam and adjoining ports. **DETAILS ON P2**

MOUS FOR OMAN SCIENCE FESTIVAL

The Ministry of Education signed three memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with Occidental Oman, ITHCA Group, and the Asyad Group sponsoring the Oman Science Festival which is scheduled to be held from October 10 to 15. The agreements were signed with the companies on Monday. **DETAILS ON P3**



FITCH UPGRADES OMAN'S CREDIT RATING TO 'BB'

Budget surplus forecast to hit 5.5% of GDP in 2022

NEW YORK: Fitch Ratings has upgraded Oman's credit rating to "BB" with a stable outlook. The upgrade reflects the significant improvements in Oman's fiscal and economic metrics, lower external financing pressures highlighting the government's continued commitments and fiscal control towards reforms as per the Medium Term Fiscal Plan, as well as higher oil prices.

In its report, Fitch forecasts a budget surplus in 2022 and 2023 of 5.5 per cent and 3.4 per cent of GDP, respectively, which is the first surplus recorded since 2013. Further, Fitch estimates a rise in real GDP to 4.4 per cent in 2022 from 3 per cent in 2021 and 2.8 per cent in 2023.

Fitch projects a decline in government debt to GDP in 2022 to 46.7 per cent and 44.9 per cent in 2023. Additionally, the State-Owned

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FITCH RATINGS

Enterprises (SOE) debt to GDP is expected to decline in 2022. Furthermore, it has stated that Oman has successfully fulfilled its 2022 funding requirements and reduced 2023 external maturities to \$1.7 billion as part of its liability management. Fitch expects a positive Sovereign Net Foreign Assets position in 2022. The gross foreign

reserves of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) are estimated to strengthen in 2022-2023 due to Current Account Surpluses. It is worth noting that S&P Global Ratings has upgraded Oman's credit rating to "BB-" with a stable outlook in April 2022. Additionally, Moody's in October 2021 has revised its outlook from negative to stable. Recently, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy said that Oman has succeeded in facing the economic challenges during the pandemic and the crisis of low global oil prices. The report touched on the increase in foreign direct investment, which stood at 19 per cent in the first quarter of 2022, and an increase in non-oil exports in 2021, in addition to organising a number of conferences, including investment conference 'Oman for Renewable Energy' in London in July. — ONA



JOINT DRILL 'WADI AL NAAR'

The Royal Army of Oman (RAO), represented by the Western Border Battalion of the 11th Infantry Brigade, with the participation of military units from American forces, is carrying out the Omani-American joint military exercise (Wadi Al Naar), which will continue in Dhofar Governorate until August 24.

Omanis constitute 59.60%

SAMUEL KUTTY
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The percentage of expatriates has rebounded to the pre-pandemic level of above 40 per cent in the Sultanate of Oman. According to the population clock at National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on August 12, the number of expatriates, which includes family members,

reached 1,928,441 forming 40.40 per cent of the total population. The number of Omani citizens now stands at 2,841,121 at 59.60 per cent of a total population of 4,769,562 on the same day. Figures from the state-run agency show over 10 per cent increase in the expat number during the first half of the current year with 144,000 being added to the total number. **TURN TO P2**

Low-cost cellular domain to test cancer therapy drugs

MUSCAT: Dr Noora Rasool Bakhsh al Balushi, an Omani researcher, reached concrete results in making a model for a 3-D lab cellular milieu mimicking the sophisticated biological and chemical environment of cancerous cells in human body. The outcome of the three-year study appeared in the Swiss scientific journal Gel.

Speaking to Oman News Agency (ONA), Dr Noora said that certain tumours are sophisticated cellular formations comprising different types of cells, fibre and proteins that secure the rapid growth of cancer cells.

"I made a 3-D cellular environment simulating cancer tumour by planting



cancer cells, fibre, immune cells and proteins constituting a matrix of functionally programmed peptide sequences and forming a gelatinous substance called a hydrogel."

TURN TO P3

Kenya's Ruto declared winner

NAIROBI: Kenya's elections chief declared Deputy President William Ruto the winner of a tight presidential race on Monday but some senior election officials disowned the result, fuelling fears of violence like that seen after previous disputed polls.

Hailing the electoral commission as "heroes", Ruto said "There is no looking back. We are looking to the future. We need all hands on deck to move forward."



The 55-year-old had made Kenya's class divisions the centrepiece of his campaign to become Kenya's fifth president, promising to reward low-income "hustlers" and pouring scorn on Kenya's political dynasties. That was a barely veiled jab at his opponent Raila Odinga and President Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the nation's first vice president and president, respectively. **DETAILS ON P7**



OMAN FM

SUNSET DRIVE

WEEKDAYS AT 4PM

WITH CHASE & BUBBA YU



Registration starts for 69 new govt jobs



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour has announced the availability of 69 jobs in a number of government units. The jobs will be offered under a set of employment contracts and financial grades. The jobs are open for applicants holding different educational qualifications, with 59 slated for Masters, Bachelor's and post-GED (General Education Diploma) and 10 for holders of GED and pre-GED. The ministry pointed out that the registration of candidates wishing to contest the announced jobs is open for a period of two weeks from the date of this announcement.

Frankincense expo opens at Salalah airport



SALALAH: A documentary exposition titled "Memory of a Nation on the Land of Frankincense" was opened at Salalah International Airport on Monday. The National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) organised the exhibition in cooperation with Oman Airports. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Head of Dhofar Municipality and Chairman of the main committee tasked with Salalah Khareef activities. The expo showcases salient features of Omani history and comprises a diverse set of written documents. It is open from 9 am to 11 pm till August 21.

GCC youth seminar kicks off in Salalah



SALALAH: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is hosting a seminar for GCC youths. The 4-day event kicked off in the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Monday. The seminar aims to sharpen the skills of youth and rising their awareness on building nations. Several working papers were presented today on the psychological health of GCC youth, the GCC efforts in the health sector, the contribution of youth in community work, the role of youth in social entrepreneurship in Bahrain and technological advancement and its role in environmental sustainability, among other topics.

RO3.5m Sohar Logistics Station opens



SUHAR: Sohar Logistics Station for inspection of agricultural, fishery, livestock and foodstuff consignments in the Governorate of North Al Batinah was opened. The project cost RO 3.5 million. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Water Resources, who affirmed the significance of the facility in serving beneficiaries from the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Al Buraimi and Musandam, among other governorates and adjoining ports. He said that Sohar Logistics Station will contribute to the marketing and export of



agricultural, fishery and food products. The minister pointed out that Sohar Logistics Station is the outcome of partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Al Madina Logistic Services Company. The facility serves as an example of services rendered to the private sector in terms of

import, export and follow-up of products when exiting or entering the Sultanate of Oman. The minister went on tour of the station and took note of the transactions and services it offers to beneficiaries across inspection, handling and storage platforms. Sohar Logistics Station comprises a number of cooling

units where consignments of fresh fish and marine products are inspected alongside other products like vegetables and fruits. The facility also inspects livestock and offers customs clearing, lab services and container services. It also includes truck parking, cool stores, business outlets and client service counters. — ONA

RO 300 fine and jail for catching kingfish during next 2 months

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

The ban on fishing and trading of kanaad or kingfish in the Sultanate of Oman came into effect on Monday, marking the beginning of its reproduction season, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources tweeted. The two-month ban ends on October 15.

The penalty for fishing, during the ban period, is a fine of up to RO 300, or imprisonment from 10 days to a month, or both. The fish will be confiscated or its value will be forfeited.

Through the annual ban, the ministry aims to preserve the stocks of kingfish, and to regulate the fishing process, to strike balance between fish stocks and the quantities of the catch.

It seeks to develop and manage fish resources and implement projects that would contribute to the sustainability of fish stocks and to set regulations for optimal utilisation of untapped marine resources.

It may be noted that the ban is also implemented by other Gulf Cooperation Council states following the recommendation of the GCC Agricultural Cooperation Committee in 2019 to take measures to protect the fish species.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the country is home to diverse marine creatures. The total fish production registered



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an average growth rate of 22.7 per cent from 2015 to 2021.

The total artisanal catch of kingfish in 2020 amounted to 5,906 tonnes worth RO 7.12 million.

The annual two-month ban aims to protect kingfish stock from overfishing. The ministry officials will comb the coasts of the Sultanate of Oman to implement the ban. Kingfish is one of the large pelagic fish belonging to the Scambrid family, a semi-tuna that migrates and reproduces along the Omani waters and is in great demand in the local and international markets.

The Marine and Fisheries Science Center at the General Directorate of Fisheries Research has carried out scientific studies on kingfish covering reproduction, growth, migration, age, dimensions and mortality rate.

The study also touched on fishing equipment for fishing kingfish.

The ministry started issuing kingfish catch regulations in 2014. Apart from the ban during the breeding seasons, it is also prohibited to catch kingfish with nets less than 65 centimetres long. Fishermen must immediately return such fish to the sea if it is caught.

It also has fishing net specifications. The length of the nets shall not exceed 2,400 metres and the depth of the nets shall not exceed 10 metres from the sea surface. The nets must not touch the seafloor. In addition, the mesh eye opening shall not be less than 3.75 inches (95 mm), and the thickness of the thread shall not be less than one millimetre.

Omanis constitute 59.60% of population

FROM PAGE 1

The private sector, which employs the majority of foreign workers, witnessed a jump of nearly 10.5 per cent to 1,250,880 by June against 1,131,526 in 2021 while the number of expatriates working in the government sector has fallen by 18 per cent to 31,125 from 37,996 at the end of 2021.

The construction sector has added 48,000 new expat workers in the first half of 2022, followed by wholesale, retail, and repair of automobiles with 224,251, domestic sector manufacturing 184,789, and accommodation and food services with 115,271.

Experts expect the construction sector, which is the largest employer of expatriates in Oman, is expected to recruit more foreign workers in the coming months.

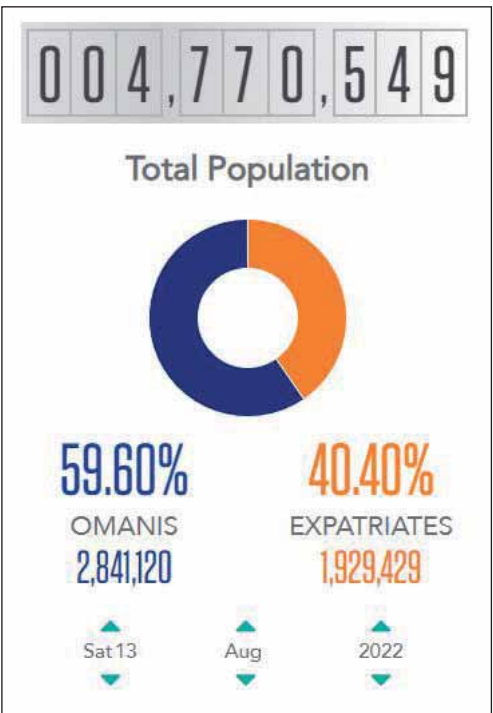
"On the back of favourable investment laws, ease in visa regulations and revision of the licencing fees, the construction sector will add more foreign workers in the sector, which is already in a revival mode in the recent months", said Mahmoud Ali Ahmed, general manager of a leading construction firm.

According to ResearchAndMarkets.com, the construction industry in Oman is forecast to grow by 3.4 per cent in real terms in 2022, after five successive years of contraction and a particularly steep decline of 8.3 per cent in 2021.

"The industry's growth in 2022 will be supported by a favourable base, coupled with rising oil prices and the continuous expansion of oil and gas production", the publisher points out in its report on Friday.

The report expects, "the Omani construction industry to register annual average growth of 4.2 per cent between 2023 and 2026, supported by investments in the construction of oil, electricity, transport, and housing infrastructure projects".

Bangladeshi workers formed the highest community with a population of 587,917 against 531,053 in 2021 followed by Indians by 506,184 and Pakistanis by 34,000 at the end of June.



■ SCIENCE WEEK BEGINS AT MTC



The Military Technological College organised 3rd Science Week on Monday. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Bakhait bin Ahmed al Mahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Higher Education. In the Exhibition, the visitors were introduced to all the scientific innovations that were displayed and were briefed about the scientific capabilities of the members of MTC. — ONA



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MoUs to support Oman Science Festival signed

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

The Ministry of Education signed three memoranda of understanding with Occidental Oman, ITHCA Group, and the Asyad Group sponsoring the Oman Science Festival which is scheduled to start from October 10 to 15.

The agreements were signed by Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of

the Ministry of Education for Education, and representatives of the sponsors at the ministry on Monday.

After signing the agreement with Dr Badr bin Salem al Manthari, Executive Vice-President of the ITHCA Group for strategic affairs, Dr Ambusaidi said, "We are pleased today to sign this agreement with the ITHCA Group. The Group will work to provide support as a gold sponsor for Oman Science Festival, joining

a number of institutions in the public and private sectors that were previously signed to sponsor the activities of this scientific event."

"We in the Ministry of Education believe that the success of any national event is not based on one entity, but rather on the cohesion and concerted efforts of the various institutions. This is a priority for ministry when organising this event, which enjoys the interest and popularity

of all segments of society, and targets students of schools, colleges, and universities.

The festival will enabling them to learn about the latest developments in science and technology, innovation and display their skills and abilities in dealing with technology to society and its various institutions".

Dr Al Manthari, said, "The gold sponsorship comes out of our keenness to build strategic partnerships that contribute

to the promotion of effective community activities, activating the Group's projects that are concerned with financing social investment projects. This event keeps pace with global trends based on the dissemination of science and technology, and encourage students to innovate and integrate into the digital transformation sectors".

The third edition of Oman Science Festival aims to introduce science to students and members

of society in an easy way and in an interactive way that stimulates creative thinking.

It also aims to encourage students to realise the importance of science in life, urging them to innovate, creating a positive attitude towards science, innovation and scientific research, enhancing students' skills to integrate into a knowledge-based economy, and encouraging young people to continue learning in scientific disciplines.

Low-cost cellular domain to test cancer therapy drugs

FROM PAGE 1

Dr Noora pointed out that the research will enhance the current understanding of the nature of cancer and update knowledge associated to environments that are suitable for the growth of cancer cells. She added that this low-cost cellular domain can be used to test cancer therapy drugs and affirm their efficiency before moving to the next high cost stage of making test tubes for lab organisms and, later, patients.

The development of such cellular domains will accelerate the production of highly efficient cancer treatment drugs, besides comprehending the multiple and variable traits of cancer cells. Dr Noora's research was supported financially by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Health, Melbourne Royal University and Deakin University in Australia. — ONA

75th anniversary of India's independence celebrated

MUSCAT: The 76th Independence Day of India and the 75th Anniversary of India's independence was marked by a unique twin-deck Reception onboard Indian naval ships Chennai and Kochi at Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat on Monday.

The reception was attended by Shaikh Khalifa al Harthy, Under-Secretary for Diplomatic Affairs in the Foreign Ministry; Commodore Tariq bin Issa al Raisi, Acting Commander Royal Navy of Oman; members of the royal family, senior government dignitaries; ambassadors; military attaches; and distinguished members of the Omani & Indian communities.

The two indigenously built Indian Naval Ships, Chennai and Kochi have anchored in Muscat on a special 4-day friendly visit. It is part of Indian Navy's initiative of deploying a naval vessel in each of the 6 continents for raising of the national flag on the occasion of 75 years of India's independence,



being celebrated worldwide as Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

The deployment of two of Indian Navy's latest and indigenously built modern ships in Muscat with Flag Officer Commanding Western Fleet of the Indian Navy embarked, is testimony to the special and unique bonds of friendship between the two countries and the special place for Oman in India's



maritime and security outlook.

