

Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, left for New York to head Oman's delegation at the first meeting of the Global Group of Heads of State and Government for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Injuries (Global NCD Compact). The several-day meeting will be held from September 21 in New York. The meeting discusses means of supporting global action and response on NCDs and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). **SEE ALSO P2**



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BASTIANINI PIPS BAGNAIA TO WIN ARAGON GP AS QUARTARARO CRASHES



P13

OMAN'S 105-MW AMIN SOLAR PV PLANT GETS GLOBAL CERTIFICATE



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TUNISIAN 'HANGING GARDEN' FARMS CLING ON DESPITE DROUGHT



HM offers condolences, greets King Charles III

LONDON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offered his condolences to King Charles III of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, and Camilla, Queen Consort of the United Kingdom, and members of the British Royal family, on the death of Queen Elizabeth II, when they received His Majesty the Sultan at Buckingham Palace, on Sunday evening.

His Majesty expressed his heart-felt condolences and sympathy on the passing of Queen Elizabeth II, affirming that the Sultanate of Oman is standing by the United Kingdom in its immense grief. His Majesty also expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to King Charles III on his accession to the throne of the United Kingdom, wishing him success in leading the friendly British people.

On his part, King Charles III expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation to His Majesty for his noble sentiments, wishing His Majesty good health and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. His Majesty was accompanied by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court. — **ONA**



Royal Guards stand by the coffin of Britain's Queen Elizabeth during her lying-in-state at Westminster Hall, in London, Britain, on Sunday. — **Reuters**

Britons hold minute's silence to mourn Queen's death

LONDON: Britons held a minute's silence to mourn the Queen's death ahead of the state funeral.

At 8 pm on Sunday, the country observed the silence to remember the late monarch, with people marking the occasion privately at their homes and at community events and vigils. Prime Minister Liz Truss stood outside 10 Downing Street with her head bowed during the national moment of reflection, with people across the country following suit. Mourners could be heard applauding and cheering after it ended. It came as presidents, prime ministers and royalty from across the globe arrived at Buckingham Palace for a reception hosted by the King.

Approximately 500 guests attended the event, among them the Prime Minister, US President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden and France's President Emmanuel Macron, who was joined by his wife, first lady Brigitte. Dozens of leaders of Commonwealth countries and members of foreign royal families also attended the reception.

SEE ALSO P7

MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO ANGOLA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent cable of congratulations to President Joao Lourenco of the Republic of Angola on being re-elected for a new presidential term. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to President Lourenco in leading his people towards further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the relations between the two countries further development. — **ONA**

HM THANKED BY UZBEK PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Dr Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, President Mirziyoyev expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to His Majesty and the Omani people further progress and prosperity. President Mirziyoyev also affirmed the importance of boosting cooperation between the two countries. — **ONA**

INSIDE



TYPHOON NANMADOL SLAMS INTO JAPAN

P6

99-YEAR USUFRUCT FOR GOVERNMENT LANDS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, Sept 18

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has stressed that Royal Decree No 59/2022 regulating the usufruct of lands aims to achieve a number of economic, social, planning and environmental objectives.

From the economic standpoint, the Decree seeks to enhance incentives for economic diversification and financial sustainability to achieve the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 in stimulating investment inflows from individuals and businesses. Moreover, it seeks to streamline

integration between different agencies in supporting optimal land use.

As for the social aspect, the new Decree seeks to ensure that local communities benefit the most of any land development, thereby nurturing sustainable and homogeneous urban development.

In the planning aspects, the Decree mandates an upgrade of all land use regulations to bring them into line with the broad goals of Oman National Spatial Strategy. By raising planning standards, it is hoped that high quality investments will flow into the country.

DETAILS ON P13

NO IMPORT OF PLASTIC BAGS

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, Sept 18

To ensure stricter implementation of ban on usage of single-use plastic bags in the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has banned the import of plastic bags in the country.

The ministry in its decision banned import of plastic bags and announced a penalty in case of any violation in this regard. Article one of the decision No 519/2022 prohibits companies, institutions, and individuals from importing plastic bags, while Article 2 has penalty provisions of RO 1,000.

"The fine will be doubled if the violation is repeated. This decision shall be published in the Official Gazette and shall come into force from January 1, 2023," the ministerial decision said.

Sami bin Salim al Sahib,



Director General of Industry at the ministry, said that the decision comes in line with the ministry's plans to regulate market activities pertaining to the import of products that damage the environment.

He added that the decision,

issued in coordination with the Environment Authority, will support Omani factories by limiting unfair competition from imported products that do not meet environment standards.

Through its cooperation with the Environment Authority, the ministry seeks to shift to environment-friendly industries, he said, noting that the decision does not affect local plastic production factories. Indeed, it will help augment their sales and their production capacity to meet local market demands.

The ministry is working in cooperation with the departments concerned to develop specifications and instructions related to industrialists and importers to ensure proper shifting to alternatives to plastic bags and raise social awareness about the negative impacts of plastics to man and the environment.

Royal Academy's programme to prepare executive leaders

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management launched a call for applications for its flagship programme, Master of Leadership and Management for the Government sector in collaboration with Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University.

The programme targets section heads and their equivalents in the government sector with a vision of preparing executive leaders of Oman, enabling them to contribute to building effective

and innovative government sector entities in line with the new economy era.

Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, stated: "Launching this Master of Leadership and Management programme puts His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's Royal directives regarding the development of all levels of government leadership into action."

Dr Al Lawati noted that the world is witnessing an accelerated



This Master of Leadership and Management programme puts Royal directives regarding development of all levels of government leadership into action

DR AL LAWATI

change in the global economic order, which requires an equally accelerated pace in developing the human capital needed to thrive in this competitive economy.

MIDDLE MANAGEMENT

Therefore, this programme will equip middle management in the government sector with the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes allowing them to adapt to as well as keeping pace with the evolution of the new economy

with all its integrated forms, be it knowledge economy, digital economy, circular economy or innovation-based economy.

The aim of this programme, he added, is to keep abreast of Oman's great paradigm shift especially in the realm of developing government sector leaders, noting that the Royal Academy of Management's contribution is aligned with the diverse and ever-changing needs of the economic and management world orders.

TURN TO P2



Real estate market sees recovery

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyvp

Strong and positive momentum is expected to continue in the Sultanate of Oman's real estate sector thanks to the shifting trends suggesting that the property market is once again on the investor radar.

After softening demand due to the pandemic, the real estate market has seen an upswing since the third quarter of the previous year, backed by a solid structural foundation and gain in demand.

Along with a slew of decisions and measures, the Omani government's new ownership scheme that allows foreigners to own properties outside integrated tourism complexes (ITC) is expected to attract capital investments in the property market.

Dr Khalid bin Saeed al Ameri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Economic Association, in a dialogue session last week, invited proposals from the real estate experts to come up with visions that can contribute to increasing the sector's attractiveness to investors.

"The flexibility of laws, legislation, and regulatory and incentive measures taken in the real estate sector has a direct role in stabilising real estate markets and

The Oman government's focus is more on making housing affordable and available for everyone. The push for 'Housing for All Citizens' fuelled the demand for affordable housing and, in turn, generated much-needed liquidity in the sector

maintaining investor confidence", he said.

The meeting reviewed purchasing power, such as the impact of value-added tax on residential sales, the availability of financing and interest rates, and availability and clarity of data, such as daily trading, clarity of investment directions and future plans in the real estate sector.

The session also touched on technology in the real estate sector, applications and crowdfunding.

The total traded value of real estate activity exceeded RO 1.3 billion at the end of last July, and the total traded value of the property rose during last July only to 213.1 million Omani riyals, an increase of 27.4 per cent compared to June 2022.

Dr Khalid indicated that the fees collected for all Legal transactions amounted to RO 35 million, a decrease of 37.8 per cent compared to the end of July of last year, while the traded value of sales contracts increased by 0.1 per cent compared to the end of July 2021, to reach RO688 million.

The number of sales contracts reached RO 40,110 million contracts, down by 18.9 per cent.

The Oman government's focus is more on making housing affordable and available for everyone. The push for 'Housing for All Citizens' fuelled the demand for affordable housing and, in turn, generated much-needed liquidity in the sector.

Oman's Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has presented plans for five new constructions totalling 4,800 housing units, catering to an estimated 24,000 people, following the success of its first Integrated Housing Development Project in Barka based on the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

The ministry has unveiled new opportunities for real estate companies and institutions specialising in real estate development (both domestic and international) who have experience, competence, financial and administrative capability in real estate development and who wish to compete, file an

"Expression of Interest" to develop.

Last week, the ministry announced five more new sites for real estate developers in the governorates of Musandam, Dhofar, South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, North Al Batinah, and South Al Batinah.

According to market intelligence and advisory firm Mordor Intelligence, the residential real estate market in Oman is expected to register a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) greater than 13 per cent during the period from 2022 to 2027.

This forecast for Oman's property market comes amid a report published by Next Move Strategy Consulting that the global real estate market generated \$ 9.52 billion in 2021 and is estimated to reach \$ 14.55 billion by 2030, witnessing a CAGR of 4.8 per cent from 2022 to 2030.

In its outlook, the Central Bank of Oman said in a report that, unlike many other jurisdictions, the real estate market in Oman followed a different course during the past few years.

"The changes in the population profile during the pandemic exerted pressure on some segments of the Omani real estate market that had signs of oversupply even before the onset of the pandemic", the Apex Bank points out in its Financial Stability Report 2022.

Health minister heads to US



Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health left here on Sunday to head Oman's delegation at the first meeting of the Global Group of Heads of State and Government for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Injuries (Global NCD Compact) which will be held in New York from September 21. The meeting discusses means of supporting global action and response on NCDs and achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). — ONA

New regulations for telecom towers

SHAMSA AL RIYAMIYAH
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Natural or legal persons, authorised by Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) to set up, manage or operate telecom towers, should from now on obtain a prior permit before starting to set up telecom towers whether on a public or private land.

According to the new regulations, telecom towers should be set up at least three metres higher than the adjacent building and should be surrounded by a fence excluding the towers that are set up on building edges.

The regulations issued on Sunday, apply to both permanent and interim telecom towers.

As per the regulations, a

licensee should, before submitting an application to set up a telecom tower, negotiate with the other licensees in the same area in order to share existing towers with them or provide proof of the impossibility of sharing the tower to the TRA.

The licensee should propose three locations not within densely populated areas for setting up the tower to the authority to select the most suitable one. The licensee should complete the construction of the tower within a period of 120 days.

Service and maintenance of the telecom tower should be carried out only by one of the companies authorised by the TRA. The telecom tower should have sufficient capacity to accommodate three more users at least.

Panos Panagis named among the Top 30 Hospitality Heavyweights in the region

Hotel & Catering News Middle East introduced their first ever Top 30 Hospitality Heavyweights in the region - a list that celebrates hospitality executives that rank at the very top of their organisations, and all their achievements in the hospitality sector.