Speaking at the Reception, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, Amit Narang extended warm greetings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman and lauded the special and privileged India-Oman relationship as a model of mutual trust and abiding friendship. He reiterated that India

will be a strong partner in realising His Majesty's 'Oman Vision 2040'.

Ambassador highlighted India's proud journey as an independent nation during the past 75 years and notable achievements in various sectors - from economic growth and social inclusion, defence, sports, education and science to information & space technology and digital inclusion

among others.

Students of Indian Schools in Muscat also joined hands to celebrate this joyous occasion by a glittering cultural event held at the Indian School, Bausher. Children showcased the best of Indian culture through mesmerising cultural performances recalling India's golden past and glorious future.

Taqi first Omani lawyer to be promoted to Dentons partner

MUSCAT: Dentons, the world's largest law firm, has strengthened its Energy, Transport and Infrastructure team in Oman and the Middle East with the promotion of Yasser Taqi to Partner.

Yasser is an England and Wales qualified lawyer, who joined Dentons as one of the firm's first trainees from the Middle East region. After over 10 years in Dentons' offices in London, Dubai and Muscat, Yasser is now the first Omani lawyer to be promoted to Partner at Dentons.

Yasser has advised on numerous significant and high-profile mandates including drafting the rules for the region's first spot market for the wholesale of electricity; developing Oman's largest utility-scale solar PV IPP; handling construction sector arbitrations as well as construction



Yasser Taqi

contracts; and negotiating concession agreements in the oil and gas, mining and ports sectors. He is an expert in the regulatory framework for power and water in both Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Yasser was the first lawyer to be awarded the prestigious NTI

"Business Professional of the Year" in 2019, and is ranked as an "Associate to Watch" and a "Rising Star" in the Chambers and Legal 500 legal directories, respectively. He has served as a non-executive director on the board of Outward Bound Oman since March 2020.

Yasser will continue to support clients in Oman and across the Middle East on energy, infrastructure and natural resources projects, with a growing focus on renewable energy and green hydrogen.

"Yasser's promotion to Partner is testament to the dedication and hard work that he has demonstrated," said Paul Jarvis, Chief Executive Officer of Dentons UK, Ireland and Middle East. "His promotion also further strengthens Dentons' leading practice in Oman, which remains an important market for the firm."

Auction Announcement for The Sale of Movables (Equipment, vehicles, scrap)

Oman Fisheries Company SAOG

Oman Fisheries Company SAOG announces its desire to sell a number of movables (equipment, vehicles, scrap) by bidding. The establishments or individuals wishing to enter the auction under the following conditions:

- Purchase the tender document from the Procurement Department at the company's Headquarters in the state of **Bowsher (Gala Industrial Zone)** or from the company's location in Salalah for payment of OMR 50 (Fifty Omani Rials) not refundable.
- Bid submission explaining the price in **closed envelopes** and addressed to the Oman Fisheries Company Providing a bank guarantee or check approved by the Bank in the name of Oman Fisheries Company for OMR 200 (Two hundred Omani Rials).
- No bid will be accepted unless the bid slip is purchased and the bank guarantee is provided in accordance with the conditions stipulated in the tender booklet, which is considered to be complementary to the bidding conditions and all bid applicants must comply with them.
- Oman Fisheries Company is entitled to accept or reject any bid without giving reasons and may cancel the auction at any time before and after the auction. The company is not liable for any expenses incurred by the bidder.
- The bidder shall specify the **method of communication** with him.
- Oman Fisheries Company employees are not allowed to bid.
- The deadline for submission of tenders on Sunday, 4 September 2022 at 4 pm.
- The movables to be sold **(after the purchase of the tender brochure for the relevant employee)** can be inspected during the period from **8 am to 4 pm** at the locations and dates shown in the following table:

No	Preview location	Preview Date
1	Halban near the Central Fish Market.	21-22/8/2022
2	The location of the Oman Fisheries Company in the Wilayat of Salalah - Raysut Industrial Area	24-25/8/2022

For further information about the bid, please contact Mr. Adnan Al Balushi on telephone no: 92138034 - Muscat
Mr. Hutham Al Hashri on telephone no: 99080280 - Salalah



FRANKINCENSE IS CLASSIFIED INTO FOUR DIFFERENT TYPES IN TERMS OF QUALITY ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL AND CLIMATIC DISTRIBUTION, WHERE IT IS INDICATED THAT THE PURE WHITE COLOUR OF FRANKINCENSE TINGED WITH GREEN IS CONSIDERED THE BEST FRANKINCENSE OF ALL AND IS PRODUCED FROM THE DRY EASTERN WADIS IN THE GOVERNORATE

OMAN’S MOST FAMOUS EXPORT

AFRAH AL BLAUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

The National Centre for Statistics and Information revealed that the frankincense export from the Sultanate of Oman reached RO 239,100, an increase of 148 per cent, in 2021 compared to the year 2020.

If we go back to the history of frankincense in the Sultanate of Oman, the Omani frankincense has been one of the most important exports of Oman to the world. Frankincense was traditionally harvested by making small cuts in the bark of the frankincense tree. The liquid of this tree appears and turns into a white sticky substance that was then collected and stored in caves for drying. After drying, it was sent to Khor Rori and the country’s port for export to India or to Egypt and Palestine on camels in caravans that cross overland roads.

It can be better exploited in the future to be an important economic resource that can be relied upon by enacting laws and preparing new legislation to preserve frankincense trees. From this point, the government’s efforts to protect the frankincense trees continued. Like, the Wadi Dawka Protectorate was established, which contains large numbers of frankincense trees planted in the reserve, along with perennial natural trees. The importance of Wadi Dawka as a site included in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage List as one of the sites of the Land of Frankincense on the Northern Hills for the Dhofar mountain range, where the reserve includes a suitable environment for the growth of frankincense trees.

The approximate production rate of the frankincense tree is approximately 3 to 4 kilograms, and the volume of production in some trees may reach 8 kilograms, as the frankincense trees bloom annually from the end of March until June of each year. Frankincense has many benefits and is used in the ingredients of medicines, perfumes, cosmetic industries, oils and powders, in addition to daily life, social and religious occasions, as well as the incense industry for which the Sultanate of Oman is famous.

Ahmed bin Amer al Awaed, a researcher in the field of Omani frankincense, said that some results related to Omani frankincense research were able to identify 98 chemical compounds, including a very important substance used in the treatment of some types of cancer, such as colon, stomach, blood and pancreatic cancer.

Several studies have shown the superiority of Omani frankincense, whose trees are spread in different areas of the Dhofar Governorate, in terms of the amount of effective natural biological materials it contains, compared to other types of frankincense trees in the world. But what exactly is the reason why frankincense production in Dhofar is the highest quality? A ‘Memorandum Concerning the Province of Dhofar in Southern Arabia’ was written in 1943 by a British official named G N Jackson, in which Jackson described the influence of Dhofar’s topography and moisture distribution on the quality of frankincense resin.

Frankincense is classified into four different types in terms of quality according to geographical and climatic distribution, where it is indicated that the pure white colour of frankincense tinged with green is considered the best frankincense of all and is produced from the dry eastern wadis in the governorate. Then comes the “Najdi” frankincense in second place and it is produced from the Najdi limestone wadis that flow to the north and descend from the Dhofar mountain range, which extends from east to west. In the third place in terms of quality comes the “Shazari” frankincense, which is harvested from the dry western wadis located to the south of the Najd Wadis, while the “popular” frankincense comes in the fourth place and is produced from frankincense trees that spread in the wadis and plains affected by high humidity and seasonal rains. The most productive species is characterised by the abundance of oil extracted from it.

Many higher education institutions in Oman and abroad are conducting scientific research related to the frankincense tree because of its cosmetic and medical benefits.



Expatriate families on vacation feel the pinch as airfares get expensive



KABEER YOUSUF
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As the schools have reopened, expatriate families who went on holidays to their home countries are now caught in a fix as the Muscat-bound airfare has hit the roof requiring them to shell out huge funds for tickets.

A one-way ticket from one of the south Asian sectors to Oman would cost anything around RO 120 to RO 200 starting September and a family of five is fearing a deep hole in their wallet with the tickets.

“Yes, schools are resuming and families have begun to come back to Oman, rates of tickets have gone high according to the demand,” said Sunil D’Souza, CEO, Travel City.

He added: “It’s a hard nut to

crack whether they are referring to the cost of tickets being high and school expenditures making them a bit weighed upon.”

Flights have been busy with incoming passengers who had gone for summer holidays and August-September are the months these families return to Oman.

“Rates of airlines are pretty high both ways, it’s due to the fact more demand and less capacity hence higher price one is paying,” adds Sunil.

Experts in Aviation furthered it saying that airlines are not able to operate to their 100 per cent capacity across the globe.

“They are facing staff shortages — pilots, baggage handlers and ground handling — as a result, many airlines have cancelled their flights and are operating between 50-70 per cent of their assets on

A one-way ticket from one of the south Asian sectors to Oman would cost anything around RO 120 to RO 200 starting September and a family of five is fearing a deep hole in their wallet

the ground.

It might take a while before full capacity is utilised and more staff are hired onboard.

“A number of reasons contribute to the high traffic to Oman and families returning after vacation is just one among them,” says Venkat, representative of GoFirst Airline, a budget airline that operates to Indian sectors.

“Primary reasons for heightened traffic is because ease of travel restrictions and renewed business opportunities created by the government for corporates have increased the inflow of passengers, as new recruitment are taking place in Oman,” he adds.

The section of passengers which is worst affected by this sudden jump in fares is undoubtedly the working class who, most often, buy tickets from their pockets.

“There are also strong family visits and the tourism sector is also getting a fair share of inflow passengers. We need to note that families are also coming back from holiday as schools are reopening after the school summer break. And this trend would continue for next couple of months too as it has always been the case, a demand-supply equation,” Venkat adds.

Number of arriving passengers at Omani airports up by 135%

MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) show that international flights that made connection via Muscat, Salalah and Suhar airports grew by 113% to 20,640 by the end of May 2022, as against 9,679 international flights during the corresponding period in 2021.

According to the NCSI, the number of arriving passengers via the Sultanate of Oman’s airports (including transit passengers) saw a 135% increase to 3,045,519 by the end of May 2022, while the number of departing passengers grew by 94% compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

The overall number of flights (internal and international — arrivals and departures put together) via Muscat International Airport grew by 90.2% to 21,930 as at the end of May 2022. These flights carried as many as 2,628,203 passengers, compared to 1,235,740 passengers carried onboard 11,533 flights during the corresponding period in 2021.

Salalah Airport registered a 68.9% increase in number of flights (internal, international) to 2,743 flights by the end of May 2022.

In a breakup, the NCSI’s figures show that the number of international flights via Salalah Airport surged by 162.7%, while internal flights grew by 31.4% to 1,524, compared to 1,160 during the corresponding period in 2021. The number of passengers onboard those flights (arriving, departing) via Salalah Airport rose by 57.3% by the end of May 2022, compared to the corresponding period in 2021. Suhar Airport registered 312 flights in number of flights (departures, arrivals) by the end of May 2022. The number of passengers in international flights via Suhar Airport (arriving, departing) stood at 28,101.

Duqm Airport posted a 6.9% increase in international flights (280 arrivals and departures put together) by the end of May 2022, compared to 262 flights during the corresponding period in 2021. There, the number of passengers grew by 39.7% from 18,804 to 26,263 by the end of May 2022, as against the corresponding period in 2021.

Nationality-wise, Indians topped the list of passengers (125,185) who travelled via Muscat International Airport till the end of May 2022, followed Bangladesh passengers (44,671) and Pakistani passengers (31,191) by the end of May 2022. — **ONA**





Sultan Qaboos University

TENDERS NOTICE

The investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University Invites the companies to submit their quotations for these Tenders On the occasion of the 33rd graduation ceremony of Sultan Qaboos University. To be held on November 6, 2022 and November 12, 2022 as follows:

S/N	Type of Business	Event Site	Date of Site Visit	Class	Tender #
1	Selling Flowers, Sweets and Gifts	Female Complex No. (2), (3) & the Open Theater	24/8/2022 9:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 9/22
2	Selling Specialty Coffee	Female Complex No. (2), (3) & the Open Theater	24/8/2022 9:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 10/22
3	Hairdressing and Beauty Services	Female Complex No. (2) & (3)	24/8/2022 9:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 11/22

- The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue And Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of OR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for Collecting the Document is 5/9/2022.
- The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and the assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations: 25/9/2022. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of The Investment & Revenue Department, located on the first floor of the commercial building at Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 11:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 90 (ninety) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tenders submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- The Tenderer should prepare the Site in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.
- Graduation ceremony dates are subject to change.

The Investment & Revenue Department
PO BOX 50, P.C. 123, ALKHOD, SULTANATE OF OMAN
Tel: 24142685 – 24142682 Fax: 24142691
Email: investmnet@squ.edu.om

■ ENSURING PRICE STABILITY



The Consumer Protection Department in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate (Masirah Consumer Protection Office) continues its inspection campaigns to ensure price stability and the availability of goods.



OMAN UNITED INSURANCE CO. SAOG
P.O. Box 1522, PC 112, Sultanate of Oman,
Tel: 24477300, Fax: 24477323

ANNOUNCEMENT

This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. Ahmed Marhoon Al Siyabi**, Sales Executive in Head Office, is no longer an employee of Oman United Insurance and does not represent our Company effective from the date of publication. We request all our customers not to deal with him in regards any company business matter effectively from 15/8/2022 publication of this advertisement. The company will not be responsible for any dealings whatsoever with him after the said date.





OMAN UNITED INSURANCE CO. SAOG
P.O. Box 1522, PC 112, Sultanate of Oman,
Tel: 24477300, Fax: 24477323

ANNOUNCEMENT

This is to inform all concerned that **Mr. Hamed Nasser Al Harrasi**, Sales Executive in Head Office, is no longer an employee of Oman United Insurance and does not represent our Company effective from the date of publication. We request all our customers not to deal with him in regards any company business matter effectively from 15/8/2022 publication of this advertisement. The company will not be responsible for any dealings whatsoever with him after the said date.





Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)
129/2022	Providing Maintenance Service for Central & Backup Devices and Backup Taking System	Companies specialized in the field of IT services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Excellent, or First Degree	Sunday 04-9-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 25-9-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Tuesday 16/8/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry “

www.mosd.gov.om



Modi: India aims to become developed nation in 25 years

NEW DELHI: India will aim to become a developed nation within 25 years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a national day address on Monday, with policies to support domestic production in power, defence and digital technology.

Speaking from the 17th century Red Fort in Delhi as India celebrates its 75th year of independence from British colonial rule, Modi exhorted youth to “aim big” and give their best years for the cause of the country.

“We must turn India into a developed country in the next 25 years, in our lifetime,” said the 71-year-old Modi, wearing a turban in the colours of the Indian flag, in his 75-minute-speech in Hindi.

“It’s a big resolution, and we should work towards it with all our might.”

Prime Minister Modi’s speech at the historic Red Fort was decorated with portraits of freedom fighters and guarded by mechanical elephants.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort during the celebrations to mark country's Independence Day in New Delhi. – AFP

Following a 21-gun salute, reportedly executed using howitzers made domestically for the first time under Modi’s “Make In India” industrial strategy, the prime minister said Indians should shed “colonialism in our minds and habits”.

“Hundreds of years of

colonialism has restricted our sentiments, distorted our thoughts. When we see even the smallest thing related to colonialism in us or around us, we have to be rid of it,” Modi said in a 90-minute speech in the Indian capital.

Wearing a cream-coloured



Police officers take part in a parade to celebrate India's Independence Day celebrations in Srinagar. – Reuters

turban speckled with the colours of the Indian flag, Modi also said India should crush the “termite” of corruption and nepotism,

follow an “India First” mantra and ensure that “in speech and conduct, we do nothing that lowers a woman’s dignity”.

“Self-reliant India is the responsibility of every citizen, every government, every unit of society,” he said. —AFP

Egyptians mourn those killed in Cairo church fire

CAIRO: Funerals were held in two Cairo churches on Sunday evening for 41 victims of a fire that ripped through a Coptic Christian church during mass, forcing worshippers to jump out of windows.

The blaze, blamed on an electrical fault, hit the Abu Sifin church in densely populated Imbaba, a working class district west of the Nile River, part of Giza governorate in greater Cairo.

Hundreds gathered to pay their respects in and around the two Giza churches where clergymen prayed for the victims, according to AFP correspondents.

Pallbearers pushed through crowds of weeping mourners who reached for the coffins, including that of a priest at the church, Father Abdel-Messih Bekhit.

The Egyptian Coptic Church and the health ministry reported 41 dead and 14 injured in the blaze before emergency services brought it under control.

Witnesses to the fire on Sunday morning described people rushing into the multi-storey house of worship to save those trapped, but the rescuers were soon overwhelmed by heat and deadly smoke.

“Everyone was carrying kids



Egyptian mourners during the funeral of victims killed in Cairo Coptic church fire at the church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Giza Governorate. – AFP

out of the building,” said Ahmed Reda Baioumy, who lives next to the church. “But the fire was getting bigger and you could only go in once or you would asphyxiate.”

Another witness, Sayed Tawfik, said that “some threw themselves out of windows to escape the fire”.

He pointed to a car bearing dents “left by a person who is now lying in the hospital with a broken arm and back”.

A resident of the area, Mina Masry, said emergency services were slow in responding. Ambulances took “over an hour to arrive” and fire trucks “nearly an hour, though their station is five minutes away”. — AFP

Covid cases skyrocket on Marshall Islands

MAJURO, Marshall Islands: A health disaster has been declared on the Marshall Islands after the fast-spreading Covid variant Omicron infected more than a tenth of residents in the capital Majuro in one week.

Since a handful of positive community cases were confirmed on August 8, the numbers have skyrocketed to 2,800 in a city of 22,500.

“We’re gearing up for the hardest part of the outbreak right now in Majuro,” Health Secretary Jack Niedenthal said on Monday.

Thanks to strict quarantine rules, the Marshalls Islands was one of the last countries to stay Covid-free.

“The good thing about having all these other countries go before us is we really understand epidemiologically how this variant of the virus spreads: like wildfire,” Niedenthal added.

On Friday, the Marshalls’ President David Kabua signed a “State of Health Disaster” to give the government access to emergency funding.

So far, there have been 3,000 positive cases in a population of around 42,000 across the islands and atolls that comprise the Marshalls.

Niedenthal warned the outbreak was continuing “to



gain strength” in Majuro, as the number of cases doubled from Saturday to Sunday.

“About 75 per cent of the people we test are positive, which is an incredibly high rate,” he added

So far, three deaths have been reported.

Three “Alternative Care Sites” set up in Majuro have been swamped by people seeking treatment for symptoms and testing.

Local health officials initially struggled to cope with demand as thousands of islanders clamoured for help even as 200 doctors and nurses across the country tested positive for Covid.

The outbreak has since spread from the capital to Ebeye, the

densely populated community next door to the US military’s Reagan Test Site at Kwajalein Atoll.

The tiny island, home to about 1,000 people, would likely see a surge in cases, Niedenthal warned on Monday. “They are about a week behind Majuro,” he said.

Domestic flights by national carrier Air Marshall Islands and travel by government ships to remote islands have been suspended since last Tuesday in an effort to contain the spread.

A special flight intended to take a health team to some of the country’s remote islands was grounded on Sunday as all Air Marshall pilots had reportedly tested positive.

Thousands of islanders clamoured for help even as 200 doctors and nurses across the country tested positive for Covid

A relaxing of the quarantine rules in recent weeks coupled with unprecedented numbers of people coming in through the managed quarantine process is the outbreak’s suspected cause.

The government previously announced plans to open its borders and drop quarantine on arrival requirements from October 1.

The US-based Centers for Disease Control and other agencies are set to send support teams this week.

Niedenthal described the extra help as “boots-on-the-ground medical support professionals” who will be sent to support local authorities after being tested on arrival.

“As a country, we have moved from prevention to mitigation because we are now fighting this disease,” he said. “The days of quarantine upon arrival are now over.” — AFP

DHAKA

Fire at plastic factory kills six in Bangladesh

At least six people have been died after a fire swept through a building that housed a restaurant and a small plastic manufacturing unit in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, firefighters said on Monday.

The fire broke out on the ground floor of the three-storey building at about noontime at Kamalbagh in the old part of the city, firefighting official Anwarul Islam said.

He said the firefighters took more than two hours to douse the blaze, which spread on the other floors and gutted the entire building as the fire engines struggled to enter congested site



which is criss-crossed by narrow lanes. “We have found six bodies inside the debris,” Islam said.

The bodies found at the accident

site are beyond recognition, he said adding two more workers of the restaurant have gone missing.

—dpa

1551

Tender Number

T-31-2022

Tender Name

Framework Agreement for Supply & Install of an Integrated in Vehicle Management System (IVMS) and Driver Behavior Management System

Tender Fee

OMR 100/-
Free for SME's holding Riyada Card

Grade & Specialty

Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field

Start date for tender document distribution

Tuesday, 16 August 2022

Last date for tender document distribution

Wednesday, 24 August 2022

Last date for submission

Tuesday, 06 September 2022

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.

Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email

The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.

Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head-quarter Oman National Transport Company S.A.O.C "MWASALAT" at Ghala, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor), Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.

"Mwasalat"
Head Quarter, Ghala
P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman

For more information
please send to:
tenders@mwasalat.om



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TUESDAY | AUGUST 16 | 2022

7

In brief

■ LONDON



HARRY, MEGHAN TO VISIT UK, GERMANY IN CHARITY TRIP

Britain's Duke and Duchess of Sussex are to visit the UK next month to attend charity events. Harry and Meghan will also visit Germany as part of their trip to support "several charities close to their hearts", their spokesperson said. The couple will travel to Manchester for the One Young World Summit, an event which brings together young leaders from more than 190 countries, on September 5. The Duchess of Sussex is a counsellor for the organisation, alongside Justin Trudeau, Sir Richard Branson, and Jamie Oliver, among others. Meghan, a counsellor for the organisation, will give the keynote address at the opening ceremony. — dpa

■ KABUL



FLASH FLOODS KILL 29 IN AFGHANISTAN

Flash floods triggered by heavy rains killed at least 29 people and destroyed scores of homes in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. Scores of Afghans die every year in torrential downpours, particularly in impoverished rural areas where poorly built homes are at risk of collapse. Heavy rains over the past 24 hours lashed Parwan, Kapisa and Nangarhar provinces. Mohammad Naseeb Haqqani, spokesman for the Ministry of Disaster Management, said at least 20 people were killed in Parwan and more than 50 were injured. "Crops, dozens of homes and roads have been destroyed," he said adding that five people died in Kapisa and four in Nangarhar. — AFP

■ MADRID



SPAIN FIGHTS FIERCE FIRE FANNED BY WINDS

Firefighters were battling strong winds as a huge forest fire burnt out of control in southeastern Spain while another blaze in the north was stabilised, officials said. Both fires broke out late on Saturday, with more than 350 firefighters engaged against the wildfire in the northern Aragon region that has so far devastated an area of 6,000 hectares forcing at least 1,500 people from their homes. But as they managed to steady the Aragon blaze after successfully preventing it from entering a protected nature reserve, the wildfire in the southeastern Valencia region continued to spread. — AFP

Kenya's Ruto declared president-elect

NAIROBI: Kenya's president-elect William Ruto vowed on Monday to work with "all leaders" as he was declared winner of a closely-fought poll, attempting to ease tensions after the outcome sparked a split in the election commission and fears of violence.

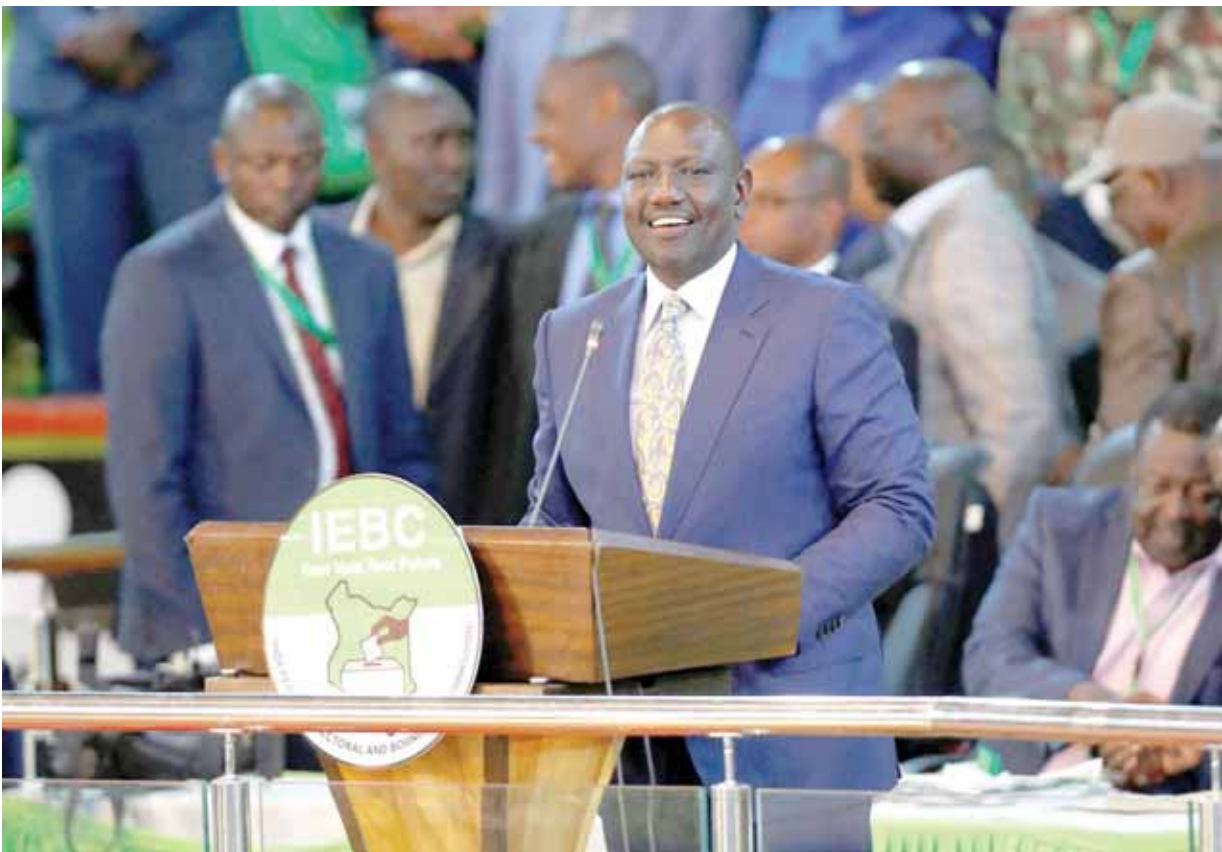
"There is no room for vengeance," Ruto said, adding, "I am acutely aware that our country is at a stage where we need all hands on deck."

Kenya's elections chief declared Deputy President William Ruto the winner of a tight presidential race on Monday but, amid chaotic scenes, four other senior election officials said the week-long count was too opaque and disowned the result.

Ruto had appeared to be leading long-time opposition leader Raila Odinga as Kenyans awaited final results of the election held nearly a week ago.

Minutes before the chairman of the electoral commission Wafula Chebukati announced that Ruto had won the vote, his deputy Juliana Cherera had told media at a separate location that she and three other commissioners disowned the results.

"We are not able to take ownership of the results that will be announced," she said.



Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto and presidential candidate for the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) and Kenya Kwanza political coalition, speaks after being declared the winner of Kenya's presidential election in Nairobi. — Reuters

Diplomats and international elections were whisked out of the tallying hall before Chebukati spoke, as scuffles broke out.

Amid fears that vote-rigging allegations could lead to bloody scenes like those that followed presidential polls in 2007 and 2017, Cherera urged the parties to

pursue any disputes through the courts.

The announcement of the long-awaited outcome of Kenya's presidential vote was thrown into chaos on Monday after four out of seven election commissioners said they could not recognise the results.

"We cannot take ownership of the result that will be announced," Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) vice chair Juliana Cherera told reporters.

She described the process as "opaque" but did not elaborate, saying further information would

The announcement of the long-awaited outcome of Kenya's presidential vote was thrown into chaos after four out of seven election commissioners said they could not recognise the results

be given later.

The IEBC had earlier said it would be issuing the results of the closely fought August 9 race at 1200 GMT but by almost 1500 GMT there was still no announcement.

Latest official results published by Kenyan media early on Monday had given Deputy President William Ruto a slight edge over Raila Odinga, the veteran opposition leader who had run with the support of the ruling party.

As confusion reigned, scuffles broke out at the IEBC's heavily guarded national tallying centre in Nairobi, where some people were seen throwing chairs. — AFP

Court jails Suu Kyi for six years for corruption

YANGON: A Myanmar junta court jailed Aung San Suu Kyi for six years for corruption on Monday, a source close to the case said, taking the ousted leader's prison time to 17 years.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been detained since the generals toppled her government in a coup on February 1 last year, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief period of democracy.

She has since been hit with a series of charges, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud. She faces decades in jail if convicted on all counts.

Suu Kyi was sentenced to "six years imprisonment under four anti-corruption charges", said the source, who requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Each charge carried a maximum of 15 years in jail. Suu Kyi was sentenced to three years for each, but three of the sentences would be served concurrently, the source said.

She appeared in good health and did not make any statement following the sentencing, they added.

A junta spokesman could not be reached for comment.

The Nobel laureate had already been sentenced to 11 years in jail for corruption, incitement against the military, breaching Covid-19 rules and breaking a telecommunications law.

Journalists have been barred from attending the court hearings and Suu Kyi's lawyers have been banned from speaking to the media.

The United States slammed the latest sentencing as an "affront to justice and the rule of law".

"We call on the regime to immediately release Aung San

Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi



Age 77

- 2010 Released from house arrest after spending around 15 out of the previous 20 years in detention
- 2015 Leads NLD to a landslide victory in the country's first democratic elections
- 2016 Assumes de facto national leadership in the role of state counsellor
- 2020 Leads NLD to second landslide

Suu Kyi and all those unjustly detained, including other democratically elected officials," a State Department spokesperson said. The coup sparked widespread protests and unrest, and renewed fighting with established ethnic rebel groups.

Dozens of "People's Defence Forces" have also sprung up to fight the junta and have surprised the military with their effectiveness,

Feb 1, 2021 Arrested hours before new parliament due to convene, as the Myanmar military staged a coup

Feb 3 - Mar 1 Charged with series of offences:

- Possession of unlicensed walkie-talkies
- Violation of Covid-19 restrictions
- Violation of communications laws
- Intent to incite public unrest
- Sedition

Jun 10 Additional charges announced:

- Corruption For allegedly accepting 11 kg of gold and \$600,000 in cash

Dec 6 Sentenced to 4 years in prison For incitement against the military, and violation of Covid-19 rules

Junta chief reduces it to 2

Jan 10, 2022 New sentence of 4 years handed down by junta court

Apr 27 Sentenced to additional 5 years in prison on corruption charges

Jun 23 Moved from house arrest to solitary confinement in prison

August 15 Sentenced to additional 6 years on corruption charges

analysts say.

According to a local monitoring group, the crackdown has left more than 2,000 civilians dead and seen some 17,000 arrested.