Panos Panagis' contribution to Radisson Hotel Group extends well beyond helming one five-star luxury hotel, he also holds a position as the District Director for Radisson Hotel Group, Oman and General Manager at one of the most iconic properties in the capital - Hormuz Grand Muscat, a Radisson Collection Hotel.

Panos has demonstrated strong resilience and unwavering determination to deliver results by successfully manoeuvring the business strategy during the most challenging market conditions the hospitality industry has ever seen. His stellar leadership has steered the organization's endeavours to greater heights.



Abdullah Al Balushi, Director of Human Resources lauds his contribution, saying, "Panos has great work ethic and commitment to the company, making a major contribution to its success. In particular, he has shown outstanding leadership and skills in the challenging economic climate caused by the pandemic."

Royal Academy's programme to prepare executive leaders

FROM PAGE1

"The programme has been closely designed with the Thunderbird School of Global Management at Arizona State University emphasising real-life application in line with Oman's development plan, thus offering participants both modern knowledge (through the academic programme) and the practical application of it (through the applied projects)."

The programme, Dr Al Lawati added, will offer participants exposure to global trends and best practices delivered through cutting-edge methods. Moreover, he announced that this programme targets section heads in the government sector.

He explained that their role is highly critical as they are the link between policy development and execution. The programme will thus enhance their capabilities and contribute positively towards them transforming conceptual strategies and plans into reality.

Kawther al Mahrouqi, the Master of



Leadership and Management Programme Lead, said that 25 section heads and their equivalents from the government sector would be selected to join the programme in January 2023. Admission to this programme will be open for all who meet the eligibility criteria and pass the rigorous assessment process in place.

Al Mahrouqi added that this programme will greatly enhance the participants' leadership skills. The programme will be for 12 months of blended learning, exploring the latest global trends in leadership,

management, innovation, strategy, public policy analysis, and agile governance, among other areas.

She also added that the programme approaches leadership development in a comprehensive and dynamic way combining in-depth academic knowledge with the latest skills, while providing innovative solutions that are in line with the requirements of the new economic order.

AlMahrouqi clarified that the programme will also focus on enhancing participants' attitudes and leadership behaviours both personally and professionally. In order to achieve this, it includes various components such as residency programmes, individual and group coaching sessions, simulation workshops as well as the opportunity to meet with local and international experts.

The applied individual and group projects in the field of digital transformation will be implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. — ONA



WHO delegation visits Nizwa

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, SEPT 18

A delegation from the World Health Organization (WHO) began its evaluation visit to the Nizwa Health City project in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate on Sunday. The visit aims to recognise Nizwa as a healthy city at the level of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

The two-day visit aims to conduct an audit and review the indicators of a healthy city that deal with developmental aspects related to health, which directly and indirectly impact human health, and the achievements made since the beginning of the project until now.

On the first day of the delegation's visit, Shaikh Rashid bin Said bin Saif al Kalbani, Wali of Nizwa and Chairman



of the Health Committee, met in his office with the visiting delegation.

A comprehensive presentation on Nizwa Health City was presented during the meeting, also attended by Dr Ali al Dhawi, Director General of Health

Services for Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The delegation also met with stakeholders in the Executive Office of Nizwa Health City and reviewed organisational structures, documents, forms and research. They presented

community participation strategies and changes in health and social indicators, and viewed the joint actions between the different sectors and the results achieved.

The programme included field visits to the Birkat Al Mouz Health Center, the Omani Women's Association in Nizwa, and Tanuf School for Basic Education, as well as a visit to generate electric power with water project and several sites and development projects in the state, as well as recreational visits to several tourist sites.

The delegation will conclude its evaluation visit today, where a meeting will be held at the Creativity Center for Culture and Innovation. To discuss the observations, provide feedback, and view the progress of work and the services currently offered by the centre.

ROP SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE BEGINS TODAY



MUSCAT: The Scientific Conference of the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences, 50 Years of Achievements and Ambitions, is set to begin today in Nizwa. Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, will preside over the opening ceremony. The two-day conference will discuss 19 working papers that cover three axes namely: the development of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) over fifty years, the legal and security dimensions of the economic, social and technological changes as well as the prospects of police training and qualification. — **ONA**

MoHT embarks on adventure tourism development plan

VINOD NAIR
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The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is embarking on several initiatives to develop adventure tourism products in the country.

According to Adventure Travel Trade Association and the UN World Tourism Organisation, the global adventure tourism market was valued at \$282.1 billion in 2021 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 15.2 per cent from 2022 to 2030.

Daoud bin Sulaiman al Rashidi, Director of the Department of Product Development and Tourism Experiences, said, "MoHT's interest in developing the adventure tourism product is in line with the trends globally and in the Sultanate of Oman in particular."

In partnership with various adventure tourism operators, MoHT has been working on various action plans.

It seeks to meet the safety requirements by preparing a legal and regulatory framework and making the Sultanate of Oman the best destination in the world for adventurous activities.

The action is based on the New Zealand model, which is considered one of the best when it comes to security and safety standards in adventure tourism



activities.

The Adventure Tourism Development Program will focus on the legislative and regulatory framework of documents and documents for adventure activities, auditing for security and safety, training programmes on adventure activities, including rescue and ambulance, awareness of security and safety requirements, and encouraging projects related to adventure tourism activities.

The ministerial decision 124/2021 had called for tour operators to include adventure tourism in their plans.

The Ministry of Defence and MoHT signed an agreement for joint cooperation between the two parties to benefit from the experiences owned by the Adventure Training Center of the Royal Army of Oman.

Mostly clear sky today

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Al Ta'en in North Al Sharqiyah recorded rain on Sunday, whereas Al Buraimi and Bahla saw a high of 43 degrees Celsius and Saiq in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Qairoon Hairiti and Jabal Qamar saw a low of 21 degrees Celsius at night.

Today, the weather is expected to be partly cloudy skies along the coastal areas of Dhofar, Al Wusta and South Al Sharqiyah governorates and Oman Sea coasts with a chance for isolated rain, according to the weather forecaster at Oman Met Office.

However, mainly clear skies are forecast over the rest of the governorates with chance of convective clouds formation and isolated rain occasionally thundershowers associated with fresh wind over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas in the afternoon.

Chance of fog at late night or early morning over the coastal areas of Oman Sea and Arabian Sea.

Stamps on Oman's freshwater fishes rolled out

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in collaboration with Oman Post rolled out four commemorative stamps depicting Oman's freshwater fishes. The stamps represent the cover and the seal of the first day of issuance of the stamps.

Dr Saud bin Musalam al Jufali, Head of Maritime and Fishes Science at the College of Agriculture and Maritime Sciences at SQU, said: "These fishes are among 23 fish species which live in Oman's freshwaters. They are classified into 15 Genus, 10 Families, and 7 Classes. Cooperation continues in this regard between SQU and Shiraz University in Iran.

Those fishes live in caves, valleys, natural wells, dams in the Hajar mountains, Dhofar mountains, the south-western coast and the interiors. — **ONA**



IATA World Financial Symposium begins today

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All the world's major airlines, including Oman's air carriers have flown down on Doha as the 8th edition of IATA World Financial Symposium -- Reshape Airline Resilience, hosted by Qatar Airways, is beginning today Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel in Qatar.

Major financial elements that define the future of global airlines, their sustainability and how to address the future demand after two years of resilience are the backdrop of the 4-day-long Symposium that end on

September 22.

"Our industry has faced unprecedented pressure, the pandemic disrupted our operations like no crisis before. As travel starts picking up and showing signs of recovery, challenges remain and must be addressed for our future and financial sustainability," a key spokesperson from the IATA WFS told the Observer.

"Sustainability reporting is rapidly evolving and its impact on airlines will be significant in terms of both complying with the requirements and the implications this will have on funding, business models, forecasting, fleet decisions and asset valuations,"

Perry Flint, Head of Corporate Communications, IATA told the Observer.

"The sustainability track will look at the nexus between finance and sustainable initiatives. There currently are three sets of proposals for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting that could set the foundation for the future," Flint added.

"As the path to recovery lies ahead, our commitment to sustainability is immutable. Our goal - Fly Net Zero - to achieve net zero carbon by 2050, will require an industry wide and collaborative effort. As part of this effort, CFOs will have a key role to play."

Oman in third stage of phasing-out HCFC project: CAA

VINOD NAIR
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The Sultanate of Oman, which acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol, is now implementing the third phase of the Hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFC) phase-out strategy project in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Development Organisation (UNIDO), the Civil Aviation Authority said on Friday.

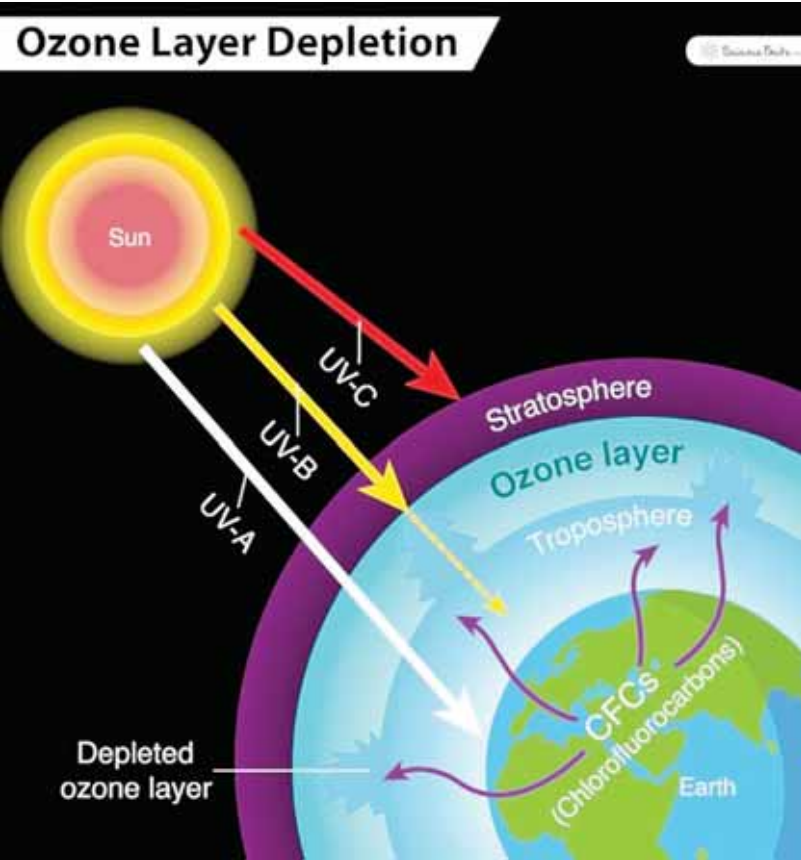
The first phase of the Montreal Protocol called for the HCFC consumption freeze by 2013 and a ten per cent reduction in consumption from the baseline by 2015 for non-low-volume consuming countries.

The second phase was completed last year, while under the third

phase, the government is enforcing a licensing and quota system for the import and export of HCFCs.