Suu Kyi has been the face of Myanmar's democratic hopes for more than 30 years, but her earlier 11-year sentence already meant she was likely to miss elections the junta says it plans to hold by next year. — AFP

Dutch court to rule in Nov on MH17 downing

THE HAGUE: Dutch judges will deliver their verdict on November 17 in the trial of four suspects accused of downing Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014, a court said on Monday.

Three Russians and a Ukrainian, who all remain at large, are accused of supplying the missile that intercepted the jet as it flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, killing all 298 people on board.

The trial began in March 2020 at a high-security court near Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport, from where the doomed Boeing 777 had taken off.

Prosecutors have demanded life sentences.

"November 17, 2022 has been chosen as the provisional ruling date in the MH17 criminal trial," the court said in a statement.

The decision "will take a part of the day and will probably take place in the afternoon."

Prosecutors say the plane was shot down on July 17, 2014, by a Russian-made BUK missile, fired from territory in eastern Ukraine occupied by pro-Moscow separatists.

The trial is being held in the Netherlands, following a huge international investigation, because Most of the victims were Dutch citizens.

But the case has taken on renewed significance after Russia's February 24 attack on Ukraine in which a slew of new war crimes are being alleged.

Dutch prosecutors in December called for life terms for all four of the men on trial: Russians Igor Girkin, Sergei Dubinsky and Oleg Pulatov and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko.

Pulatov is the only accused with legal representation and all four have refused to appear in court, insisting they are innocent.

Prosecutors allege the four played pivotal roles in securing the BUK system, which was most likely intended to shoot down a Ukrainian warplane.

Girkin also known by his pseudonym "Strelkov", is the most high-profile suspect — a former Russian spy who helped kickstart the conflict in Ukraine in 2014, and has been vocal about the current war.

International investigators said the BUK missile was originally brought from a Russian military base, ostensibly to be used in the fight against Ukrainian forces.

Pulatov's lawyers said prosecutors failed to show that a Russian-supplied BUK brought down the jetliner, saying there were "gaps" in the prosecution's case. — AFP



Judges inspect reconstruction of MH17 wreckage, in Reijen

Once more unto to the breach



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

You would have wondered the same: “What does Shakespeare have to do with an executive leadership programme?” It turned out to be one of the most enjoyable and life-changing learning experiences. These thoughts came to my mind as me and my colleagues were finishing The Diwan’s Royal Court’s National Leadership and Competitiveness Programme, delivered by Oxford University’s Said Business School.

One of the last sessions in this programme was on personal leadership. Today, the main message from this session resonates very well giving what we are all witnessing everyday socially, economically, and politically. This session’s resourceful facilitator chose King Henry’s words in Shakespeare’s play that say: “Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more; Or close the wall up with our English dead” (Henry V,

act 3, scene 1, lines 1 to 5).

I firmly believe that there’s no impact more powerful a leader can share with his team than leading by example in inspiring resilience, just like King Henry V inspired his army to keep going until they win, or sacrifice their lives trying.

Investing in social resilience
We are exhausted, and rightly so. We survived a global pandemic where we lost loved ones may their souls rest in peace, and had to be confined to limited interactions and spaces for almost two years. We also had to voluntarily go through one of the harshest punishments in history- ostracise ourselves from feeling that physical togetherness heals families and communities in tense times.

Therefore, I believe this is absolutely the perfect time for a deliberate social togetherness initiative where we meet, socialise, hug and kiss each other in a way

THERE IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN ECONOMIC DISRUPTIONS AND INNOVATIONS BY INVESTING IN PROGRAMMES THAT ACCELERATE INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH AND MEDITATION

that reminds us that we are one community and one body. The consequences of not doing so could be passing up on a social resilience opportunity, where we and future generations start to forget the value of how human touch can heal pandemic wounds.

Investing in economic resilience
Because we had to restrict cross-border movement of people, goods and services the global supply chain was disrupted for two years,

and is still recovering to this day. Corporates and governments chose to pass the cost of this global supply chain disruption to us as average consumer where we are still going through pandemic disruption in our incomes, housing, food, fuel and other living costs.

We are hardly realising that the rising cost of living is starting to outpace human innovations that normally help us adapt with new situations.

There is a great opportunity to close this gap between economic disruptions and innovations by investing in programmes, such upgrade to turn graduations projects into startups, that accelerate innovations in health and meditation, using advanced manufacturing in housing, organic food, and circular economy in general.

Investing in political resilience
Winter is coming, and with it

an immense pressure on global energy security and climate change solutions, which historically tend to bring instability. Nations endowed with natural resources and geostrategic locations tend to be focus of the attention of superpowers that deplete their resources in an endless pursuit of perceived “greatness” via imposing themselves on others, via despicable means such as neo-colonialism.

Giving the current increasing demand for energy and the relative stability in our region it is inevitable that our natural resources, including people, land, air and waters will be much sought after by the world’s superpowers.

Political resilience implies that our nations must invest in deliberate political resilience programmes that bring people together in a sustainable way that guarantees a just and prosperous present and future for all of us.

Stark choice facing RCongo’s displaced

HERITIER BARAKA MUNYAMPFURA

When fighting broke out near his home in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Furaha Nyimutozo fled for his life. Now, weeks later, he says he has a bleak choice: “starving to death or going back to our fields to harvest the food and risk getting shot at by the rebels.”

Nyimutozo is one of hundreds of thousands of people whose lives have been turned upside down since a long-dormant armed group called the M23 resumed fighting last year.

Its campaign has triggered both a humanitarian crisis and a tense political showdown. The DRC accuses its Rwanda of abetting the militia — an allegation that Kigali denies.

According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, 200,000 people have fled their homes. Most of the displaced live with families who have taken them in, said Blaise Ngoy, the UNHCR spokesman in North Kivu district, which borders Rwanda and Uganda. The agency itself was taking care of another 4,000 families, he added.

The UN’s humanitarian aid coordinating agency, OCHA, had already recorded 900,000 internally displaced people in the DRC up to the end of June.

Thousands have found a haven at the Rugabo sports stadium in Rutshuru. Huge white tents bearing the UNCHR blue letters are set out inside the venue, which in better times hosted football matches.

Now, 1,500 families are housed there, in tents that each take in more than 40 families — a unit that means two parents and four children on average.

The stench of woodsmoke from cooking is heavy in the air. Feeding the people is no easy task, said Pierre Atchom, the agency’s head in Goma. He said the agency needed \$225 million to handle the deep and wide-ranging crisis in eastern DRC.

“To date, we have 43 million. The needs are enormous,” he said, adding with regret that the situation failed to get the media attention of the Ukraine war.

If the agency was forced to pull out of the region, the consequences would be disastrous, said Atchom.

Families at the site said they were struggling to make ends meet with what the UNHCR was able to provide.

But they shuddered at what would happen if the agency had to withdraw.

“If you have a family, it’s a real struggle,” said Julienne Nyiramana, a mother of four. —AFP

75 years later, the fading ghosts of India’s partition

MUJIB MASHAL, HARI KUMAR AND ZIA UR REHMAN

For seven decades, Sudarshana Rani has ached to learn her younger brother’s fate. She was just a child when the aftermath that surrounded Britain’s 1947 Partition of India wiped out nearly her entire extended family. But in the paddy fields that became execution grounds, there was one body she did not find: that of her 5-year-old brother, Mulk Raj.

Rani, an older brother were sheltered by a classmate’s family before they abandoned their home near Lahore, which became part of the new nation of Pakistan. In India, they built anew. The brother, Piara Lal Duggal, retired as a senior officer in India’s state bank. Rani raised children who are now doctors and bankers.

Yet, her mind remained with the brother left behind. Had Mulk Raj made a run for it and survived? She has imagined him searching for her; she saw him everywhere and in everything. Even a family movie outing a few years ago became part of her long, quiet search.

“I thought maybe this is my brother — they made the film about him,” she said about the 2013 biopic of Milkha Singh, a star sprinter who had overcome his own family’s massacre. “I walked around the field, I saw everyone — not him,” she said of that long-ago day in the rice paddies. “Maybe he told his story.”

Survivors of Partition, now in their twilight, have often been reluctant to share their stories with their children, author Aanchal Malhotra writes in her book “In the Language of Remembering.” Many, including Malhotra’s own grandmother, have carried their trauma quietly, alone.

“We never wanted to burden them with our memories,” the grandmother tells Malhotra in her book. “We wanted the sadness to end with us.”

Some survivors have managed to return for a pilgrimage to a lost home.



Indian Border Security Force (BSF) soldiers and Pakistani Rangers take part in the Beating the Retreat ceremony at the India-Pakistan Wagah border post, about 35 km from Amritsar. — AFP

Others, such as the Duggals, have searched for answers.

Piara Lal Duggal, who along with his sister was the only known survivor of the massacre in the paddy fields, was able to find Muhammad Anwar, the classmate who had helped shelter them from the mobs. For decades, the two wrote to each other.

In one letter, Anwar wrote that he had started a fish farm near Lahore and that the fish were growing to “2kg each.” He told Duggal that he went to a shrine every Thursday to light a candle and pray “to reconnect me to my friend.”

In a letter that the Anwar family still keeps, Duggal responded: “My piece-of-heart of a friend, my brother Muhammad Anwar,” adding, “The old thoughts of you and your family have been refreshed in my heart. Sometimes, I can’t even sleep at night.”

The Attari-Wagah border is largely sealed, with just a handful of visa holders crossing each day on foot. But every evening, the border gate opens for a pomp-filled flag-lowering ceremony, as each side turns into a little arena packed with spectators.

“Hot popcorn, hot popcorn!,” one of the many vendors shouted as families

filed in to take their seats one recent evening.

Bollywood songs blared from loudspeakers on the Indian side, as people waved flags and danced. During the military marches, tall officers from both sides competed to see who could kick higher, who had a more impressive mustache to twist and who could scream with the most intimidation.

As the sun set, the crowds went quiet during the lowering of the two flags. “Long live India,” roared those on one side of the fence, while those on the other shouted, “Long live Pakistan.”

In the recollection of the Duggal siblings — the brother is now 86 and the sister 83 — their family were wealthy landowners in a village near Lahore. During the height of the violence, a group of men arrived at the house and led them to the paddy fields.

“My father was bathing us. The younger brother was 5 days old,” Rani recalled.

“He didn’t even have a name yet.” Duggal, 11 at the time, managed to flee after a blow to the side of his head that has left a bald patch to this day. Rani passed out, unconscious.

— New York Times

Having the courage to move ahead



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it is the the courage to continue that counts,” said Winston Churchill. Some people you could say are born with comfort and others are born with a road map to reach success and others are meant to find their way on their own to make life meaningful. When can we call someone successful? Most of us would declare

a person successful analysing their materialistic wealth or the individuals who have titles. But then what do we know about their internal struggles or their outlook in life and professional path where other people suffer due to their authoritative manner or insecurities? It could lead people to move away from them. The out come could be loneliness.

They do say that it is lonely up there when you are successful. One might face the competition, that could be threatening not just for their ideas but even mental health.

Renowned American professional boxer, Muhammad Ali, has a quote, “I hated every minute of training but I said, don’t quit. Suffer now and live rest of your life as a champion.” The beauty is he did it and everyone till today remembers him as a champion.

How often do we talk to ourselves? At times we do not even dare to confide in ourselves let alone have an open conversation with others. There are of course valid reasons such as the question on whom to trust, privacy and the fear of being judged and the worry if someone would take advantage of their circumstances. On the other hand bottling it will be so stifling that it is unfair for anyone to suffer silently.

PROBLEMS APPEAR TO GO AND WE NEED PATIENCE TO SURVIVE UNTIL IT CHANGES. BUT IF THEY ARE PROBLEMS AS A RESULT OF OUR ACTIONS THEN THERE ARE SO MANY ASPECTS TO LEARN FROM

All of those concerns can be used against an individual. One’s problems can be weaknesses that can be used against an individual if the information falls into the wrong hands. In other words could your pain be someone else’s advantage? And in reality is there ever a secret?

A wise person once shared a bit of wisdom with me - when you share your problems one has to remember that majority of them would use it as information. The reality is most of the people would talk about it to others if not use it for gossiping, and others might laugh at the situation, but there would be hardly few who would actually have empathy towards the suffering one.

Human being is inquisitive by nature, and although social we can be selfish too. This is because somewhere along we have become competitive probably has to do with the concept of survival of the fittest. A society has to bring out the best in its people.

Problems appear to go and we need patience to survive until it changes. But if they are problems as a result of our actions then there are so many aspects to learn from. Instead of going down the depression lane we need to work on mental fitness to bounce back. It so happens that there is nothing much we can do about the past and we know not much about the future. That is why we must invest on today with best of thoughts and energy. The very nature of future is unpredictability and that uncertainty can lead to stress. That, however, cannot stop us from being ambitious and hope for the future because this is what generates the inspiration we need. Life can only move forward when there is hope and inspiration.

The world, thankfully, is still with people who find satisfaction in supporting others in a sustainable way. As the saying goes give a fish to a man and you feed him for a day, teach a man to fish and you feed him for a life time. Each individual is talented in one way or the other. What is required the most in today’s world is the ability to learn and develop skills. And the fact is no time can be wasted in this regard so invest in your talent develop skills and prioritise your objectives and life could be one exciting journey! Be there for others and life becomes satisfying! So we must have the courage to learn, change and advance forward.



AFTER RAINS!

A photograph shows at sunset after rains the bay of Villefranche-sur-Mer, France, on Monday.
– AFP

Afghan staring at the abyss



Brahma Chellaney

The author is Professor of Strategic Studies at the New Delhi-based Center for Policy Research and Fellow at the Robert Bosch Academy in Berlin, is the author of Water, Peace, and War: Confronting the Global Water Crisis

In the year since the United States’ disgraceful abandonment of Afghanistan to the Taliban, the country has gone down precisely the path any logical observer would have predicted: a medieval, terrorist-sheltering country has been established. The US will incur costs for betraying its Afghan allies for a long time to come. But nobody will pay a higher price than Afghans.

The geopolitical fallout of America’s humiliating retreat from Afghanistan – after President Joe Biden followed through on the withdrawal commitment of his predecessor, Donald Trump – is still growing. By exposing the US as a power in decline, the withdrawal gave a huge boost to militants everywhere, while emboldening others. It is no coincidence that, not long after the fall of Kabul, Russia began massing forces along Ukraine’s borders.

But things are much worse in Afghanistan. Women and girls have lost their rights to employment and education, with many girls subjected to slavery through forced marriages to Taliban fighters. Taliban death squads have been systematically identifying and murdering those who cooperated with US forces. Torture and execution have become commonplace. Afghanistan’s Hindus and Sikhs have been fleeing to India to avoid slaughter.

The regime’s cabinet is a veritable who’s who of international terrorists and narcotics kingpins. Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is responsible for Afghanistan’s internal security and preventing the country from becoming a safe haven for international terrorists, is the leader of the ruthless Haqqani network. The US has designated him a “global terrorist” and placed a \$10 million bounty on his head. Not surprisingly, the Taliban continues to shelter known terrorists, as the recent Biden-ordered assassination of Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri in central Kabul showed. While Biden was quick to take a victory lap after Al Zawahiri’s killing, the assassination hardly reflects well on him. A year ago, when ordering US troops to beat a hasty retreat, he claimed that the US no longer had any interest in Afghanistan, because Al Qaeda was already “gone.” (No matter that, just weeks earlier, a United Nations Security Council report had shown that Al Qaeda militants were fighting alongside their Taliban associates.)

Compounding the danger to Afghanistan and its neighbours, the US left behind \$7.1 billion worth of weapons in its chaotic withdrawal from the country. According to a recent Pentagon report, the US has no plans to retrieve or destroy the equipment, despite recognising that the Taliban has already “repaired some damaged Afghan Air Force aircraft and made incremental gains in its capability

THE TALIBAN REGIME IS BEHAVING AS EXPECTED, TURNING THE COUNTRY INTO A BREEDING GROUND FOR INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM, NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, AND MASS MIGRATION. THERE IS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR ATTEMPTS BY US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN’S ADMINISTRATION TO ENGAGE WITH IT

to employ these aircraft in operations.”

In short, Biden’s decision to overrule his generals and withdraw from Afghanistan — a month before his own target date of September 11 — has created a security and humanitarian nightmare. And Biden is nowhere near finished making foreign-policy blunders in Afghanistan.

After Kabul’s fall, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken declared that the US would judge its future engagement with the Taliban-led government based on “one simple proposition”: whether it helps the US advance its interests, including “seeing that women’s rights are upheld,” delivering humanitarian assistance, and pursuing counterterrorism. But even though the Taliban has failed on all three counts, the Biden administration is gradually easing sanctions on the regime.

At the UN, the US spearheaded a resolution providing for a humanitarian exemption to the sanctions imposed on Afghanistan. The US Treasury Department’s General Licenses, aimed at facilitating the provision of humanitarian relief, now allow financial transactions involving the Taliban and the Haqqani network. And the US is currently negotiating with the Taliban over the

release of \$3.5 billion of Afghan central-bank reserves.

Meanwhile, the US refuses to target Haqqani or other leading terrorists in Kabul. Yes, Al Zawahiri was assassinated, but, contrary to the Biden administration’s narrative, he was not all that influential. He was largely retired, living with members of his extended family in a Kabul house under Haqqani’s protection.

What’s next? Will the US now reward Pakistan — one of America’s 18 “major non-Nato allies” — for opening its airspace to the drone that killed Al Zawahiri?

Likewise, will the US now continue to pursue the release of Afghanistan’s central-bank reserves to the Taliban, despite its indisputable harboring of terrorists and establishment of an oppressive and violent IS? The Biden administration defends its engagement with the Taliban by speciously contending that the top terrorist threat in Afghanistan is the IS-Khorasan. But IS-K has relatively few members, no state sponsor or Afghan allies, and controls no territory.

The Biden administration seems committed to striking a kind of Faustian bargain with the Taliban. But to what end? The Taliban’s political power and ideology make it a critical link in the international terror movement. And its rule is threatening to turn Afghanistan into a breeding ground for international terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and mass migration. There is no justification for engaging with it.

Through its precipitous and bungling withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Biden administration handed the group worldwide their greatest victory. But the war in Afghanistan is hardly over. As the Taliban’s self-styled emir, Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, recently declared, “This war never ends, and it will continue till judgment day.”

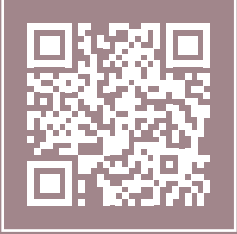
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A Taliban fighter stands guard at a checkpoint in Herat on Monday. – AFP

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REAL BEGIN TITLE DEFENCE WITH WIN

Real Madrid's Austrian defender David Alaba (L) celebrates scoring this team's second goal against UD Almeria in Almeria. — AFP

MADRID: David Alaba scored with a stunning free-kick immediately after coming on as a substitute as reigning champions Real Madrid came from behind to beat Almeria 2-1 in their opening game of the season in La Liga on Sunday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side trailed to an early goal by Largie Ramazani away against their promoted opponents, but Lucas Vazquez equalised just after the hour mark.

The winner arrived with 15 minutes remaining at Almeria's Power Horse Stadium, as Alaba strode onto the pitch and curled a free-kick in off the upright after Luka Modric had been fouled just outside the box.

Real were made to work hard for the points against an Almeria side who won last season's second-tier title to return to La Liga after a seven-year absence.

"We had lots of shots on goal but once we got the first goal it made things much easier for us," said Ancelotti.

"I am happy with the way the game went. We were not spectacular but there were lots of things to take into account, like the game on Wednesday and the heat."

At one point it looked like Madrid might suffer a defeat in their opening league game of the season for the first time since 2008, with Ancelotti's decision to

rotate his squad not initially paying off.

The Italian had made five changes to the line-up that started in Wednesday's 2-0 win over Eintracht Frankfurt in the Uefa Super Cup in Helsinki, when goals by Alaba and Karim Benzema gave the defending European champions the first silverware of the campaign.

Alaba and Modric were among the players dropped to the bench, while close-season signings Antonio Rudiger and Aurelien Tchouameni were handed first competitive starts for their new club.

RUDIGER CAUGHT OUT

Yet the game was just six minutes old when former Chelsea defender Rudiger was caught out by a ball over the top and Ramazani ran through to beat Thibaut Courtois.

Ramazani, the 21-year-old Belgian winger who used to be on the books at Manchester United, ran off to celebrate in acrobatic fashion as Saudi-owned Almeria enjoyed a dream start to their top-flight comeback. Yet the hosts needed some inspired goalkeeping from Fernando Martinez to keep them ahead into half-time, with the standout save coming low to his left to deny Rudiger five minutes before the break.

Vazquez then had the ball in the net in the 43rd minute only to be denied by a very tight offside call, but the full-back was the man who dragged the away side back level in the 61st minute as he pounced on a loose ball in the area to score.

Almeria, who had already seen a hanging Vinicius cross strike the frame of their goal on its way behind before that, soon conceded again.

When Modric was fouled just outside the box by Rodrigo Ely, Austrian defender Alaba was waiting on the sideline for the chance to come on.

The break in play allowed him to replace Ferland Mendy, and he came straight on to take the free-kick and score in stunning fashion to complete the latest comeback from Ancelotti's team.

Earlier, Japan star Takefusa Kubo marked his Real Sociedad debut by scoring the only goal in a 1-0 win at Cadiz.

Kubo, 21, moved to San Sebastian last month on a five-year deal from Real Madrid, after never managing to break into the first team at the Santiago Bernabeu. Signed by Madrid from FC Tokyo as an 18-year-old in 2019, he was farmed out on loan to Mallorca, Villarreal and then

Real Sociedad's Japanese forward Takefusa Kubo celebrates scoring against Cadiz. — AFP

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS

On Sunday
Cadiz 0 Real Sociedad 1 (Kubo 24)
Valencia 1 (Soler 45+1-pen) Girona 0
Almeria 1 (Ramazani 6) Real Madrid 2 (Vazquez 61, Alaba 75)

On Saturday
Celta Vigo 2 (Aspas 45+2, Paciencia 63)
Espanyol 2 (Exposito 72, Joselu 90+7-pen)
Real Valladolid 0 Villarreal 3 (Jackson 49, Baena 81, 90)
Barcelona 0 Rayo Vallecano 0

On Friday
Osasuna 2 (Avila 9, Oroz 74-pen) Sevilla 1 (Mir 11)

Getafe, before returning to Mallorca last season. Carlos Soler's penalty gave Valencia a 1-0 win over promoted Girona in their first La Liga outing under new coach Gennaro Gattuso.

Valencia held on after having Swiss defender Eray Comert send off early in the second half.

Barcelona were held to a 0-0 draw by Rayo Vallecano in their opening game at the Camp Nou on Saturday.

Atletico Madrid begin their campaign away at Getafe in one of three matches to be played on Monday. — AFP



Poland's Aleksandra Lisowska crosses the finish line to win the women's marathon during the European Athletics Championships in Munich, southern Germany. — AFP

LISOWSKA, RINGER CLAIM EURO MARATHON GOLD

HUNGARY'S MILAK CLAIMS MEN'S 100M BUTTERFLY GOLD

MUNICH, Germany: Poland's Aleksandra Lisowska claimed the first title at the European championships, winning the women's marathon on the streets of Munich on Monday.

The 31-year-old Pole clocked 2hr 28min 36sec, Croatia's Matea Parlov Kostro taking silver, at 7sec, with Nienke Brinkman of the Netherlands claiming bronze, a further 10sec adrift.

The men's marathon title went the way of host nation Germany as Richard Ringer produced an extraordinarily well-judged final burst past Ethiopian-born Israeli Maru Teferi for gold.

Ringer dug deep in front of thousands of onlookers to time 2:10.21, with Teferi taking silver, 2sec behind, and another Ethiopian-born Israeli, Gashau Ayale, claiming bronze a further 6sec adrift.

The opening day of the athletics championships had opened in dramatic style as world decathlon champion Kevin Mayer's bid for a first European title came to a shuddering halt as he pulled up in the opening 100m.

World record holder Mayer, twice world champion and a two-time Olympic silver medalist, had



Germany's Richard Ringer celebrates after winning the men's marathon. — AFP

warned that he would withdraw from the gruelling two-day event should he feel even the slightest pain. And so it proved as the Frenchman took the foot off the pedal after 70 metres of the 100m, the first of 10 events at Munich's Olympic Stadium.

"I did a decathlon three weeks ago," he said in reference to his world title-winning effort in Eugene, Oregon, dubbing his bid to add the continental title to his haul as a "mission impossible".

"I pulled up before injury. I had a hundredth of a second to decide: carry on and I injure myself, or I stop. It's very hard.

"I gave myself every chance to

have a great time again because, regardless of the fears and stress it could generate, on the track I have so much fun!

"I wanted to give myself a chance to get there, I didn't succeed, it doesn't matter: I'm world champion, my season has been a success, which was unexpected given my injuries."

The evening session at the Olympic Stadium sees medals up for grabs in both the men and women's shot put, as well as the women's 10,000m.

MILAK PIPS PONTI

Hungary's Kristof Milak won the men's 100m butterfly in 50.33 seconds at the European

Championships in Rome on Sunday.

The 22-year-old Olympic silver medalist pipped Switzerland's Noe Ponti in second place with Poland's Jakub Majerski in third.

Milak was in line to beat his own continental record of 49.68sec at the halfway stage before slowing down in the final 50m in the open-air pool at the Foro Italico complex.

"I wanted to win this, but with a better time. I always want to go under 50sec which I was unable to do today," Milak said.

"I want to improve all the time, I want to do 49s all the time," he added.

Elsewhere, France's Analia Pigree claimed the women's 50m backstroke in 27.27sec, almost 0.30sec slower than the world record with Italy's Silvia Scalia in second and the Netherlands' Maaïke de Waard taking bronze.

"I'm totally happy, I'm in shock," 21-year-old Pigree said.

Britain's James Wilby claimed gold in the men's 200m breaststroke after starting in lane number eight in 2min 08.96s with Finland's Matti Mattson in second and home favourite Luca Pizzini in third. — AFP

Windies hand NZ first limited-overs loss of 2022

KINGSTON, Jamaica: West Indies handed New Zealand their first limited-overs defeat of the year in cruising to a consolation eight-wicket win in the third and final T20 International at Sabina Park on Sunday.

Odean Smith improved on his career-best T20I bowling figures for the third time in four matches as the fast bowling all-rounder claimed three for 29.

That helped limit the Black Caps to 145 for seven after captain Kane Williamson chose to bat first.

New Zealand had already wrapped up the series by margins of 13 and 90 runs in the first two matches.

West Indies' platform for the comfortable win was established by openers Shamarh Brooks (56 not out) and Brandon King (53) in a 102-run opening stand.

"This was special, being able to give this performance at home," said King on receiving the man of the match award for his 35-ball innings.

"My job is the same no matter what total we are chasing, which is to get the team off to a good start."

Leading the side in the absence of regular captain Nicholas

Pooran, Rovman Powell sealed victory in style off the last ball of the 19th over as the home side reached 150 for two.

New Zealand struggled to establish any sort of batting momentum although Glen Phillips was again in prime form, top-scoring with 41 off 26 balls before falling to Smith at the start of the 17th over.

"West Indies adapted to the conditions nicely and we just couldn't open up an end with the ball," Williamson conceded.

"Our focus is to achieve consistency in our performances."

Left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein, rested from the first two matches of the series, claimed two for 28.

He claimed the first wicket of the match when he bowled Martin Guptill in the third over.

This was a disappointing series for the veteran opener but with Sunday's score of 15 he at least had the satisfaction of raising his overall T20I run tally to 3,497, ten more than India captain Rohit Sharma as the top run-getter in all T20I cricket.

The two teams now play a three-match One-Day International series beginning on Wednesday in Barbados. — AFP



Shamarh Brooks (R) and Brandon King (L) of the West Indies run between the wickets during the third and final T20I match between West Indies and New Zealand at Sabina Park in Kingston, Jamaica. — AFP

UAE T20 league hopes to minimise schedule clashes

NEW DELHI: Organisers of a new Twenty20 league in the United Arab Emirates are working with their counterparts in Australia and South Africa to minimise the impact of scheduling clashes with their competitions, a top official has told Reuters.

The International League T20 (ILT20), which launches in January, will be the second most lucrative Twenty20 tournament after the trend-setting Indian Premier League (IPL) in terms of player remuneration.

The inaugural edition of the six-team competition, however, coincides with another new Twenty20 league in South Africa, Cricket Australia (CA)'s Big Bash League and the Bangladesh Premier League.

Mubashshir Usmani, general secretary of the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB), said the January 6 to February 12 window for the



tournament had been selected because it presented "optimal playing conditions in the UAE".

"While this window suits our purpose, we are closely working

with different boards towards minimising date clashes," he added. The money on offer at ILT20 has caused some consternation in Australia.

It has prompted Cricket Australia (CA) to enter negotiation with its top players to retain them for the Big Bash League, which is scheduled to run between

December 13 and February 12.

Media reports in Australia said CA might block Chris Lynn, who was among the first of list of marquee names released by ILT20 last week, from joining the league by denying the big-hitting batsman the necessary clearance.

"We are working with Cricket Australia, in fact we are in touch with all the relevant cricket boards, to minimise any major clashes," Usmani said.

"We do want Australian as well as any other available players to be involved with the league."

Among the other marquee players announced by the ILT20 were England internationals Moeen Ali, Dawid Malan and Chris Jordan as well as West Indies all-rounder Andre Russell and Afghan bowler Mujeeb Ur Rahman.

Usmani said the franchises had been empowered to sign overseas players directly, although the ECB

were ready to help.

"Our team has been working alongside players, players' agents and various boards to seek and secure the necessary approvals for those identified to participate in the league's inaugural edition," he said.

Although the franchises are likely to be mostly made up of players from outside the Emirates, two local players must feature in every starting team.

Usmani said ILT20 was "special" as it afforded players from the UAE, and other associate nations, "an incomparable experience" of sharing the dressing room with top players in "one of the most attractive destinations in the world".

The owners of the Mumbai Indians, Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals teams in the IPL have purchased ILT20 franchises.

— Reuters

Former Oman skipper Kanu returns to Al Oruba

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

The Al Oruba football club announced on Monday that Oman's former national team player Ahmed Mubarak 'Kanu' has signed a contract with the club to represent the team during the new season 2022-2023.

The experienced midfielder is back to home as he started his

football career from Al Oruba at the junior teams moving to the senior team. Kano, who hails originally from Sur, has assisted the Sur-based team in snatching the 2014-2015 top-tier league title and HM Football Cup championship as they defeated neighbours Sur 2-0 in the final clash.

The forthcoming season will be the second successive year for



Ahmed Kanu

the Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the 23rd edition of the Gulf Cup in Kuwait, in the domestic top tier league as he played for Al Suwaiq FC during the previous season.

In his latest tweets from his personal twitter account, Kanu thanked Al Suwaiq club's chairman, board members, coaching staff, players and the fans for their support during the

last season. It was an indication for leaving the north Batinah team and to begin his new journey with the Al Oruba team. Al New comers Al Oruba will open their Omantel League campaign on Thursday against Al Suwaiq at Sur Sports Complex.

Kanu had powered the national team in various accomplishments including his involvement in crowning the maiden Gulf Cup

win in 2009 in Muscat and then he was the captain when Oman won the second Gulf Cup in Kuwait in 2018.