According to UNIDO, the Sultanate of Oman has continued developing and strengthening its legal framework to create an enabling environment for sustainable phase-out, including an e-licencing system; a ban on imports of HCFC-141b in bulk and contained in pre-blended polyols and HCFC-142b; a ban on the venting of refrigerants into the atmosphere; mandatory refrigerant R&R and mandatory quarterly reporting thereon; mandatory logbook to record leaks and repairs and mandatory leak detection of all controlled substances in RAC systems with a charge greater than 3kg, and requiring the licensing of all entities handling ODS.

The projects include training technicians and planned



implementation of the certification scheme. The second stage of the HCFC phase-out was completed in 2021.

There has been a substantial reduction in ODSs emissions over the last two decades, and there is evidence that the ozone layer is healing itself and can recover by the middle of this century, according to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), thanks to the agreement.

The Antarctic Zone hole is expected to close by the 2060s, while other regions will return to pre-1980s values even earlier. To date, nearly 99 per cent of ODSs have been phased out, UNEDP said.

"We celebrate 35 years of the Montreal Protocol's success in protecting the stratospheric ozone layer against synthetic chemicals that also cause climate heating," said Secretary-General Antonio

Guterres in his message to mark the international day.

The Montreal Protocol, adopted in 1987 and entered into force in 1989, is considered one of the world's most successful environmental treaties. "Thanks to a global agreement, humanity has averted a major health catastrophe due to ultraviolet radiation pouring through a massive hole in the ozone layer," the Secretary-General said.

The Protocol provides a set of practical ways to phase out ODSs – including through stringent measures worldwide to control products containing the chemicals.

In 2016, the Protocol was amended in Kigali to also phase out the production and use of hydrofluorocarbons — which became a replacement for ODSs but proved to be more potent than carbon dioxide, and detrimental to the climate.



' K N O W L E D G E ' F A C T C H E C K



INFODEMIC

LEADS TO TOO MUCH INFORMATION FLOW,
MAKING THE RECEIVERS CLINICALLY
CONFUSED, AFRAID AND INDECISIVE
IN MOST CASES



KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
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HOW MUCH knowledge is good knowledge? The answer to it is as complicated as the question. Nevertheless, a section of people, or a large number of them, are constantly in pursuit of knowledge even though there is no relation between their area, study and even interest or hobby.

These types of people are not content with what they have acquired in the course of their hard pursuit and major time investment. Wastage of time would be a better expression for such efforts because they not only waste their own time but the time of many others who otherwise would have utilised the time in a better way. They want everyone to know their 'acquired knowledge' and keep on spreading it until someone takes it seriously, does a fact check and announces that the 'knowledge' being spread is either fake, morphed or far from any truth.

In the days of the Internet of things, applications are developed with good intentions to serve social, commercial and even cultural purposes. But people with vested interests hijack them for their own personal needs and dirty deeds that do more harm than good.



**Infodemic leads to confusion
and confused individuals
are the ablest hosts of developing
fear and anxiety.
The loss of reasoning
and judgment sets in**

DR SIDRA AFZAL
Clinical psychologist

Yes, it is all about social media. The false content being spread there needs to be checked and rechecked before believing or re-sending to acquaintances. In most cases, the gullible audiences are victims up to the level of social and psychological problems, which is called 'infodemic' by psychologists.

The psychological cost of infodemic is "unimaginably far-reaching."

Infodemic creates a vicious cycle, the structural significance of which needs to be understood. "Infodemic leads to confusion and confused individuals are the ablest hosts of developing fear and anxiety. The loss of

reasoning and judgment sets in.

Once this operation of anxiety and fear begins, it leads to high suggestibility among individuals. The mental filter which is completely corrupted under the influence of a vicious cycle begins allowing the free flow of misinformation at micro and macro levels," said Dr Sidra Afzal, a clinical psychologist.

Infodemic leads to too much information flow, making the receivers clinically confused, afraid and indecisive in most cases. There are cases developed during the Covid-19 pandemic which started treatments based on the 'knowledge' spread on WhatsApp, fell victim to wrong information and finally turned into psychological cases.

"There were some who turned into cleanliness maniacs, spending most of their time cleaning hands and other body parts, while many others seriously believed that Covid-19 was nothing but propaganda launched by some pharma vested interests. There were instances where people suffered due to wrong herbal treatments and ended up with irreparable losses medically," said another psychologist with a strong suggestion for some mechanism to control this bad practice.

Yes, there is no limit to knowledge, but the knowledge earned should be authentic, well researched and far from bias and vested interests.



RAO Commander receives US Central Command Chief of Staff



MUSCAT: Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Maj Gen Patrick D Frank, Chief of Staff of the United States Central Command. The two sides exchanged views and reviewed several military matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Salim bin Saif al Hosni, Senior Staff Officer at the RAO Command, and Brigadier Sultan bin Mohammed al Maamari, Director General of Operations and Intelligence at RAO. – ONA

Tanuf honours GED toppers



AMAL AL RIYAMI
TANUF, SEPT 18

The Cultural Committee of the Tanuf team of the Nizwa Club organised a ceremony to honour top performing students of the General Education Diploma.

It is an appreciation for their efforts and motivation for the upcoming batch of students.

The honouring ceremony was held under the auspices of Mohammad bin Yasir al Riyami, owner of Mohammad al Riyami Apiaries. Al Riyami thanked students for their outstanding academic excellence. He also praised the teachers and parents who helped the students to achieve their goals.

Dr Salim bin Hamad al Nabhani, father of one of the students, said: “This honour is a morale booster and motivates these students to achieve more in their future academic life.” Dr Al Nabhani thanked the team management for organising such initiatives.

Fahd bin Said al Nabhani, a student, said: “Praise be to Allah for what he has bestowed upon us with this achievement, which was the fruit of effort throughout the year and the support I received from my family. I thank the Tanuf team for the gesture of honouring my colleagues and me.”

Over 500 doctors take entrance test for specialised training



MUSCAT: A total of 525 doctors from all over the country took the exam to qualify to 19 specialised training programmes at Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) for the 2023-2024 academic year on Saturday.

The exam consists of 160 multiple choice questions spanning all medical specialties.

The OMSB annually conducted exam is the second admission exam to be designed and developed in accordance to high international standards by local competencies at the OMSB examination department in coordination with teaching staff members. — ONA



Sultanate of Oman The Supreme Judicial Council

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
39/2022	Consultancy Services (Design and Supervision) of New Court Complexes at A'Seeb and Musandam	27/09/2022	20/10/2022	First	RO 150/-

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

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

- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om

OPEC Fund adopts first Climate Action Plan

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

The OPEC Fund for International Development has adopted its first Climate Action Plan, which commits the organisation to increase its climate financing to 25 per cent by 2025 and 40 per cent by 2030 with a cross-cutting approach to all its projects. The current share of climate finance in approved projects is 20 per cent.

OPEC Fund adopts first Climate Action Plan, doubles targets by 2030. The new Climate Action Plan will boost the Fund's support for sustainable, low-carbon, inclusive, and climate-resilient investments in partner countries.



OMAN CHROMITE COMPANY (SAOG)

Closed Envelop Auction announcement No. (1/2022)

Oman Chromite Company (SAOG) invites offers from interested parties for the Selling some of used equipment, trucks and light cars on “ as is where is condition” and some scrap. Auction document containing the terms & conditions can be obtained from the Company at Sohar office during office hours 8:00.A.M – 3:00.P.M from 20/09/2022 to 27/09/2022 on payment of a non – refundable fee of R.O. 10 (Ten Omani Rials only)

It will be allowed to enter the inspection of the company’s site in the state of Liwa after purchasing the auction brochure.

Those wishing to buy must present a cheque of 100 Omani riyals in the name of the Omani Chrome Company, which will be returned after the completion of the auction.

For more information, please contact Saeed Al Badi at 97191419.



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان وزارة التراث والسياحة Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL TENDER

Tender No.	Tender Name
58/2022/MHT/HQ-40 International	Appointing a company to represent Oman as a tourist destination in Gulf Collaboration Countries (MARKET BASED REPRESENTATIVE) for 2023
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)	25 O M R
Tender Document Sales End Date	9/10/2022
Last Date for Bid Submission	31//10/2022
E-Tendering Portal	https://etendering.tenderboard.gov
Grade	International and excellent grade companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board and their registration is valid

- International companies and institutions that are not registered in the Sultanate can participate in international tenders through the E- tendering portal of the Tender Board at the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) Provided that it register under the regulations in force in the Sultanate of Oman.
- Any bid that does not meet the required tender bond will not be considered.
- The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : solic@mht.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (34/2022)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/122	2022/MM/ QS-52	Supply & Fix of Variable Message Sign Boards at Muscat Expressway & Qurriyat Gate (E-Tender)	25	24/09/2022	02/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/123	2022/MM/ QS-53	Installation of Decorations in Building Muscat Municipality Headquarters for National Day 2022 (E-Tender)	25	24/09/2022	02/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/067	2022/MM/ QS-54	Consultancy Services for Supervision of the Construction of Wadi Mayh (E-Tender)	25	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	First
PRE/22/112	2022/MM/ QS-55	Annual Contract for Maintenance of Cables in Muscat Governorate (E-Tender)	25	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/119	2022/MM/ QS-56	Supply of Traffic Signals Controllers (E-Tender)	25	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	Specialist
PRE/20/017	2021/MM/ HQ-33 (Re Call)	Construction of Storm Water Drainage Channel in AL Ghubrah North – Phase 1C (Re Call) (E-Tender)	290	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/086	2022/MM/ HQ-11	Design & Construction of Internal Roads in Ghala Industrial Area (E-Tender)	36	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	First
PRE/22/111	2022/MM/ HQ-12	Landscaping & Irrigation for Sultan Qaboos Street, Al Khuwair (E-Tender)	48	08/10/2022	30/10/2022	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of abond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission. Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality. For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200 / 24402330).



Fallen bicycles amid strong winds as Typhoon Nanmadol approaches Izumi, Kagoshima prefecture. – AFP

Powerful typhoon bears down on Japan

IZUMI, Japan: Typhoon Nanmadol made landfall in southwestern Japan on Sunday night, as authorities urged millions of people to take shelter from the powerful storm's high winds and torrential rain.

The storm officially made landfall around 7 pm local time as its eyewall arrived near Kagoshima city, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said.

It was packing gusts of up to 234 kilometres per hour and had already dumped up to 500 mm of rain in less than 24 hours on parts of southwestern Kyushu region.

At least 20,000 people were spending the night in shelters in Kyushu's Kagoshima and Miyazaki prefectures, where the JMA has issued a rare "special warning" — an alert that is issued only when it forecasts conditions seen once in several decades.

National broadcaster NHK, which collates information from local authorities, said more than

The region could face 'unprecedented' danger from high winds, storm surges and torrential rain and called the storm 'very dangerous'

seven million people had been told to move to shelters or take refuge in sturdy buildings to ride out the storm.

The evacuation warnings are not mandatory, and authorities have at times struggled to convince people to move to shelters before extreme weather.

They sought to drive home their concerns about the weather system throughout the weekend.

"Please stay away from dangerous places, and please evacuate if you feel even the slightest hint of danger," Prime Minister Fumio Kishida tweeted

after convening a government meeting on the storm. "It will be dangerous to evacuate at night. Please move to safety while it's still light outside."

The JMA has warned the region could face "unprecedented" danger from high winds, storm surges and torrential rain and called the storm "very dangerous." "Areas affected by the storm are seeing the sort of rain that has never been experienced before," Hiro Kato, the head of the Weather Monitoring and Warning Centre, told reporters on Sunday.

"Especially in areas under landslide warnings, it is extremely probable that some kinds of landslides are already happening."

He urged "maximum caution even in areas where disasters do not usually happen."

By Sunday evening, utility companies said nearly 200,000 homes across the region were without power.

Trains, flights and ferry runs

were cancelled until the passage of the storm, and even some convenience stores — generally open all hours and considered a lifeline in disasters — were shutting their doors.

"The southern part of the Kyushu region may see the sort of violent wind, high waves and high tides that have never been experienced before," the JMA said on Sunday, urging residents to exercise "the highest caution possible".

On the ground, an official in Kagoshima's Izumi city said conditions were deteriorating rapidly by Sunday afternoon.

"The wind has become extremely strong. Rain is falling hard too," he said. "It's a total white-out outside. Visibility is almost zero."

In Kyushu's Minamata city, fishing boats tied up for safety bobbed on the waves, as spray from the sea and bands of rain sluiced the boardwalk. — AFP

Tunisia raises gas cooking bottles and fuel prices

TUNIS: Tunisia said on Saturday it raised prices of gas cooking bottles by 14 per cent and fuel by 3 per cent as part of a plan to reduce energy subsidies, a main policy change wanted by the country's international lenders.

The energy ministry said the cooking gas prices, that were raised for the first time in 12 years, will rise to 8.800 dinars from 7.750 dinars, in the first raise in 12 years.

The gasoline price will be raised on Tuesday to 2.400 dinars per litre from 2.330 dinars, a 3 per cent increase, the ministry said in a statement. The rise in

fuel prices is the fourth this year. Tunisia expects its budget deficit will expand to 9.7 per cent of gross domestic product in 2022, up from a previously expected 6.7 per cent, due to the stronger dollar and a sharp increase in grain and energy prices.

The North Africa country, suffering from its worst financial crisis, is trying to agree on a new financing programme with the International Monetary Fund.

The energy balance deficit doubled to 6 billion dinars in the first eight months of 2022 compared with 2.9 billion dinars last year, driven by the impact of the war in Ukraine. — Reuters

Gaza farmer unearths Byzantine-era mosaic

GAZA: An ornate Byzantine floor mosaic showing a variety of colourful birds and other animals has been discovered by chance in Gaza after a Palestinian farmer tried to plant new trees on his land.

Salman al Nabahin unearthed the relic six months ago while working in his olive orchard in Bureij refugee camp, about a kilometre from the border with Israel. Trying to figure out why some trees had not properly taken root, Nabahin said he and his son began digging.

Then the son's axe hit something hard and unfamiliar in appearance.

"I searched on the Internet ... We learnt it was mosaic belonging to the Byzantine era," said the father-of-seven, sitting next to his discovery. "I see it as a treasure, dearer than a treasure. It isn't personal, it belongs to every Palestinian."

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities said the flooring included several

mosaic panels depicting animals and other features of social life during the Byzantine era.

"The archaeological discovery is still in its early stages and we await to know more of the secrets and civilisation values," the ministry said in a statement. "National research teams are working in partnership with international experts and scientists from the French Archaeology School."

Gaza is rich with antiquities, having been an important trading spot for civilisations dating as far back as the ancient Egyptians and the Philistines depicted in the Bible, through to the Roman empire and the crusades.

Several discoveries have been made in recent years. But due to a lack of funds and relevant professionals, Gaza has usually invited international groups to help with the process of excavation and preservation. — AFP



Palestinian farmer Salman al Nabahin cleans a mosaic floor he discovered at his farm and which dates back to the Byzantine era, in the central Gaza Strip. — Reuters

Strong quake strikes eastern Taiwan

TAIPEI: A strong earthquake struck southeastern Taiwan on Sunday, killing at least one person, bringing down a handful of buildings and tearing up roads — but forecasters said the threat of a regional tsunami had passed.

The quake hit at 2:44 pm about 50 kilometres north of the city of Taitung at a depth of 10 kilometres, the United States Geological Survey said.

Its initial strength was given as magnitude 7.2 but the USGS later downgraded it to 6.9. Multiple aftershocks were recorded.

Japan's Meteorological Agency and the Pacific Tsunami Warning



Firefighters work at the site where a building collapsed following a 6.8-magnitude earthquake, in Yuli, Hualien county, Taiwan. — Reuters

Center issued tsunami advisories shortly after the quake, but both

later said there was no longer a threat of high waves. Taiwan's

National Fire Agency said one person was killed by falling machinery at a cement factory in the town of Yuli, which lay close to the epicentre.

The health ministry said 79 people either sought medical treatment or were sent to hospital. At least three buildings collapsed in Yuli, including one that had a 7-Eleven convenience store on the ground floor.

Video footage posted by Taiwan's Central News Agency showed panicked residents running towards the building, which sent up a thick cloud of dust as it caved in. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KHARTOUM

Sudan agree civilians will appoint top leaders

Sudan's generals have agreed to leave the choice of future heads of state and prime ministers to civilian political factions, the deputy head of the military government said.

The announcement was made by paramilitary commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo following a meeting with army chief Abdel Fattah al Burhan. But he gave no indication of when power might be returned to civilians amid the persistent failure of talks with the main



civilian factions since the coup.

"We renewed our previous commitment for the military institution to exit power and leave the governance to civilian (factions)," said Daglo. — AFP

BISHKEK

Kyrgyz-Tajik border conflict death toll rises to 81

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan said on Sunday the death toll from their border conflict had risen to 81 people, as a fragile ceasefire held between two Central Asian nations for a second day and their mutual ally Russia urged a de-escalation.

The former Soviet republics clashed over a border dispute on September 14-16, accusing each other of using tanks, mortars, rocket artillery and assault drones to attack outposts and nearby settlements. Central Asian border



issues largely stem from the Soviet era when Moscow tried to divide the region between groups whose settlements were often located amidst those of other ethnicities. — Reuters

BEIJING

27 people killed in China quarantine bus crash

Twenty-seven people died en route to a Covid-19 quarantine facility when their bus crashed in southwest China, in the country's deadliest road accident this year.

The crash took place on a highway in rural Guizhou province when the vehicle carrying 47 people "flipped onto its side", Sandu police said.

Twenty people were being treated for injuries and emergency responders were dispatched to the scene in remote Qiannan prefecture, police said.



The Guizhou government confirmed that the vehicle had been "transporting people linked to the epidemic to quarantine" from the capital of Guiyang. — AFP



FANS PAY TRIBUTES



A handbag with a sandwich, a reference to her jubilee video, is pictured among flowers and tributes left in Green Park in London following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. – AFP

TRIBUTES POUR IN



A portrait of late Queen Elizabeth II is pictured among flowers and tributes left in Green Park in London following her death on September 8. – AFP

FINAL RESPECTS



Union Jack flags are waved as members of the public stand in the queue as they wait in line to pay their respects to the late Queen Elizabeth II in London. – AFP



FUNERAL OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Main events

September 19, Monday
11:00 am local time (From 1000 GMT)

WESTMINSTER ABBEY
STATE FUNERAL SERVICE AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY
The service starts after the coffin is transferred by gun carriage from Parliament's Westminster Hall to the abbey.

12:15 pm
FUNERAL PROCESSION TO WINDSOR
Procession led by King Charles III and senior royals from the abbey to Wellington Arch, before the coffin is transferred to Windsor by hearse.

3:06 pm
On arrival in Windsor, the hearse makes its way via the Long Walk (historic avenue)

3:40 pm
The king and members of the Royal Family join the procession in the Quadrangle before the coffin enters the chapel

3:53 pm
Cortege halts at chapel.
The coffin will be carried up the steps through the nave, to a platform in the quire.

4:00 pm
TELEVIEWED COMMITTAL SERVICE
At least 800 people expected to attend, including past and present staff members who worked for the queen.

7:30 pm
FINAL RESTING PLACE
Private burial service at King George VI Memorial Chapel. Attended by the king and senior members of the Royal Family.

At the end of service, the coffin will be lowered into the **Royal Vault** (under quire) before interment.

Seating area for the Royal Family and guests. Choir will sing anthems and hymns.

Altar. Quire. Nave. West Steps.

Great West Door. High Altar. Quire. Nave. Coffin carried through nave and quire to a platform. Seated areas: those invited include family members, prime minister, former prime ministers, heads of government and other personalities.

Service is televised to a global audience of millions. Hundreds of thousands of people expected to line the streets for the procession.

Wellington Arch. Buckingham Palace. Westminster Abbey. Palace of Westminster. Horse Guards Parade. Parliament Square. Windsor. Long Walk. Windsor Castle. Quadrangle. The Long Walk. S' GEORGE'S CHAPEL. Private burial service at King George VI Memorial Chapel. Attended by the king and senior members of the Royal Family.

Windsor → LONDON. UNITED KINGDOM.

Sources: Buckingham Palace, BBC, AFP Photos.

Biden pays respects to Queen before funeral

LONDON: US President Joe Biden paid tribute to Queen Elizabeth on the eve of her state funeral on Sunday, appearing on a balcony overlooking the coffin of Britain's late monarch as she lay in state.

Biden is among the scores of dignitaries and royals from across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas who will attend Monday's funeral. Hundreds of thousands of people have descended on London to pay tribute to Britain's longest-reigning monarch, who died on September 8 aged 96.

Elizabeth's body has been lying in state at the historic Westminster Hall since Wednesday, and people from all walks of life and from around the country and overseas have queued for hours to file past her coffin in a constant, emotional stream.

As Biden took his place on the balcony alongside his wife Jill, he made the sign of the cross before briefly placing his hand on his heart.

The US president will later join King Charles and other leaders from around the globe for a reception ahead of the grand state funeral. "Her legacy will loom large in the pages of British history, and in the story of our world," Biden said in a message following news of the queen's death.

Biden was one of the 14 US presidents in office during her 70-year reign, of which Elizabeth met all except Lyndon Johnson, starting with Harry Truman in 1951 when she was still a princess.

Biden will join presidents, prime ministers, kings, queens and sultans representing nearly 200 countries and territories at the funeral. French President Emmanuel Macron was seen walking near the River Thames earlier on Sunday, mingling with those gathered in the streets around parliament.

Britain has invited heads of state or ambassadors from any country with which it has full diplomatic relations, but it is up to those nations who they send. The change was made by Saudi Arabia, the source added.

For all the high ceremony and careful diplomacy of the funeral, for the queen's family, it is also when they will bid farewell to a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.