The 37-year-old has served different teams during his career as he represented many Gulf teams including Saudi's Al Wehda, Al Ahli, Al Fateh, UAE's Al Ain, Qatar's Al Rayyan, Al Sailiya , Al Mesaimmer, Al Markhiya and Kuwait's Al Nasr.



Chelsea's Marc Cucurella reacts after having his hair pulled by Tottenham Hotspur's Cristian Romero. – Reuters

SPURS RESCUE POINT IN EXPLOSIVE LONDON DERBY

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, AUGUST 15

Tempers ran high and reached boiling point with managers of both teams being given marching orders at the end of a pulsating London derby from which Tottenham Hotspur managed a 2-2 draw against Chelsea. There was certainly no lack of entertainment in this enthralling match in which the refereeing was poor and Chelsea would be regarded as unfortunate not to emerge clear winners.

Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel attempted to play down the bad feeling between the managers: "We got involved because both of us were fighting for our teams. We did not insult each other, did not hit each other, didn't have a fist fight. So, it's not a big deal."

On pulling Antonio Conte towards his face during their frosty handshake, Tuchel said: "I thought



Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel and Tottenham Hotspur manager Antonio Conte clash after the match. – Reuters

when you shake hands you look into each other's eyes. Antonio had a different opinion. We're emotional coaches and that's it. It got a bit heated. There are no hard feelings. It was a fair tackle from him and a fair tackle from me."

"I'm surprised we both got a red card. It was not necessary but a lot of things were not necessary and another poor decision from the ref today. I'm sorry but sometimes a match gets you totally. This match sucked me in," he added.

Chelsea dominated the play throughout the first half and opened the scoring in the 19th minute when new signing, Kalidou Koulibaly struck a firm right-foot volley from a corner. But mid-way in the second half, the visitors equalised. Kai Harertz was tripped by Rodrigo Bentancur, which the referee ignored and after Jorginho lost possession. Son Heung-Min eventually passed to Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg whose low shot beat Edouard Mendy and Conte celebrated encroaching into the Chelsea area.

Chelsea's lead was restored in the 77th minute with Reece James unmarked on the right, ramming in a shot after receiving a pass from Raheem Sterling. This time Conte was irked by the fired-up Tuchel's celebration as he sprinted down the touch line and directly in front of Conte.

Finally, in the 6th (last) minute of stoppage time, Spurs won a

corner and as the ball came over, Cristian Romero pulled the long hair of Marc Cucurella – which the referee missed again – hindering him from going for the ball, and Harry Kane was able to score with a glancing header to draw level.

At this point matters erupted with the managers, players, officials all getting involved. At the handshake bust-up Tuchel gripped Conte's hand and wouldn't let go while Conte attempted just a cursory touch of hands. The two managers were eventually separated as astonished spectators had witnessed quite a spectacle.

Conte said: "The referee showed me the red card but he didn't understand the dynamic of what happened, but it's ok I have to accept. For sure I'm not passive. If I see aggression, then my answer is aggressive, but this is not a problem. Next time we will pay more attention and not shake hands."

Halep holds off Haddad Maia to grab Canadian crown

TORONTO: Simona Halep kept control against unpredictable Beatriz Haddad Maia on Sunday, beating the Brazilian 6-3, 2-6, 6-3 to win a third WTA Masters 1000 title in Canada.

The former world number one from Romania added the trophy in Toronto to those she captured in Montreal in 2016 and 2018.

She needed two and a quarter hours to deny the South American left-hander the upset victory.

"Here there are many Romanians and they always come to support me. I'm really happy that I could win also here," said Halep, who was backed by chants of "Simona!" from her vocal fans throughout the match.

She shrugged off nine double-faults and broke Haddad Maia five times from 10 chances as she became the third player with at least nine WTA 1000 titles, after Serena Williams (13) and Victoria Azarenka (10).

Halep, who was playing in her ninth final at the elite level as Haddad Maia tackled her first, won her 38th match of the season and claimed her biggest success since the Rome trophy in May, 2020.

After a year outside of the world's top-10 she is projected to rise to sixth this week with the start of the US Open approaching on August 29.

"I was there for many years but now I feel like it's a big deal to be back in top 10," she said. "I'm really happy with this performance."

Haddad Maia, enjoying a breakout season that included grasscourt titles at Birmingham and Nottingham in June, had toppled world number one Iga Swiatek on her way to the final.

Haddad Maia said she was at times overwhelmed by the occasion. — AFP



Simona Halep of Romania poses with the National Bank Open trophy after defeating Beatriz Haddad Maia. – USA Today Sports



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Salalah Port cargo volumes perk up in H1

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

Publicly listed firm Salalah Port Services, which operates the Port of Salalah overlooking the Indian Ocean, has reported positive growth in volumes handled at its Container and General Cargo Terminals during the first half of this year.

The Container Terminal (CT) handled 2.241 million TEUs of containers in H1 2022, compared to 2.142 million TEUs in the corresponding period of last year, an increase of 4.6 per cent. The General Cargo Terminal has handled 8.896 billion tonnes of general commodities during H1, 2022, as compared to 8.798 million tonnes in H1 2021, a marginal increase of 1.1 per cent.

The major commodities handled are limestone, gypsum, methanol, and cement, which are exported from Salalah to nearby markets, and continue to drive the general cargo business, said Braik Musallam al Amri, Chairman, Salalah Port Services Co SAOG.

Commenting on the port's financial performance, Al Amri noted that consolidated net profit for H1, 2022 was recorded at RO 1.418 million, as compared to the corresponding period last year at profit of RO 2.619 million. Consolidated EBITDA was recorded at RO 6.598 million



during H1, 2022, as compared to RO 8.252 million during same period last year.

Total revenue from operations increased by 7 per cent to RO 35.111 million, while net profit after tax declined to 1.418 million this year, down from RO 2.619 million in H1 2021.

Direct Operating cost increased by 14 per cent as compared to corresponding period last year mainly due to increase in Staff cost, Marine cost and Fuel cost.

The Chairman noted that containerised exports are expected to grow in line with the growth witnessed in first half of 2022. Imports however are unlikely to recover from decline seen in the first half due to the current global economic situation.

“The freight rates are unlikely to soften further in the second half and the schedule reliability to remain low without any significant change from the first half. The management continues to pursue new opportunities to further enhance volumes,” he stated.

Oman Fisheries set to kick off commercial fishing operations

Key deal: Agreement with Irish firm Atlantic Dawn set to be activated

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

Oman Fisheries Company (OFC), a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), says it is gearing up to commence commercial fishing operations in Omani waters in cooperation with Irish fishing firm Atlantic Dawn.

OFC's Chairman said in the Directors' Report of the company's first half performance that commercial fishing will kick off in the current third quarter of this year.

The announcement comes just three months after OFC, a publicly listed fisheries group, signed a commercial fishing agreement with Atlantic Dawn for the utilisation of its fishing vessels in the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement enables the Irish firm to utilise the fishing quotas granted by the Omani Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The partnership will help Oman Fisheries secure



(Image for illustration only)

sustainable supplies, in addition to enhancing export operations. Under the deal, Atlantic Dawn will bring a small pelagic fishing vessel targeting 30,000 metric tonnes of small pelagics that, if achieved, will result in boosting Oman Fisheries' financial performance and margins.

Atlantic Dawn Group, one of Europe's largest producers of frozen pelagic fish, operates a vertically integrated business. Accordingly, it is engaged in

every link in the chain from first catch to final customer. The company operates across multiple territories and seas to supply a global market, utilising a modern fleet of fishing vessels.

In other highlights of the first half of the year, Oman Fisheries announced it procured a total of 14,252 tonnes from artisanal fishermen and other sources as compared with 13,213 tonnes for the same period from last year.

Export sales represented 85

per cent of the total sales, with local sales accounting for the remaining 15 per cent.

Oman Fisheries group achieved a consolidated turnover of RO 7.695 million from operations during the first half of 2022, which was 36 per cent higher than the corresponding figure for H1 2021. The group made a net profit of RO 2.349 million this year versus a net loss of RO 730K for the same period in 2021.

Subsidy to Oman's power sector slides 7.5% to RO 569m

INTEGRATED SERVICES:
Newly restructured water and wastewater sector, now part of Nama Group, received subsidy of RO 136m last year

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 15

Electricity supplies to predominantly residential customers in the Sultanate of Oman were subsidised to the tune of RO 568.64 million last year, according to Nama Group, the state-owned grouping of power, water and wastewater service providers.

The amount was lower by 7.5 per cent compared with the previous year's figure of RO 614.98 million – a reflection of subsidy reform under way in the power and water sector.

Government grants to the sector are expected to be completely phased out in line with fiscal reforms initiated in 2020 under the Medium Term Fiscal Plan.



It stipulates a complete rollback of all power and water subsidy to all categories of consumers over a four-year timeframe spanning the 2021 – 2024 period.

Under this programme, expatriate residential customers have been charged subsidy-free cost-reflective tariffs for their

electricity consumption. For citizens, however, the subsidy is being progressively reduced on an annual basis before it is completely phased out by 2024.

However, citizens in low-income groups will remain covered by a safety net. Significantly, the water and wastewater sector, which was

incorporated into Nama Group last year, received a subsidy of around RO 136.355 million last year, down from RO 198.437 million in 2020.

Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), the product of a merger between the Public Authority for Water (Diam) and Haya Water, was brought

GOVERNMENT GRANTS TO THE SECTOR ARE EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETELY PHASED OUT IN LINE WITH FISCAL REFORMS INITIATED IN 2020 UNDER THE MEDIUM TERM FISCAL PLAN.

under the umbrella of Nama Group following the restructuring of the country's water and wastewater services sector.

Notably, government subsidy accounted for a sizable chunk of total revenues generated by Nama Group subsidiaries in 2021. It accounted for 49 per cent of total revenue of RO 1.412 billion earned by the Group last year. In comparison, the subsidy accounted for a 41.8 per cent share of the group's total revenue of RO 1.330 billion in 2020.

The subsidy paid by the government per unit of electricity supplied last year declined to RO 15.9 per Megawatt-hour (MWh), down from RO 18.6 per MWh in

2020. On average, every customer earned a subsidy of RO 418 in 2021, which was around 10.5 per cent lower than the corresponding figure of RO 467 per customer in 2020.

Of the five electricity distribution companies that received subsidy last year, the biggest beneficiary was Mazoon Electricity Company (MZEC) with RO 204.922 million in government support.

Mazoon, with around 489,000 customers, is also the largest supplier based on its sizable customer base.

Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC), with around 427,000 customers, received RO 107.439 million in support last year, followed by Dhofar Integrated Services Company (around 272,000 customers) with RO 41.812 million. The Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer) received subsidy support of RO 106.062 million (around 46,500 customers). The remaining 19.06 per cent share of the total subsidy went to Majan Electricity Company (MJEC).

Bank Muscat wins Best Bank in Oman Award from Euromoney

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has been awarded the Best Bank in Oman award by Euromoney.

The award, which was presented to the Bank after a thorough evaluation based on a number of different criteria including the product mix, financial performance, asset and revenue quality, customer satisfaction, and digital offerings, adds to the list of accolades and achievements received by the Bank in 2022.

Award winners were chosen by the editors after extensive consultations with corporate financial executives and bankers, banking consultants and analysts across the world.

The recognition by Euromoney is the result of the bank's adoption of global best practices and its customer-centric approach in banking as it celebrates 40 years of success and achievements in the service of the Sultanate of Oman and its people.

It must be noted that Bank Muscat has won multiple awards



in the recent past from a number of prestigious international journals and publications. The awards criteria have included growth in assets, profitability, geographic reach, strategic relationships, new business development and innovation in products.

In 2022, Bank Muscat was ranked by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 100 Listed Companies in the Middle East for the second consecutive year.

Earlier in 2021, the bank was rated as one of the Top 50 Banks in the region by Forbes Middle East and also as the Best Trade Finance Provider in Oman by Global Finance.

Driven by robust policies to achieve global best practices, the bank always endeavours to participate in the development of Oman's banking sector. In particular, the bank's customer-centric vision is now reaping rich rewards in the form of rising Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and customer referrals.

Bank Muscat has also recently undergone a successful organisational restructuring by putting in place a vibrant and young Management Team in key positions, further motivating the leadership pipeline and

THE AWARD, WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO THE BANK AFTER A THOROUGH EVALUATION BASED ON A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CRITERIA INCLUDING THE PRODUCT MIX, FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE, ASSET AND REVENUE QUALITY, CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, AND DIGITAL OFFERINGS, ADDS TO THE LIST OF ACCOLADES AND ACHIEVEMENTS RECEIVED BY THE BANK IN 2022.

positioning it for its next stage of achievements and milestones.

The bank is the largest bank in Oman by total assets and has consistently demonstrated its leadership in position in Oman. Bank Muscat posted a net profit of RO 99.26 million for the six months ended 30 June 2022 compared to RO 94.65 million reported during the same period in 2021, an increase of 4.9 per cent.

Lexus Design Award 2023: Call for entries

MUSCAT: Lexus International has recently announced a call for entries for its distinguished Lexus Design Award 2023, an international design competition dedicated to empowering and encouraging the next generation of creators. Inaugurated in 2013, the award has given up-and-coming talents and innovators a global platform for exposure, discovery, and launch of countless impressive careers.

As the award continues to evolve, Lexus is aiming to enrich its platform for next-generation design talents by more broadly focusing on the creative growth of the individual. To achieve this goal, it embraces a new, streamlined form where four winners are now chosen to allow us to dive deeper into each winner's story, while also fostering rich dialogue amongst them and the industry luminaries who serve as members of the jury.

Mentorship remains core to the award, with winners being mentored by leading lights of the design world. Lexus is seeking innovative ideas that contribute to a thriving and prosperous future for all through the power of design and technology.

Applicants will explain how their creative concept puts into practice the Lexus brand's three key principles: Anticipate, Innovate and Captivate.

The design must anticipate global challenges to societies, envision inventive ways to reach a sustainable future, and seamlessly enhance the happiness of all.



Oman Arab Bank sponsors 3rd Little Tourist Forum

MUSCAT: In line with its sustainability strategy, Oman Arab Bank recently sponsored the third edition of the Little Tourist Forum. Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the two-week event took place from July 17 to 28 and included several workshops and activities related to tourism.

Designed to target the next generation of young Omanis, several interactive programmes, activities and field trips, focused on the tourism sector, were held this year. The forum aimed at equipping the participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in the tourism industry.

Moreover, it sought to



utilise children's free time during the summer holiday with valuable activities. Commenting on the initiative, Sulaiman bin Ali al Hinai, Head of Treasury, Investments & Government Relations Division said, "We are delighted to support the Little Tourism Forum.

There is no doubt that the forum will develop the skills of our talented young children in the tourism industry. This will enable them to serve as ambassadors for this vital sector, whose enormous potential for stimulating the economy is vital to the government."

"At Oman Arab Bank, we believe that public-private sector partnerships are

crucial for achieving national socioeconomic goals. Therefore, to maximise our positive impact, we will continue to support national initiatives as part of our sustainability strategy."

OAB's sustainability strategy was designed to strengthen the Bank's social impact within its three main strategic pillars: community partnerships, environmental responsibility and financial inclusion.

The strategy was developed to boost the Bank's social contribution in line with its business growth. The Bank will remain steadfast with its commitment towards delivering impactful initiatives over the years.

ahlibank celebrates Al Nukhba's 100m deposit portfolio

MUSCAT: ahlibank's resilient second quarter performance received a thumping response from branch managers at its recently concluded Retail Banking Meeting, held to review the Bank's retail performance and explore newer avenues to enhance customer experience.

With an impressive net profit of RO 15.8 million in the second quarter (an increase of 18.6 per cent over the same period last year), the meeting applauded the role played by each branch in bolstering the Bank's strong growth curve.