US President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden pay their respects as they view the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, as it lies in State inside Westminster Hall, at the Palace of Westminster in London. – AFP

'World is better' thanks to Queen, says Biden

Pays tribute to queen's notion of service and dignity

Isolated Prince Andrew pays tribute to 'mummy'

Decision due on when to close queue for lying-in-state

Prince Andrew, the queen's second son, paid tribute to "Mummy, Mother, Your Majesty" on Sunday, reflecting the roles he said Elizabeth fulfilled during her reign.

"Mummy, your love for a son, your compassion, your care, your confidence I will treasure forever," he said.

On Saturday evening, his two daughters joined the queen's other six grandchildren, including Charles' sons Princes William and Harry, at a vigil around her

coffin. Camilla wife of the new king and now Queen Consort, said the smile of the late queen was "unforgettable", in her own tribute on Sunday.

Monday's funeral and the period of mourning has already drawn hundreds of thousands of people to central London's streets and parks, with many clamouring to view floral tributes and experience the atmosphere.

The government advised against travelling to join the queue to see the coffin before the line closes later on Sunday.

Such has been the desire to pay tribute to the popular monarch, the only one most Britons have known since her accession in 1952, that tens of thousands have waited patiently for hours alongside the Thames to spend a few brief seconds at the side of her coffin.

Dignitaries have also taken their place on a balcony to view her lying-in-state, with leaders from Canada, Brazil, Trinidad and Tobago and elsewhere having already paid their respects.

"Everybody's there for one person, to mark what she's done for people and whatever way they felt she touched them or their country," said Darren Luckhurst, a 49-year-old headteacher.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the "sheer silence" was one of the things that made the lying in state so moving, adding that she had shared her moment beside the coffin on Friday with people who had queued for 20 hours or longer. — AFP



Members of the public file past the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, draped in the Royal Standard with the Imperial State Crown and the Sovereign's orb and sceptre, lying in state on the catafalque in Westminster Hall, at the Palace of Westminster, London. – Reuters

Warriors serving one and all!



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

An author, columnist,
creative writer,
translator and a
communications
professional

From saving poor people and improving their lives, fighting disease, protecting children, to giving hope to thousands of people around the world. These are all charitable deeds that very much count on what we do for others around us. Charitable activities are not only limited to donating money to the needy families and people or funding other charitable projects. Rather it goes further beyond these activities to even more human-touched doings. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “Feed the hungry and visit a sick person, and free the captive, if he be unjustly confined. Assist any person oppressed whether Muslim or non-Muslim”.

We are social creatures by nature; our life purpose could be fulfilled by engaging with the society, charitable organisations and even those with whom we work or live. That is why some are doing charity out of their social commitment to give back to a nation, society or a certain segment of people, rather than as a religious obligation. It is true that charity begins at home, but it should never end there. Our charity deeds should extend beyond just family and relatives; charitable deeds make everyone a hero! Let's all serve charity and become heroes.

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This is why the International Day of Charity is introduced to highlight its significance worldwide. This day promotes awareness about charity and why it is important to help the needy people. Charity is essential as it allows us to reach out to wider sections of the society, assist those who need our help the most. International Day of Charity serves to increase and boost social responsibility across the world, growing our support for charitable and noble causes as well as bringing everyone

together in harmony.

The day presents humans with a great opportunity to get involved in various charity events which are going on nationwide or worldwide. The day (September 5) was selected by the United Nations to commemorate an annual International Day of Charity as an official day of recognition and celebration. As the day marks the anniversary of the death of Mother Teresa of Kolkata, it commemorates her works. She was the founder of the Missionaries of Charity, in 1950, which is active all over the world.

It manages homes for those who are dying of tuberculosis, leprosy, and HIV/Aids. It also runs schools, orphanages, family and children's counselling programmes, mobile clinics and other activities. Over the years, Mother Teresa has been awarded many different honours such as the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, and the Tamon Magsaysay Peace Prize in 1962. Mother Teresa stated, “Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time and always start with the person nearest to you”.

On the local front, there are many charitable associations spreading all over the country, making things much better compared to the past days. These charities are sparing no effort to provide different kinds of support to the needy families. Their support goes beyond providing daily rations and funding children's school fees, but extends to building new houses and accommodations sometimes.

The voluntary warriors are making every possible effort to carry out the noble mission of giving. They sacrifice time and efforts to be with the needy people, children at homes or patients at hospitals. All are just after making others happy and enjoying a decent living. Helping others always creates an improved sense of purpose in life or work and inner satisfaction.

If a person performs a deed that continues to benefit others in a good way, s/he will keep collecting rewards for this single charitable act as long as it benefits others. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “When a person dies his works end, except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from and a righteous child who prays for him.” Charity always intends to serve bringing justice, balance and kindness to society.



A TRIBUTE

A child wears a homemade hat with muppets on top depicting late Queen Elizabeth II and a guard as she comes to leave a tribute in Green Park in London on Sunday, following the death of Her Majesty on September 8. Britain was gearing up for the momentous state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II as King Charles III prepared to host world leaders and as mourners queued for the final 24 hours left to view her coffin. – AFP

As climate ‘tipping points’ near, scientists plan for unthinkable

LAURIE GOERING

With new evidence that catastrophic climate-change “tipping points” are nearing — from surging sea levels as polar ice melts to spiking temperatures as methane escapes thawing permafrost — scientists are quietly planning for the unthinkable.

“Extreme climate change risks are under-explored,” Luke Kemp, a researcher with the Centre for the Study of Existential Risk at the University of Cambridge, warned at a pioneering conference on the theme at the University of Exeter this week.

“Climate scholars have strong incentives to err on the side of least drama,” he noted. “You don’t want to be branded an alarmist.”

But with fossil fuel emissions still going up and climate-fuelled disasters multiplying, it’s time for an “honest assessment of the risks and what can be done”, he told an audience stunned into silence by frank assessments of looming threats. A study published last week in the journal Science found that four dangerous planetary tipping points are “likely” above 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7F) of warming above preindustrial temperatures — a level that could be passed within a decade.

Tipping points happen when a small change — such as an incremental increase in global temperature — sparks a rapid, often irreversible transformation, scientists say. One — accelerating melting leading to the eventual collapse of the Greenland ice sheet - may have already been triggered, some believe, setting in motion 7 metres of sea level rise over time, enough to swamp key coastal cities.

David King, former chief scientific adviser for Britain and founder of the Climate Crisis Advisory Group, an expert panel, said he thinks “the Arctic circle tipping points are now passed”.

With the Arctic having warmed 3C — well above the global average, which is already about 1.3C, he said — risks are also growing that large amounts of methane trapped in thawing permafrost could be released.

Adding much more of that potent greenhouse gas to the atmosphere could drive an unstoppable cycle of higher global temperatures and more melting, King said.

“If all of that is released, we’ll see temperatures rise 5-8C (8-14F) over 20 years,” he said, adding this would be “extraordinarily destructive to the future of humanity”, likely causing food system collapse and displacing billions of people. United Nations’ chief António Guterres on Wednesday called the devastating

floods covering a third of Pakistan a “window into the future”.

“What is happening in Pakistan demonstrates the sheer inadequacy of the global response to the climate crisis, and the betrayal and injustice at the heart of it,” he told the UN General Assembly in New York.

“If one-third of G20 countries were under water today, as (they) could be tomorrow, perhaps they would find it easier to agree on drastic cuts to emissions,” he added.

Scientists at the Exeter conference emphasised that channelling money and attention to rapidly scale up renewable energy — already as cheap as fossil fuels in most places — along with better nature protection could still hold off many disastrous shifts. They pointed to early signs of “positive” tipping points that could also be approaching as some societies and economies push towards a safer and more sustainable path.

Most major car and truck manufacturers, for instance, now plan to stop producing fossil fuel vehicles.

And in many countries meat-eating — a major driver of emissions and nature loss — is falling, even if global demand is still rising, the scientists said.

Tasty, high-quality and increasingly cheap meat substitutes could prove “a potential tipping point that could take the carpet right out from under livestock farming”, which is a major driver of deforestation, said Tim Lenton, director of the Global Systems Institute at Exeter and an organiser of the conference.

Similarly, the cost of renewable energy is expected to plunge so fast in coming decades that using anything else will soon be uncompetitive, said Doynne Farmer, director of the complexity economics programme at the Oxford Martin School. “Even if you’re a climate denier, you should be behind making the green energy transition quickly” just to save

cash, he added.

Social tipping points are also emerging, such as many new graduates refusing jobs at unsustainable companies, social scientists said.

Economist Kate Raworth said her students at Oxford University’s Environmental Change Institute now consider the traditional push for endless growth more radical and risky than her “doughnut” economics model which seeks a safe space between planetary boundaries and human needs.

From neighbours installing solar panels to Greta Thunberg launching her lone climate strike and cities like Harlem in the Netherlands banning ads for fossil fuels and, soon, meat, “behaviour is contagious”, noted Dutch social campaigner Femke Slegers.

Johan Rockström, director of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research and another conference convener, said that increasingly self-reinforcing green switches would be crucial to hold off catastrophic climate impacts.

“Nothing less than positive social tipping points will take us to a safe landing,” he said. “The radical suggestion is to continue business as usual. That’s the really nightmarish dead end.”

An array of new efforts to reduce catastrophic risk — or to deal with the consequences of failing — are starting to appear. Efforts to pass a fossil fuel “non-proliferation” treaty — designed to end new oil, gas and coal exploration and production - are gathering steam, while the Bezos Earth Fund this week put \$1.15 million into efforts to “activate” positive tipping points.

Scientists also want a special report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on catastrophic climate change and tipping points, in part to help raise the profile of the threats.

— Thomson Reuters Foundation



Hikers walk past the newly uncovered Zanfcluron path at Glacier 3000 in Les Diablerets. – Reuters

sport

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Ducati Gresini Italian rider Enea Bastianini celebrates after winning the Moto Grand Prix GP of Aragon at the Motorland circuit in Alcaniz. — AFP

Bastianini pips Bagnaia to win Aragon GP

SPAIN: Enea Bastianini overtook Francesco Bagnaia on the last lap for a dramatic Aragon Grand Prix victory on Sunday as world championship leader Fabio Quartararo crashed out in the first lap, blowing the title race wide open. Gresini Racing's Bastianini avenged his narrow defeat at Misano earlier this month by denying Bagnaia a fifth straight win after a photo finish in Alcariz, fighting off the Ducati rider to win by 0.042 seconds.

"It's almost like a dream," Bastianini, who started third on the grid, said after his fourth victory of the season. "I made some mistakes during the race but in the end I ended up approaching Pecco and on the last lap I had the opportunity to attack, and I managed to win." Bagnaia cut Frenchman Quartararo's championship lead from 30 points to 10 with five races remaining, with Aleix Espargaro a further seven points behind and back in



the title hunt after completing the podium for Aprilia. Espargaro passed Red Bull KTM's Brad Binder, who had spent most of the race in third after re-overtaking Ducati's Jack Miller on the penultimate lap to take his first podium place since Mugello in May. "On the last lap I felt that I wasn't able to overtake Enea again, because I was already taking too many risks in the previous laps. So the 20 points are important," Bagnaia said.

"Enea did an incredible job, he was very competitive throughout the weekend and I already knew that he and Fabio were the fastest. Fabio, unfortunately, crashed on the first lap, but in any case I just tried to do my best." Reigning champion Quartararo hit the rear of Marc Marquez's Honda on the exit of turn five before the Spaniard and LCR Honda's Takaaki Nakagami made contact, bringing the race to a premature end for all three riders.

"I lost the rear in Turn 3 and Fabio made contact. When I engaged the holeshot device later in the lap, the bike locked and moved to the left because there was a piece of Fabio's bike in the rear," Marquez said. "It was really unlucky and I want to apologise to both Taka and Fabio." Bastianini's victory secured Ducati the constructors' championship for the third consecutive season. — Reuters

Dutch star Van Dijk defends world time-trial crown

WOLLONGONG, AUSTRALIA: Dutch ace Ellen van Dijk successfully defended her time-trial crown at cycling's road world championships on Sunday for her third career title, outpacing Australia's Grace Brown and European champion Marlen Reusser. The 35-year-old was the final rider down the ramp and chased down Brown's blistering early pace to win by 12.73 seconds in 44min 28.60sec and clinch another title, having also won in 2013. Switzerland's Reusser was third, 41.68 sec adrift at the opening event of the eight-day road world championships at Wollongong, a coastal city 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Sydney. In a major upset, two-time title holder and Olympic champion Annemiek van Vleuten failed to make the podium, with the Dutchwoman managing only seventh, a huge 1min 43.02sec behind Van Dijk. "I never expected to win. I didn't think it was a perfect course



for me but I had a good mental and physical approach with my coach," said Van Dijk. "I just thought I would give it my all today, a podium spot would be nice, but if it's not, it's not, I still had a great year. I never thought I would win today." She made a point of not looking at the times set by the other cyclists, instead concentrating on her own riding. "I wanted to focus completely on myself, but I was so surprised to cross the finish line first," she said. For the first time at the worlds, women covered the same distance as the men, sharing a 34.2 kilometre



Ellen Van Dijk of The Netherlands competes in the Women's elite time trial during the first day of UCI Road World Championships in Wollongong, Australia.— REUTERS

(21.2 miles) route running along two laps of a technical and twisting circuit with a small climb. Commonwealth Games time-trial champion Brown was among the first riders out with her time standing until Van Dijk's exploits. Reusser appeared on track to challenge Brown after setting a faster pace through the first split, but faded as Van Dijk, who was following her, rose to the challenge. "It was a very long and nervous wait," said Brown. "I thought there was still a chance I could win the race overall, but Van Dijk had a phenomenal day. She's a seasoned time-trialer and she deserved the win." In another first, under-23 women competed for their own championship as part of the same race with Italy's Vittoria Guazzini, who finished fourth 52.11sec behind Van Dijk, taking the U23 gold. The men's time trial is later on Sunday with Italy's Filippo Ganna the two-time defending champion. — AFP



Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-min celebrates scoring their fourth goal. – Reuters

SON HAT-TRICK IN LEICESTER'S THRASHING

ANDY JALIL.
LONDON, 18 SEPTEMBER.

Heung-Min Son returned to form emphatically, ending his goal drought with a hat-trick in a space of 13 scintillating minutes as Leicester were humiliated by Tottenham Hotspur in a 6-2 defeat. After ending last season as joint top scorer in the Premier league, Son had not been able to get on the score sheet and was made a substitute for this match. But having been brought on, in the 58th minute of the second-half, he displayed his superb ability. The loss leaves Leicester languishing at the bottom of the league table after six consecutive defeats and puts the manager's position distinctly at risk as he clearly realises. Asked if he expected the club's owners to continue with him as manager, he said: "I don't know, to be honest. Whatever their decision is, I'll always respect it. I feel in the team tonight, you watched them play in the first half, you can see the confidence in the

team, the creativity in the team. It's just cutting out the mistakes. "There's no doubt first seven games, we've had a tough start. Tottenham away, Arsenal away, Chelsea away and Manchester United at home." He said the international break "has probably come at a good time to reset everything and break the cycle of the summer as well." He added: "The owners will do what it is that they feel they need to do. Losing the last six games doesn't make great reading. I've every confidence that the team can push on and if they play like they did for large parts of this game we'll climb higher in table." Tottenham were a goal down as early as the sixth minute when Leicester converted a retaken penalty after the first attempt was saved but VAR decided the goalkeeper had moved early. Two minutes later Spurs equalised from Harry Kane's header following a corner. Spurs then took the lead in the 21st minute following another corner with Eric Dyer leaping high to head the ball in.

Leicester drew level just four minutes before half-time when Tim Castagne did well on the right moving forward and crossing to James Maddison to firmly slot his shot home. The parity didn't last long as two minutes after the break Tottenham scored. Wilfried Ndidi dawdled on the pass from Jonny Evans and was disposed by Rodrigo Bentancur who then put his side in front again. Then came the superb hat-trick displayed by Son. In the 73rd minute he sprinted ahead to collect the ball and with his right foot found the top corner of Leicester's goal with a 22-yard curling shot. Ten minutes later after Cristian Romero inexplicably missed an open goal, Son received a pass from Kane and moved the ball to his left foot to unleash a powerful shot into the top left corner. Finally, two minutes later, Son lifted the ball over the goalkeeper from a pass from Pierre Emile Hojberg but an off-side flag went up. However, a check by VAR showed a clear goal.

Arsenal's Nwaneri becomes Premier League's youngest player at 15



Arsenal's Ethan Nwaneri with Gabriel Martinelli after the match. – Reuters

LONDON: Ethan Nwaneri made Premier League history on Sunday as the Arsenal midfielder became the youngest ever player in the English top flight at 15 years and 181 days. Nwaneri came off the bench late on as the Gunners returned to the top of the table with a 3-0 win at Brentford. He broke the record previously held by Liverpool's Harvey Elliott when he appeared for Fulham aged 16 years and 30 days. Nwaneri also set a new landmark for the youngest Arsenal player in any competition that was held by Cesc Fabregas. Nwaneri had been expected to spend the season with Arsenal Under-18s but he was quickly promoted to the Under-21s following his impressive performances. Injuries to captain Martin Odegaard and Oleksandr Zinchenko had left Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta short of midfield options. "We are pretty short and opportunities come when issues arise," said Arteta. "We have the opportunities to bring young players on." Northern Irish schoolboy Christopher Atherton became the youngest senior footballer ever in the United Kingdom earlier this week when he appeared for Glenavon aged 13 years and 329 days. — AFP

Inaugural edition of Women's Indoor Bash cricket held at Oman Cricket Academy

MUSCAT: It was a day of cricket where camaraderie and competitive spirit was in full display at the Oman Cricket Academy indoor arena as the inaugural edition of the TM Done Women's Indoor Bash came to successful conclusion. Organised by Oman Cricket (OC), the nine-a-side T10 tournament attracted a total of seven teams with Pitch Smashers cornering the title glory in style. In the final, Pitch Smashers defeated Phoenix by six wickets with Smashers' Nayan Anil picking the player of the final trophy. Besides the finalists, the other teams that battled out at the indoor arena of the Oman Cricket Academy were Pakistan School Muscat (PSM) Women, Globetrotters, Indian School Wadi Kabir (ISWK) Women, Bangladesh Cricket Club Women and The DrOmans. OC's endeavour to make the game popular and reach a larger section of women met with encouraging response as the seven teams were allowed to name 11 players each. A round-robin format ensured that each team played two matches each in the league stage and the best four – Pitch Smashers, Phoenix, PSM Women and Globetrotters — advanced to the playoff stage. The playoff stage had a Qualifier 1 for the top two teams in the league stage and Pitch Smashers defeated Phoenix to qualify directly to the final. Phoenix got another chance in Qualifier 2 as it met PSM Women, who had defeated Globetrotters in Eliminator. Phoenix got the better



of PSM Women to setup a repeat match against Pitch Smashers. However, Pitch Smashers stamped their authority to claim the title. Phoenix's Amanda D'Costa was declared the Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the tournament. Delighted after the success of the inaugural edition, Vaishali Jesrani, OC's women coordinator and advisor to the OC board, said, "This was a new concept launched by us. We are very happy to have received such an encouraging response. The players, be it working women, schoolchildren and homemakers, were all part of the event and it was played in good spirit. It was heartening to see families turn up to cheer the women teams." Vaishali, who has been spearheading women's cricket in Oman for more than a decade, said, "Oman Cricket is committed to promote women's cricket and the new format was introduced to attract more players and showcase our world-class indoor facilities at the Oman Cricket Academy. We are thankful to all the participants, and we hope to bring more such events in the country." Saada al Ismaili, former Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) board member, and Kiran Asher, OC board member, were the guests of honour, and presented the trophies, cash awards and individual prizes. Also present on the occasion were Maryam al Hosni, representative from the Ministry of Education and member of Oman School Sports Association, and Duleep Mendis, OC's chief development officer. **Brief scores: Qualifier 1:** Pitch Smashers: 69/1 in 10 overs (Nitya 31 n.o.; Geetha Jagdish 1-7) beat Phoenix: 30/5 in 10 overs (Afida 1-0, Meera 2-2) **Qualifier 2:** Phoenix: 79/0 in 10 overs (Geetha J 31 n.o.); beat PSM Women: 34/4 in 10 overs (Fiza 19; Nikithaa 1-10) **Final:** Phoenix: 49/3 in 10 overs (Geetha J 18; Meera 1-6) lost to Pitch Smashers: 50/2 in 8.1 overs (Nayan 19 n.o.; Amanda D'Costa 1-5)



■ HH SAYYID THEYAZIN BIN HAITHAM AL SAID SUPPORTS CAMEL RACING



With the support of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth to preserve traditional sports including camel racing events, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth provided financial support to organise camel races in various fields in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. Oman Camel Racing Federation soon will announce the details of the qualifying races (for all ages), which will be held in the same day in all the governorates.

51 winners of Hospitality Packages to enjoy World Cup 2022

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, conducted an exciting live draw at its Head Office recently to choose the winners of the Hospitality Packages to FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa. Attended by members of the bank's Management Team, bank customers and media personnel, the special draw saw 51 Hospitality Packages of two persons each being given away to the lucky winners. The packages will enable 102 people in total to visit and enjoy select matches at the

FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa. To add further excitement, the ceremony was broadcast live to the public through Bank Muscat's social networking sites. This announcement of winners is part of the biggest campaign ever in the Sultanate of Oman to give customers an opportunity to participate in the FIFA World Cup to be hosted in Qatar in November.