Attending branch managers also charted the successes over the course of 2022 to emerge as one of the most preferred banks in the country.

The meeting also celebrated Al Nukhba segment's achievement of 100 million in the deposit portfolio and highlighted the significance of upgraded e-channels in structuring its current and future

growth.

Commenting on the proceedings of the meeting, Muneer al Balushi, AGM – Head of Retail Distribution, ahlibank, said, "It is heartening to note that we have forged ahead in our mission to exceed our customers' expectations and deliver outstanding shareholder value, while ensuring all-round development of our staff.

This buoyant phase has been possible, thanks to the concerted efforts and dedication of our team members. In the coming months, we need to fortify our resources and grab the opportunities to grow manifold in the local and regional financial sector. This will be possible with the team spirit that we bring to the table and with our focused approach to customer-centric operations.

Our recent investments in high-tech digital products and fintech solutions have well demonstrated our intent to be



in the driving seat of customer service bandwagon, and to partner with the government in its economic development initiatives. We will continue this path diligently, serving the community we operate in."

While second quarter performance was the key feature of the meeting agenda, it also saw the management cadre discuss topics ranging from branch control and e-channel, Change management and customer experience to complaint-management and digital transformation and

marketing.

The latter has propelled ahlibank's strategic endeavour to integrate its growing footprints in the country. On the marketing front, the Bank has found a unique niche among the youth and the SME sector, which it has leveraged

with a portfolio of innovative products and services.

Participating branch managers also lent their expertise while discussing ways to enhance operations and effectively manage loan and credit risk and enhance customer experience. The interactive session was reflective of the Bank's vision to manage and sustain its progress with a team of responsive and responsible managers and professionals who are committed to meet and exceed the needs of its customers.

The meeting concluded with a celebration to mark Al Nukhba segment's 100 million deposit portfolio, and an award ceremony to commend individual efforts in shaping the Bank's success story.

ahlibank has cultivated and nurtured a culture of innovation, and the range of products and services it has implemented and upgraded over the years is a testimony of its pursuit of excellence.



China cuts key rates as economic data disappoints

BEIJING/SHANGHAI: China's central bank cut key lending rates in a surprise move on Monday to revive demand as data showed the economy unexpectedly slowing in July, with factory and retail activity squeezed by Beijing's zero-Covid policy and a property crisis.

The grim set of figures indicate the world's second largest economy is struggling to shake off the June quarter's hit to growth from strict Covid restrictions, prompting some economists to downgrade their projections.

Industrial output grew 3.8 per cent in July from a year earlier, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), below the 3.9 per cent expansion in June and a 4.6 per cent increase expected by analysts. Retail sales, which only just returned to growth in June, rose 2.7 per cent from a year ago, missing forecasts for 5.0 per cent growth and the 3.1 per cent growth seen in June.

"The July data suggest that the post-lockdown recovery lost steam as the one-off boost from reopening fizzled out and mortgage boycotts triggered a renewed deterioration in the property sector," said Julian Evans-Pritchard, senior China economist at Capital Economics.

"The People's Bank of China is already responding to these headwinds by stepping up support...But with credit growth proving less responsive to policy loosening than in the past, this probably won't be sufficient to prevent further economic weakness."



A worker welds a bicycle steel rim at a factory manufacturing sports equipment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. — Reuters

Local shares gave up earlier gains after the data while the yuan weakened to a one-week low against the dollar.

China's economy narrowly escaped a contraction in the June quarter, hobbled by the lockdown of the commercial hub of Shanghai, a deepening downturn in the property market and persistently soft consumer spending.

Risks still abound as many Chinese cities, including manufacturing hubs and popular tourist spots, imposed lockdown measures in July after fresh outbreaks of the more transmissible Omicron variant of the coronavirus were found.

The property sector, which has been further rocked by a mortgage boycott that weighed on buyer sentiment, deteriorated in July. Property investment tumbled 12.3 per cent last month, the fastest rate this year, while the drop in new sales deepened to 28.9 per cent.

Nie Wen, Shanghai-based economist at Hwabao Trust, lowered his forecast for the third-quarter gross domestic product growth by 1 percentage point to 4-4.5 per cent, after the weaker-than-expected data.

ING also cut their forecast for China's 2022 GDP growth to 4 per cent from 4.4 per cent previously, and warned a further downgrade

is possible, depending on the strength in exports.

To prop up growth, the central bank on Monday unexpectedly lowered interest rates on key lending facilities for the second time this year. Analysts expect the cut is likely to lead to a corresponding reduction in benchmark lending rates next week.

Many believe the room for the People's Bank of China to ease policy further could be limited by worries about capital outflows, as the US Federal Reserve, and other economies, aggressively raise interest rates to fight soaring inflation. — Reuters

Oil drops as China cuts rates, Iran talks in focus

LONDON: Oil prices fell by more than \$3 a barrel on Monday on concerns over demand in China, the world's largest crude importer, and ahead of Iran's response to a nuclear deal proposal which could raise the country's oil exports.

Brent crude futures fell \$3.49, or 3.56 per cent, to \$94.18 a barrel after settling 1.5 per cent lower on Friday. US West Texas Intermediate crude was down \$3.32, or 3.61 per cent at \$88.34, after a 2.4 per cent drop in the previous session.

China's economy unexpectedly slowed in July, while refinery output slipped to 12.53 million barrels per day, its lowest since March 2020, government data showed.

ING bank cut their forecast for China's 2022 GDP growth to 4 per cent from 4.4 percent previously. It warned a further downgrade is possible, depending on the strength in exports which are suffering from high inflation, ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, and unemployment growth in mainland China.



A man wearing a protective mask fills a car tank at a petrol station in Qatif city in Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Oil supply could rise if Iran and the United States accept an offer from the European Union to revive the 2015 nuclear deal, which would remove sanctions on Iranian oil exports, analysts said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Monday that Iran will respond to the EU's nuclear text later in the day, and that a deal can be concluded if the US agrees to three remaining issues.

"We will need more talks if Washington does not show flexibility for resolving of the remaining issues. Like Washington, we have our own plan B if the talks fail," Amirabdollahian said, according to Iran's Fars news agency. — Reuters

Wall Street revives Russian bond trading after US go-ahead



A man wears a protective mask as he walks on Wall Street in New York. — Reuters

NEW YORK: Several major Wall Street banks have begun offering to facilitate trades in Russian debt in recent days, according to bank documents, giving investors another chance to dispose of assets widely seen in the West as toxic.

Most US and European banks had pulled back from the market in June after the Treasury Department banned US investors from purchasing any Russian security as part of economic sanctions to punish Moscow for attacking Ukraine, according to an investor who holds Russian securities and two banking sources.

Following subsequent guidelines from the Treasury in July that allowed US holders to wind down their positions, the largest Wall Street firms have cautiously returned to the market for Russian government and corporate bonds, according to emails, client notes and other communications from six banks as well as interviews with the sources. — Reuters

Japan's economy stages modest bounce from Covid-induced slump

TOKYO: Japan's economy rebounded at a slower-than-expected pace in the second quarter from a Covid-induced slump, data showed on Monday, highlighting uncertainty on whether consumption will grow enough to bolster a much-delayed, fragile recovery.

A revival in Japan, like many other economies, has been hobbled by the Ukraine war and surging prices of commodities even as rising consumption propped up growth in April-June.

"Consumption and capital expenditure will continue to drive growth in July-September. But momentum may not be that strong as rising inflation is cooling household spending," said Atsushi Takeda, chief economist at Itochu Economic Research Institute.

"While domestic demand may continue to expand, falling exports could put a brake on Japan's recovery," he said. Indeed, Japan's outlook has been clouded by a resurgence in Covid infections, slowing global growth, supply constraints and rising raw material prices that are boosting households' living costs.

The world's third-largest economy expanded an annualised 2.2 per cent in April-June, government data showed, marking the third straight quarter of increase but falling short of median market forecasts for a 2.5 per cent gain. It followed a revised 0.1 per cent rise in gross domestic product (GDP) in January-March, when surging Covid cases hurt spending.



A vendor selling food wait for customers at the Ameyoko shopping district in Tokyo. — Reuters

The growth was driven largely by a 1.1 per cent gain in private consumption, as restaurants and hotels saw demand recover thanks to the lifting of pandemic-related curbs.

Capital expenditure, another key driver of April-June growth, increased 1.4 per cent from the previous quarter, exceeding a median market forecast for a 0.9 per cent expansion.

But the rise in second quarter consumption was smaller than market forecasts for a 1.3 per

cent increase, casting doubt on whether the rebound in household spending will have legs.

Some analysts say a resurgence in Covid infections, and recent price hikes for a wide range of daily goods, could discourage households from splurging on leisure and dine-outs.

Wage earners' remuneration during April-June, adjusted by inflation, fell 0.9 per cent from the previous quarter, a deeper drop than a 0.1 per cent fall in January-March in a sign rising living costs

were already hurting household income.

Heightening fears of a global slowdown, driven in part by a wave of monetary tightening by major central banks, have also darkened prospects for a sustained recovery in Japan's economy.

While domestic demand added 0.5 per cent point to April-June GDP, external demand neither added to, nor shaved off from growth in a sign of waning support from the once-strong export sector. — Reuters

Thailand GDP growth improves in second quarter

BANGKOK: Thailand's economic growth improved in the second quarter as the service sector gained momentum, resulting from the easing of pandemic related restrictions and stimulus measures implemented to support tourism, official data showed on Monday.

Gross domestic product grew 2.5 per cent from the last year, faster than the 2.3 per cent expansion seen a quarter ago, the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council said. This was weaker than the expected 3.1 per cent growth.

On a quarterly basis, economic growth eased to 0.7 per cent from 1.2 per cent in the first quarter. The rate was forecast to slow moderately to 0.9 per cent. The expenditure-side breakdown showed that private consumption growth advanced to 6.9 per cent from 3.5 per cent, driven by the strong growth in net services.

Meanwhile, growth in government spending decelerated to 2.4 per cent from 7.2 per cent. — dpa



Visitors take pictures of the gold plated stupa at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep Buddhist temple in Chiang Mai. — AFP

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#Living_with_COVID19

Reimagining the many uses of a date palm

Saeed bin Salem al Wardi is a young Omani who specialises in making different environmentally friendly heritage products from a date palm. Here's how he does it... **P20**

San Francisco metro system hires bird of prey to scare pigeons away

METRO SYSTEM riders in California's San Francisco Bay Area may have noticed a new station guard in recent months.

A 5-year-old Harris's hawk named Pac-Man has taken up the perch at El Cerrito del Norte station, where he's on the look out — not for fare evaders, but pigeons.

Ricky Ortiz, a falconer with Falcon Force and Pac-Man's handler, began patrolling with the bird at the station this summer, contracting with the Bay Area Rapid Transit system, or BART, to keep the pigeons at bay and protect commuters from pigeon poop.

The team patrols three days a

week, starting their day at the bottom level entrance before scoping out the platforms, scaring away any pigeons who are resting on a ledge or on the interior scaffolding of the station.

So far Ortiz has noticed a big difference.

"There was probably less than half of the pigeons here after the week of us flying," he said.

Ortiz tries to keep Pac-Man from feasting on the pigeons or local rodents, instead giving him snacks throughout the day to keep his feathery friend happy on the job.

So far, Pac-Man has been a hit with commuters.

Rider Bethany Campbell, 43, took a selfie with Ortiz and Pac-Man to send to her family.

"We have family back in the Midwest and the south and they think everything in the Bay Area is weird, so the idea of having birds here for bird eradication is just funny to them," Campbell said, adding that she was first scared when she saw the hawk but now thinks it's great.

"I switched cars because I wasn't going to be trapped in a metal box with a bird of prey."

— Reuters



READ

WE'LL ALWAYS HAVE SUMMER

BY JENNY HAN

A beach house, summer love and enduring friendships.



BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

Family members perform the Manene traditional rite, cleaning the relatives' preserved remains, in Lembang, which is held every three years in August and is said to bless the harvest of rice fields. — AFP



TRAVEL TALES

A shepherd milks a cow in the mountain pasture "Alpeccio Valanghe" in Marmora, Maira Valley, near Cuneo, Alps Region, Northwestern Italy. In the alps the less snowfall and the prolonged drought on mountains are causing problems to pastures with dry grass, insufficient water to produce electricity with small private power stations used by shepherds to illuminate the huts and produce cheese. — AFP





The best summer dinner is assembled, not cooked

Much of the so-called cooking I do in summer is just assembling. Slice up whatever produce is on hand, add something creamy or salty for texture and tang, then dress it all with olive oil and a handful of herbs. Total time spent: 20 minutes. Pleasure received: an entire evening's worth. Repeat for the whole month of August.

For hot-weather meals such as these, the classics never fail. Tomatoes with mozzarella, basil, maybe a few peaches; cucumbers with red onions, olives or capers; melon with feta and a few leaves of mint.

When the heat becomes especially oppressive, my family is happy to eat one of these light salads for dinner and call it a night. Add a little bread to catch the juices, and pair it with a spritz or cold white wine to round out the meal.

But there are nights when something more substantial is required — maybe people are coming over, or the temperature dropped enough to restore our appetites.

My current strategy for turning almost any summer salad into a robust meal is to throw some quickly grilled or broiled shrimp on top. This works with tomatoes and mozzarella, and it works with cucumbers and onions. But it's especially wonderful with melon and feta in this speedy, weeknight-friendly recipe.

Often when I cook shrimp, they're the sweetest, mellowest elements on the plate, sharpened by the likes of garlic and lemon. But here, next to the melon, they taste more savory, their briny succulence and some char from the grill a contrast to the juicy cubes of melon (any kind will do: watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew or a combination for the more colourful salad).

Chunks of creamy, pungent feta liven the whole thing up. Here's a tip for using feta. Taste it right out of the package, if it's too salty and intense, let it soak in some fresh water for an hour or two. This really tones it down.

There aren't a lot of other ingredients here, just slivers of chile for heat, the grated zest and juice of a couple of floral-scented limes for acidity and some toasted coriander for crunch. It's a simple yet powerful

mix.

And if applying heat to anything just seems out of the question, you can substitute precooked shrimp here, marinating them in the chile-lime mixture for a half-hour or so. It's an assembled summer dinner, in a very deluxe way.

GRILLED SHRIMP SALAD WITH MELON AND FETA

By Melissa Clark



Yield: 4 servings
Total time: 30 minutes

shallot
1/3 cup crumbled feta
1/2 cup chopped soft herbs, such as

mint, basil or cilantro, plus more for garnish

METHOD:

1. Light a charcoal or gas grill or heat the broiler. Make the fire as hot as it will get, and if using a broiler, put the rack close to the heat source.
2. While the grill heats up, lightly crack the coriander seeds in a mortar and pestle, or with the side of a knife on a cutting board. (Careful: They can roll around.) Put them in a small dry skillet over medium heat and toast, shaking the pan once or twice until fragrant, 1 to 3 minutes. Pour into a small bowl.
3. Using a Microplane or other grater, grate zest from both limes straight into the bowl with coriander. Grate in the garlic (no need to wash the grater in between), then add the chile and a large pinch of salt and pepper. Whisk in oil.
4. Pat shrimp dry, then transfer to a medium bowl and season with a pinch each salt and black pepper. Give the coriander mixture a stir, then pour half of it over the shrimp, reserving the rest for the salad. Toss shrimp to coat and set aside while preparing the other ingredients.
5. Cut the zested limes in half, squeeze out 2 tablespoons juice and whisk into the coriander mixture to make a dressing. Cut leftover lime into wedges.
6. Arrange the shrimp in a grill basket or on skewers (or just on a sheet pan if broiling), and grill or broil shrimp until well browned on one side, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip and cook until just opaque and cooked through, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer the shrimp to a plate and squeeze a wedge of lime all over.
7. In a large bowl, combine melon, cucumber, onion, feta and herbs. Pour in coriander dressing and toss to combine. Taste, and add more salt or lime juice to taste. Top melon salad with grilled shrimp and more herbs, if you'd like. — **NYT**

ANIMAL PLANET

Beijing's pet lovers turn to acupuncture to treat their furry friends



STRAPPED IN tight, the prone poodle nervously eyes the vet as he gently sticks fine needles into its back and paws, summoning the ancient art of acupuncture to treat the pet's aches and pains.