Sharing the enthusiasm of many of the customers at the event, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to organise this campaign in partnership with Visa to celebrate along with our customers one of the biggest global sporting spectacles in the



world. This campaign witnessed great interest from customers and was a success at all levels. We would like to congratulate all the winners and we do hope that they will enjoy the prize which comes courtesy of Visa, and have the experience of a lifetime in Qatar. At the same time, we also thank all our customers for their positive contributions in making this campaign a success and also for their trust and confidence in the bank."

Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah Tamman al Mashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, thanked Visa for their continuous cooperation and partnership with Bank Muscat,

which helped to organise this exciting promotion for the benefit of the bank's customers and helped them attend the largest sports event in the world. He added: "Digital transformation has given financial institutions wider space to develop their services. Bank Muscat has always been keen to leverage this transformation successfully in its services and products. The success of this transformation was helped by the high demand from customers for the bank's digital payment services. We always encourage our valued customers to transact digitally whether shopping locally or internationally."

After launching the promotion



in May 2022, all Bank Muscat Visa Credit and Prepaid Cardholders were automatically entered into raffle draws to select the winners when they used their Bank Muscat Visa Credit or Prepaid Card to make a minimum cumulative spend of RO 50 or more during the promotional period till August 31, 2022. Customers also got additional chances in the draw for every additional RO 50 spent through their cards.

HOSPITALITY PACKAGE
Each of the 51 winners will receive a Hospitality Package for two to the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa. The packages include airline tickets,

hotel accommodation and tickets for a number of matches during the month-long football carnival and as many as 10 packages (1 Opening Match, 1 Final and 8 Quarterfinal matches) were reserved for Bank Muscat Private Banking Visa Infinite and Asalah Priority Banking Visa Signature credit cardholders. Nine packages featuring Quarterfinal matches were reserved for Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit cardholders and the winners also included 8 Visa Prepaid cardholders who won packages to visit Group Stage matches. As many as 24 winners were chosen from holders of Bank Muscat-co-branded Visa Platinum credit cards, Visa Gold

credit cards and Visa Classic credit cards.

Earlier this year, the bank also launched a special limited-edition Visa Prepaid Card to celebrate the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, courtesy of Visa. Customers can easily apply for this Visa Prepaid card, which has been designed as a collector's item via their Bank Muscat Mobile Banking app or Internet Banking only. Bank Muscat's contactless cards can be used by customers to make secure payments online and at millions of PoS terminals in Oman and around the world as well as for ATM withdrawals. They feature the latest security standards and state-of-the-art technology.

“E-Sports, Future Sports” Course organised by OOA

MUSCAT: Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) will organise “E-Sports, Future Sports” Course on Tuesday and will last for 3 days, in cooperation with Oman E-Sports Committee. The course aims to spread cultural awareness about e-sports due to the growing interest during the past few years and as one of the official sports recognised in many countries of the world, as it aims to introduce the participants in the e-games industry and the awareness of the psychological factors associated with it and the risks and how to deal with it.

27 candidates from OOA, federations, sports committees, club employees, and those

interested in e-sports and their practitioners will be attended by Asma al Yahya, a member of Oman E-Sports Committee - Member of the Women's Committee of the Arab Federation for E-Sports.

The course includes many theoretical axes and practical episodes, where the history of electronic sports, the concept of electronic sports, E-Sports and the difference between them, the classification of games and E-Sports, its importance, the psychological factor in electronic sports, the E-Sports industry, in addition to reviewing the professional experience of one of the players in E-Sports.







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To know more



99-year usufruct for government lands: Housing and Urban Planning Ministry

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

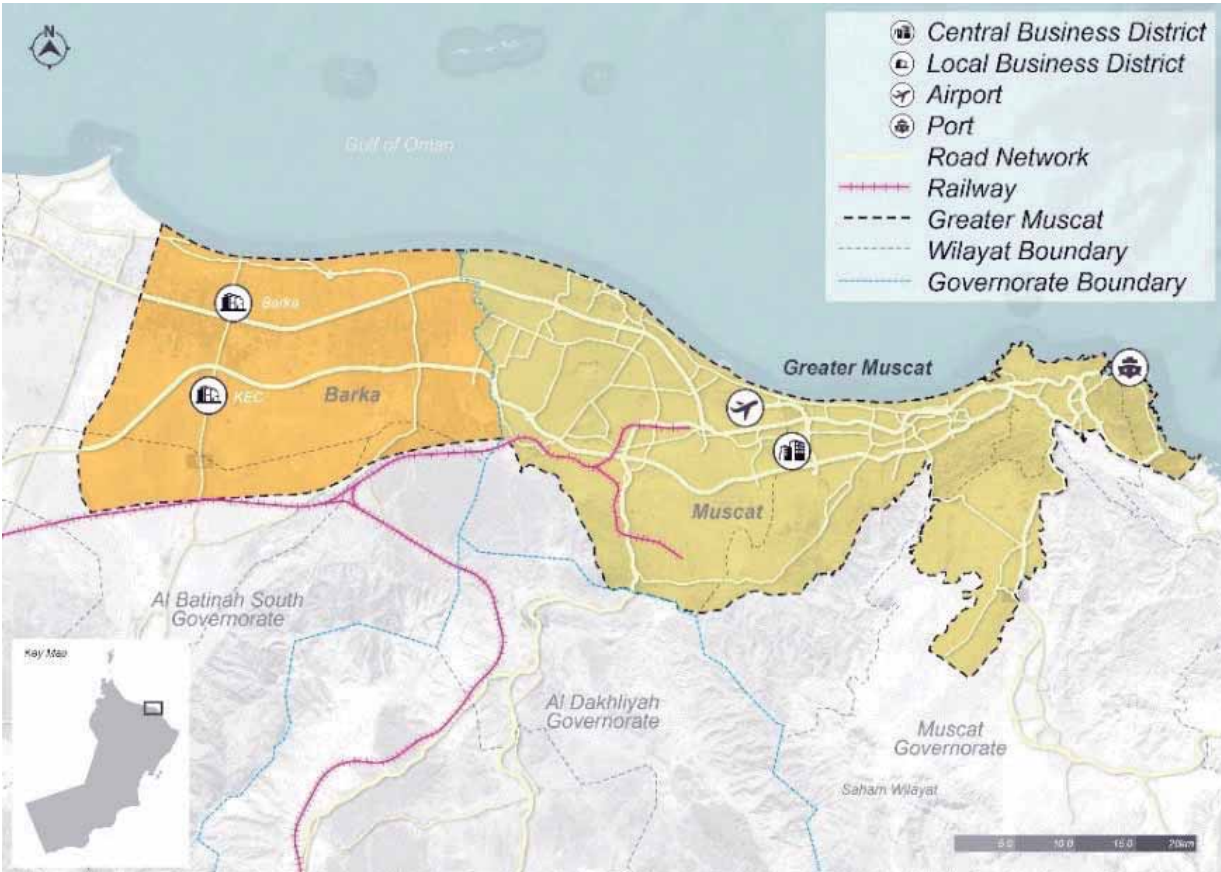
The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has stressed that Royal Decree 59/2022 regulating the usufruct of Omani lands aims to achieve a number of economic, social, planning and environmental objectives.

From the economic standpoint, the Decree seeks to enhance incentives for economic diversification and financial sustainability in order to achieve the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 in stimulating investment inflows from individuals and businesses.

Moreover, it seeks to streamline integration between different agencies in supporting optimal land use. As for the social aspect, the new Decree seeks to ensure that local communities benefit the most of any land development, thereby nurturing sustainable and homogeneous urban development.

In the planning aspects, the Decree mandates an upgrade of all land use regulations to bring them into line with the broad goals of Oman National Spatial Strategy. By raising planning standards in the regions of the country, it is hoped that high quality investments will flow into the region, thereby contributing to the growth of prosperous cities.

As for the environmental aspect, the Decree seeks to enhance



the sustainability and balance of the elements of the environment and the use of green spaces and surfaces through sustainable investment and development of a basic environment that is resilient and deals with climate change.

Several initiatives will be pursued in line with the objectives of this Decree: introduction of efficient land use guidelines, stimulus programme for the economic sector, completion of the governorate development system, providing service and commercial activities per urban strategy policies, working to

achieve sustainability and maximising the financial return from the real estate sector, and strengthening the capabilities of the sector.

It also seeks to support the localisation of industries in integrated areas to raise the value-added rates. Besides contributing to the inflow of expertise and modern technologies, the Decree will also open wider horizons and new markets for Omani products, work to provide more job opportunities, support the national economy, and enhance investment opportunities for

small and medium enterprises, the ministry said.

It added that the public bidding process advocated under the Royal Decree seeks to enhance transparency, strengthen governance, enable equal opportunities, drive productivity and efficiency, support competition, and localisation of industries.

Significant, the usufruct for any government land is for 99 years as a further incentive to investors, enable investment stability and support long-term investment projects.

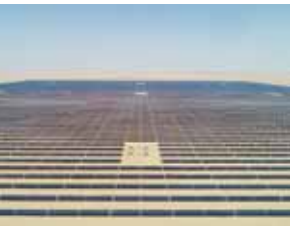
THE DECREE SEEKS TO ENHANCE INCENTIVES FOR ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THE PRIORITIES OF OMAN VISION 2040 IN STIMULATING INVESTMENT INFLOWS FROM INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES.

An usufruct agreement is initially for a period of one year, subject to renewal, provided it is renewed every 5 years after the completion of implementation, or according to the period of the mortgage in the case of financing, provided total period of the contract does not exceed 99 years.

The period allowed for the beneficiary to start the project shall not exceed two years from the date of registration of the usufruct contract, and the contract shall be considered null and void in the event of any failure to implement the project within the stipulated period.

Regarding the lowest ceiling for the value of the public auction, the ministry indicated the bidding starts from the price per square metre in the wilayat or governorate in which the land is located. It is RO 1 in the governorates of Muscat and the Wilayat of Salalah, and 500 baisas for the rest of the wilayats and governorates, and is based on the market value of the location of the land subject to bidding.

Oman's 105-MW Amin solar PV plant gets global certificate



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

Oman's 105-MW Amin solar PV plant has been registered as the first solar energy project in the country with a global renewable energy certificate.

The global energy renewable certificate allows linking electricity ownership rights from the place of production to the place of consumption by issuing a certificate for each megawatt-hour produced from the power plant. These certificates also enable their reuse towards decarbonisation goals or be traded in the open market. This registration paves the way to benefit from the first batch of energy units, which exceeds 206MWh.

The registration of the units produced from the station was completed in coordination with the Department of Climate Affairs of the Civil Aviation Authority and Three Pillars Consulting — the local issuer of the renewable energy certificate in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Firas bin Ali al Abduwani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Amin Renewable Energy, said: "This registration is a gain for all partners and related parties in this strategic project, and obtaining these certificates is the first stage to ensure that the Sultanate of Oman meets the international ambition of clean energy and structuring the adoption of green particles."