Duniu is just one of a growing number of animals being signed up for traditional medicine in China — care their masters say is less invasive and comes with fewer side effects than conventional treatments.

In one Beijing practice, pets of all shapes and sizes

dles at acupuncture points specific to dogs and cats.

"Out of the 10 animals that I receive on average every day, there are always one or two who rebel," Li says.

"You have to communicate with them, treat them gently, reassure them that you're not here to hurt them."

Recordings of soft bamboo flute music and the chirping of birds are played at the clinic to help the animals relax.

Li mainly deals with cases



come for treatments.

"The advantage of traditional Chinese medicine is that there is no surgery," 38-year-old Zhai Chunyu tells AFP, accompanied by Duniu, his poodle.

"So the animal's suffering is reduced."

At just three years old, Duniu suffers from Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, which affects the thigh bone and can lead to painful osteoarthritis.

"He was in so much pain that he could no longer put his paw on the ground" and "had no appetite," says Zhai, who works in finance.

"A doctor advised me to have the head of the femur removed. But I didn't want to because I have another poodle who has been there and he suffered a lot from the operation and the after-effects."

But then a friend advised him to try acupuncture.

"After five to six sessions, we saw the results. Duniu manages to walk and even run a little now," Zhai says.

'TREAT THEM GENTLY'

Animal acupuncture is centuries old in China, says veterinarian Li Wen, who founded his practice in 2016.

"Traditional Chinese medicine is not intended to replace conventional medicine" because "both have their strengths" and are complementary, he says.

Before starting the treatment, the vet first checks the animal's body, examines its eyesight and the colour of its tongue, takes its pulse and asks its owner questions.

He then plants his needles

of paralysis, limb weakness, epilepsy, pain and urinary retention.

But acupuncture can also be used for ailments when no other treatment is available.

That was the case with Xiaomei, a 12-year-old male Labrador suffering from nerve compression in his lower back.

"Last September, after swimming, he was unable to get back on his feet. A veterinarian then told us that it was impossible to treat and that he would become paralyzed," his owner Ma Li, 41, tells AFP.

"Thanks to acupuncture, he still has difficulties but can walk normally and even run."

'HE LOVES IT!'

"The first time, he was scared," says Yang Lihua, a 65-year-old retiree accompanied by her Pekingese Niannian, who is suffering from a herniated disc.

"Now he loves it! After the session, he is so relaxed that he sleeps in the car on the way home."

The acupuncture market for animals remains limited for the moment, Li says.

"But since 2016, it has been gaining popularity," he adds.

"As education levels, living conditions improve and incomes rise, more and more people are realising the benefits of this medicine."

Ma's Labrador jumps into the back seat of her mistress's car after her session, looking content.

"Doesn't he look happy?" she exclaims. — **AFP**



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AROUND THE WORLD

CULTURE

We can live together: Church helps bridge Bosnia's deep divisions



DECADES AFTER fighting, a new church has provided a rare opportunity to bridge the divides in the deeply fractured Bosnia's Bugojno.

Still under construction, the Catholic place of worship in the central Bosnian town is being built on land donated by Husejn Smajic, a 68-year-old Muslim resident, after he discovered the foundation of a medieval church on his property.

For Smajic, the new church represents a small step in a quest to rebuild the communal harmony common in Bosnia before the war in the 1990s.

"I did this so that people can see that we can all live together. There cannot be beauty of life here without the mixture of communities. It is our wealth," Smajic told.

Amid the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia, Bosnia erupted into a vicious civil war that killed around 100,000 people.

Bugojno was hard hit during the war that was defined by bouts of ethnic cleansing, mass displacement and atrocities committed by all sides.

Nearly three decades later, many of the divisions that were exacerbated by the conflict have largely hardened, with Bosnia's three main groups rarely mixing.

A peace deal that succeeded in ending the war has left the country partitioned and controlled by ethno-religious political parties that have exploited Bosnia's divisions in a bid to maintain power.

With few economic opportunities, hundreds of thousands have moved abroad in the search of a better and more stable future.

But the discovery of the medieval church on his land — which was likely sacked in the 15th century during the Ottoman invasion of Bosnia — provided an opportunity in Smajic's eyes.

After donating a portion of his property to the Catholic Church, Smajic has provided a guiding hand to help complete the project, proving the country's communities can still work together to build, rather than destroy.

Smajic — who owns a nearby sawmill and two small hydroelectric power plants — has financed a large share of the operations, while members of the Croat, Muslim and Serb communities have also donated money and supplies.

During a recent ceremony to consecrate the church, hundreds attended the celebration and the festivities that followed, including a barbecue of traditional Bosnian sausages and dancing.

"We can live together if we respect each other," said Vinko Puljic, the former leader of the Catholic Church in Bosnia, who oversaw the consecration of the new church. Smajic's efforts have proven to be an inspiration to others.

"If we were all like him, if we all had this love for each other, I think this country would be so happy and nobody would move to Germany, Austria or Switzerland anymore. We would make Switzerland here," said resident Mihovil Klisanin.

"People like Husejn are rare in Bosnia, especially after these tragic conflicts. He has a heart as big as a mountain," added Frano Glavas, a 58-year-old Croat from Bugojno who now lives in Croatia.

For Smajic, rebuilding Bosnia and the ties that once bound the nation requires both vigilance and empathy, while avoiding the country's divisive political scene that has continued to fan the flames of separatism.

"If you love this country and if you love this people, I mean all its people, you have to work against the politicians," said Smajic.

"From this valley will come messages of peace, love and respect for all peoples."

— AFP

MUSIC

'Grease The Musical' cast dedicates show run to Olivia Newton-John



CAST MEMBERS of "Grease The Musical" in the West End have dedicated their entire run to the memory of Dame Olivia Newton-John, following her death aged 73.

In joint statement following Tuesday night's West End performance of the show, they said it was a "huge honour to follow in Olivia's footsteps each night" and that they had all been inspired by her work.

Dame Olivia's death was announced on Monday on social media by her widower John Easterling, who said she had died peacefully at her home in California, following a battle with cancer.

The actress was best known for playing Sandy in the 1978 film opposite John Travolta, who played Danny Zuko.

As the show concluded, actress Olivia Moore, who plays Sandy in current run, addressed audiences against the backdrop of a large image of Newton-John, set within the neon pink staging.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure you have all heard the incredibly sad news that Olivia Newton-John passed away yesterday evening," she said.

"She of course played Sandy in the film and she is an icon who has inspired countless young performers across the world, especially all of us in this company."

"It is a huge honour to follow in Olivia's footsteps each night and perform those songs that she made world-famous with millions of fans that continue

to celebrate her incredible talent.

"We are dedicating our run of Grease to Olivia's memory and all that she stood for tonight."

Moore, 26, added that a collection for breast cancer support, a charity for which Newton-John raised much awareness, was being held at the exits of the theatre.

High-profile figures from across the creative industries have paid tribute to the singer and actress, including Abba, Dolly Parton, Kylie Minogue, Peter Andre, as well as Travolta, who led tributes on Monday.

Newton-John came fourth at the Eurovision Song Contest 1974 in Brighton, where Swedish pop outfit Abba triumphed with Waterloo, launching their careers.

The global superstars described her as the "nicest, kindest and most loving woman" and hailed her "brave fight" against an "invincible enemy" following her death.

Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Agnetha Faltskog, who performed alongside Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson in the group, paid tribute in statements to the PA news agency.

Lyngstad, known as Frida, said: "What do you feel, what do you say when the nicest, kindest and most loving woman leaves us to travel somewhere else?"

"The heart aches to know Olivia's brave fight against an, in her case, invincible enemy."

"That she never gave up

or complained about her situation, but instead told us her story so that we would understand and want to help others affected.

"I am grateful to have known a person like you, Olivia, and you will always be in my heart. With love, your friend Frida."

Faltskog added: "So sad to hear of Olivia's passing... A fine person has left us - and there are many of us who mourn her now."

"My thoughts go out to the family, and her music and personality will always remain in memory."

US country legend Parton said she was "so happy that our lives-crossed paths" in her own tribute to Dame Olivia.

Travolta paid tribute on Instagram shortly after news of Newton-John's death was announced on Monday evening.

"My dearest Olivia, you made all of our lives so much better," he wrote.

"Your impact was incredible. I love you so much. We will see you down the road and we will all be together again."

"Yours from the first moment I saw you and forever! Your Danny, your John!"

Aside from her hit role in Grease, Dame Olivia was also a multi-platinum selling artist, with two singles and two albums having earned the certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA).

She is survived by her husband as well as her daughter Chloe Lattanzi.

— dpa

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
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My journey starting with No. 4973

THE FOLLOWING is my English translation of an excerpt from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (Retd) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani

THE COASTAL ROUTE TO MILITARY

We left our hometown and went through Wadi Hawasina towards Khabora along the coastal line. We called at the Dhyia Bay for afternoon prayers. One of us, while washing for prayers, dove into a sea inlet, thinking it was a stream, just like the one he knew would flow after heavy rain. To his (and our) surprise, he almost drowned. We all ran to him and saved him. It was a lesson for him that sea water was different from valley water.

After the prayers, we continued with our journey, passed through A'Soweq and Barka till we reached A'Seeb at night. It was a rather exhausting journey, sitting all the way on wooden Bedford seats as they shook on the then unpaved road.

We waited in Wadi Lawami for about ten days, anticipating the order to be shifted to the Bait al Falaj Camp; there was nothing we could do except walk at leisure in A'Seeb souq and at the beach. Despite the ten too long days for young men eagerly awaiting a life they had always dreamt of, we did spend our days and nights in joy and happiness.

We reached Bait al Falaj, and set foot at "al Farara", in the eastern part of Bait al Falaj. ("Al Farara" means a device to pull water from a well with the wind movement, similar to the one in Thomas Hospital in Mutrah). When the wind blew, we knew that the machine would begin to work, and would run and take a bath there.

MY SALARY IS ONLY 60 RUPEE

We stayed for a couple of days till came the day for medical check-up and other tests. Some of us passed all the tests, while others didn't. I was amongst the former. At that moment my journey started with 4973, my military number which I at first thought warranted no attention, but it grew so important and would remain with me throughout my army career. Another number that I still fondly remember was 60, as my first salary was just 60 Rupee.

What beautiful days! Each one of us was given 20 Rupee at first to buy an aluminium container, a coal operated iron, a substance to whiten the clothes and a brush for cleaning the boots. We all went to Mutrah, and bought all that we needed. Once in the Mutrah Market, I remember a young man who failed the tests approached me asking for 10 baisa to buy lemon juice with sugar. I didn't give him anything, saying, "That's not fair". To this day I don't quite understand why I behaved in the way I did. I might have meant something like, "You failed; you have no right to claim benefits you're not due".

Later we were moved to the Ghala Traning Centre, where we spent six months. It was there that I came to learn what it meant to be a military man. Training was very tough, and the trainers were at pains to teach the new cohorts all manner of military exercises. We used to run from the training centre in Ghala to the Azeba Coast. We were, in the same period, trained in swimming. On a board attached to barrels through a long rope tied to a tree, we would be pushed out to the sea.

art & life

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | AUGUST 16 | 2022



Reimagining the many uses of a date palm

By Kabeer Yousuf

They say every single part of the Arab traditional palm tree is useful and nothing goes to waste. Be it the tree itself or the luscious dates or the pit or the frond or stems, wicker, leaves and even thorns and fibres or any smallest part of the tree is needed for human beings.

Date fronds are widely used as broomsticks to sweep outdoors as well as indoors but here, a man has found a different, yet aesthetic use for the frond and the love that he developed during his childhood has grown to be his passion and today, his livelihood after combining his passion with the world of business.

Meet Saeed bin Salem al Wardi, a young Omani who 'invented' and 'reinvented' the multiple uses of the date fronds and a devoted lover of the field of palm fronds who makes environmentally friendly heritage products, and has become an instant hit on his own.

"From a young age, I was attached to the palm tree and somehow felt it was attached to me too. I loved it and wrote poetry about it. I wrote, 'Leave it, all of you just leave the palm tree to me!' It is a tree of challenge that resists the scarcity of resources and continues to give, and it is truly blessed as described by the Prophet (peace be upon him), and among its blessings is that it is reusable. We reuse all its parts: stems, wicker, fronds, leaves and even thorns and fibres," says Saeed.

The pioneer in this industry today runs Albaydar and Al Drwaza Foundation and Al Drwaza products and services which are focused on reusing the date fronds. Daily, Al Drwaza is making and modifying various rooms, awnings, heritage councils, environmentally friendly buildings, chalets and arish. Al Drwaza has been keen on local and international participation, and because the

entrepreneur considers himself fully responsible for his chosen field, he searches for innovation, renewal and creativity and constantly needs to exchange ideas with interested people so that he cross-fertilises with others in search of inspiration and ideas.

Challenges in reinventing the aesthetic uses of date fronds:

"There have been a lot of challenges and I must say we faced them with the same love, determination, experience and passion and today we're here!

We are always keen to introduce continuous modifications, employ qualified people and experts from our country, benefit from the experiences of similar projects, and communicate with officials, and authorities to facilitate obtaining financing and the palm waste regularly", adds Al Wardi.

"There is no leadership without a challenge. In our field, the challenges were refining the palm tree craft as a jewel, keeping it radiant and shining, modernising it and making it keep pace with the times in design and engineering, employing scientific development and the latest technology, and training workers in a specialised manner, raising quality and raising the level of competition, continuously providing palm waste in good condition, treating the waste so that it is resistant to pests, and eventually after the birth of the product it is exported as part of our culture and our elaborate heritage, yes! It is our royal tree and our majestic ambassador," Al Wardi adds the patriotic flavour to his craft.

HOW HAS THE JOURNEY BEEN?

"I do not claim success alone, but I refer all the time to the assistance I received throughout my journey, starting with the support of family, friends and acquaintances, who were and still stand by my back and give me hope. As for the financial

support, I have used youth financing funds and bank loans after submitting feasibility studies and the required papers, and I am still under the great umbrella of the Al Ra'd Fund."

The corona phase: The pandemic shook us all, except for the bride of the sand (the palm tree), which even when it dies, stands tall. It was impossible to work and the life we were familiar with has been paralysed, debts, loans, rents and fees have accumulated. The stagnation has afflicted all commercial and tourism activities and projects in general, and because the palm is our example of steadfastness and its love runs the bloodstream us.

The futuristic and artistic concept of revamping porticos, foyers and courtyards has been recognised globally.

"We did not leave an opportunity for internal or external participation unless we were present in it, for example, our participation in the Amman Humanitarian Dialogue Exhibition in Geneva 2018, the Intellectual Property Rights Organisation," says Saeed.

FUTURE:

We are still planning and dreaming of many achievements, and one of our plans is to be part of the future of resource sustainability in our country and to be part of the solution to critical national issues, contributing to the Oman 2040 vision with diligence.

A WORD FOR FUTURE ENTREPRENEURS:

I advise my fellow Omani entrepreneurs who are in the market or who are about to establish their projects to spare no effort to develop and keep pace with their projects and to rely on science, research and comparison in studying trends and to accept competition and look at it positively and to be certain that God does not waste anyone's wages or efforts.