Meanwhile, Sami bin Baqi al Lawati, Technical Director of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), described this achievement as a great example of collaboration between key industry players to ensure industrial decarbonisation in Oman, in line with Oman Vision 2040. **TURN TO P15**

PDO generates cash flow 'windfall' of \$14.5bn in 2021

AMBITIOUS GOALS: 2022 cash flow targeted at \$8.9 billion, says MD Steve Phimister

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Buoyant international energy prices helped boost cash flow from Petroleum Development Oman's (PDO) Oil & Gas operations to \$14.5 billion in 2021, delivering a "significant windfall for the nation", according to Steve Phimister, Managing Director.

This compares with an original target of \$10.5 billion, he stated in the majority government-owned energy company's 2021 Sustainability Report.

Helping deliver this impressive figure is a combined oil, gas and condensate production averaging 1.223 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) in

2021.

It included oil production averaging 635,000 bpd (5,000 bpd short of target), annual gas production of 57 million cubic metres per day (against a target of 71 million m3/day) and condensate output that was slightly under the target of 104,000 bpd – overall figures that were achieved "despite the coronavirus constraints on the mobility and availability of personnel and pressures on our supply chain", the Managing Director noted.

In comparison, oil production is targeted at 652,000 bpd and condensates at 91,000 bpd in 2022, with Capex and Opex for the year projected at \$5.129 billion and \$2.066 billion respectively. "This should generate \$8.9 billion cashflow for our shareholders (based on an oil price of \$45 a barrel and of \$4.5 per million British thermal units of gas)," Phimister stated.



Helping deliver this impressive figure is a combined oil, gas and condensate production averaging 1.223 million barrels of oil equivalent per day (boepd) in 2021.

STEVE PHIMISTER
Managing Director, PDO

In another successful year on the exploration front, PDO booked a total of 111 million barrels of

oil and 0.6 trillion cubic feet of gas as commercial contingent resource (CCR) volumes in 2021. The overall unit finding cost was just \$1.36 per barrel of oil (boe) equivalent, according to the report. The company also notched significant gains in reining in expenditure in line with its rigorous cost management regime, the Managing Director said.

"We made more than \$550 million in total savings (a rise of more than 10 per cent on 2020) across all directorates and different contracts, especially those related to rates, demands and specifications. This was mainly attributable to our Near-Term Sustainability programme (NTSP), which addresses a step change in structural cost reductions and productivity improvements on a far greater scale than achieved throughout our history.

The Programme achieved its mandate to deliver \$1 billion cost savings in 2020-21, guided by multi-disciplinary teams for each spending portfolio. These were tasked with carrying out deep-dive investigations, contract reviews and negotiations to deliver optimal value."

A mix of NTSP revisions, drilling efficiencies, well optimisation and project savings delivered oil-related Capex savings of \$327 million and gas Capex savings of \$90 million, he further added.

Going forward, the company's future direction will be guided by the following three strategic priorities: (1) growing safe and cost/carbon competitive hydrocarbon operations, (2) establishing a differentiated hydrocarbon portfolio and (3) developing carbon capture, usage and storage and low-carbon fuels, Phimister added.

GHSO 2022 Energy Future Leaders Programme elicits strong interest from budding researchers

MUSCAT: The Energy Future Leaders Programme – organised as part of the 2022 edition of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Global Conference & Exhibition and sponsored by Oman LNG – has garnered an overwhelming response from young researchers studying at universities and colleges within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Entries received from some of the 120 universities locally and internationally are presently being evaluated by a “Technical Committee of experts. A selection of winning entries will be invited to attend this year’s Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Conference and Exhibition – the country’s pivotal platform showcasing national and global aspirations for the growth of a green energy based economic future.

Posters highlighting their outstanding concepts and research work will be featured at the Summit. Three of these winners will go on to present their work to an international audience of dignitaries and experts during the Summit, and receive prestigious awards as well.

Commenting on the success of the Energy Future Leaders Programme, Dr Intisar al Busaidy – Team Leader, said: “It was gratifying to receive such a large



Dr Intisar al Busaidy



Hisham al Sulaimi



Houd al Saqri



Abd Alhadi al Saadi



Abdulaziz al Hashemi



Yarub al Hadhrami

number of abstracts, many of them high quality and merit-worthy. The response from young Omani research students was particularly commendable, which was demonstrative of the deep interest that our youth have in their country’s low-carbon energy future.

Going forward, we hope to build on the momentum created by this initiative to drive further interest in the green energy future

among our youth.”

Generously sponsored by Oman LNG, the roughly two-month-long programme was aimed at recognising and rewarding young talent in the renewable and green energy space that, in a matter of a few years, will find themselves on the frontlines of the international drive to decarbonise global economies. Creating a cadre of young energy professionals to serve this vitally important

emerging industry is an underlying objective of the GHSO Exhibition and Conference.

Assisting Team Leader Dr Intisar al Busaidy in the delivery of the GHSO Energy Future Leaders Programme was a team of enthusiastic student volunteers.

Sharing about his support for the initiative, Abd Alhadi al Saadi said: “Young people are the force of the future, and developing their skills and abilities is one of the

most important things that must be done to ensure a better future.

I have always believed in renewable sources of energy, and it seems that green hydrogen gives a wider choice of different energy options, and this increases the enthusiasm to join this team, which aspires to hone the capabilities of ambitious students.”

Fellow team member Houd al Saqri added: “As the world is pushing towards fighting climate change and hydrogen being one of the main solutions, I’m happy to be with the team to enhance my skills and work for something that can help the world.”

Yarub al Hadhrami stated: “The air that we breathe and the water that we drink do not know political boundaries, as everyone is affected when something bad happens to these resources.

Seeing many people from different countries do their best to save the environment brings up bright hope for a green and peaceful future. I am happy to be part of the Future Energy Leaders Programme management team, as it helps me improve my skills and enrich my knowledge in the field of renewable energy.”

For Abdulaziz al Hashemi, a place on the Project Team also afforded him the opportunity to improve his management team: He said: “The Future Energy Leaders

Programme was a great chance to delve into the latest research in the green hydrogen field from more than 200 universities around the world that have long experience in renewable energy research.

Furthermore, I was excited to be on the management team of this programme as it is a great opportunity for me to expand my knowledge in green hydrogen and also to improve my management skills.”

Hisham al Sulaimi added in conclusion: “What a great opportunity to join the management team of the Future Energy Leader Programme, where more than 120 universities from around the globe are competing and sharing experiences. I hope this programme will result in excellent outcomes for the world to be a more climate-friendly place.”

Organised by Birba Energy in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the GHSO Summit & Exhibition will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Center during December 5-7, 2022.

The primary focus on Oman’s strategy to develop a world-class industry that, on the one hand, meets the energy requirements of the Sultanate of Oman’s future low-carbon economy, and on the other, serves as a major global supplier of the carbon-neutral fuel.

SBCF facilitates depart of 100 pilgrims for Umrah

MUSCAT: 100 national pilgrims from Al Noor Association recently departed from Oman for Umrah. The specially designed package was fully sponsored by Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation (SBCF) and included return airfares, food, accommodation and on-ground Umrah related activities.

Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation was founded in 2004. It is the first Charity Organisation in Oman and continually assists in the welfare of individuals and families who are economically hard-pressed.

The foundation regularly facilitates various charitable activities by providing financial and non-financial assistance.

The foundation’s activities are apparent in various spheres across the nation. While



most of the projects are directly handled by Saud Bahwan Charitable Foundation, it also

undertakes projects jointly with Ministries and Institutions.

Al Namaa opens investment avenues for ahli Islamic depositors

MUSCAT: With an expected return rate of up to 3.54% per annum, ahli Islamic is opening investment avenues for depositors with its exclusive Al Namaa Savings Account, which is designed and structured to inspire a culture of saving among its patrons and potential customers.

Through the Mudaraba based Savings Account, depositors can enjoy high profits calculated and paid on a monthly basis. As per the set protocol, the depositor (Rab-ul-Mal), investing in Al Namaa Savings Account, authorises the Bank (Mudarib) to invest his/her funds into Sharia-compliant high net worth business avenues.

The bank has added ease and convenience to the account and made it feasible for customers with varying financial capabilities



by incorporating multiple deposit tiers that caters to the different customer segments.

Noora Sabah Sultan – AGM, Head of Retail, ahli Islamic, commented: “The main premise behind Al Namaa is to earn highest possible profits on every

Rial invested with the bank. We want our customers to understand the potentials of their deposits to earn them profits that are commensurate with their investments. Our investment tiers are weightage-based and the same is distributed on a monthly basis,

with payment assured on average balance maintained.”

According to Yousuf al Rawahi, DGM and Head of ahli Islamic, “this account is, literally, a call for investors to gain extra mileage with their deposits. We have, through our various products and services, encouraged our customers to save and prosper, both personally and professionally.

With Al Namaa Savings Account, we are taking that initiative a step further by offering high profit generating deposit product. While our loyal patrons are buoyed by the prospect of enhancing their investments by simply depositing their incomes, we would also like to urge all new customers to recognise the potential of this account to grow their savings without any hassles.”

Al Hassan opens new gym facilities for employees



MUSCAT: Businesses that have an eye on the future are focusing more on employee well-being than ever before. The physical and mental well-being of the employees is at the core of the values ingrained in the culture of Al Hassan LLC as well.

The “Al Afia” initiative engages employees at the company through different events and sessions that guide them on how to bring healthy changes in their lifestyle.

Recently an initiative was taken by the management of Al Hassan LLC to take the physical well-being of the employees to the next level. A modern gym was opened in the company’s premises in the month of July. Equipped with advanced machinery, the gym has been opened with the idea of keeping the work force healthy and energised.

The idea was welcomed by everyone at Al Hassan and it has immediately become a popular spot for the employees after office hours.

People are taking benefit of having access to the facility which is free for all employees for which they would have to pay a monthly fee outside.

“The opening of the gym has come as a blessing for many of us, who can keep their fitness in check. People are now more encouraged to take advantage of the state-of-the-art machines installed in the gym for their use,” said Murtaza who is one of several regulars at the gym.

Opening of the gym is one of many other initiatives that Al Hassan LLC has taken in recent years, which shows the organisation’s commitment towards keeping their workers engaged, content and healthy.

Wakud, Tadweer join hands to strengthen waste oil recycling



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Local Omani SME Wakud International has joined hands with fellow Omani SME and leading recycler Tadweer has announced a collaboration to turn waste oils into biodiesel. Tadweer is growing its recycling streams to include the recycling of used cooking oil (UCO). It is the first entity in the Sultanate of Oman to provide a solution for collecting used cooking oil from residential homes.

The new partnership will raise awareness of the local benefits from recycling UCO in Oman, said Wakud in a press statement. Waste oils can be a hazard to the environment and wildlife as they are usually disposed of incorrectly.

Collecting UCO for renewable fuels provides a solution for the ecological challenge our community is facing. “It our pleasure to have this great partnership with Wakud - the lead company in UCO recycling

in Oman - in collecting UCO from individuals for a first time in Oman beside collection from hotels, restaurants, and other UCO generators and recycling it to biodiesel.

This partnership come in line with Oman 2040 to raise the awareness of community about green economy and keep our environment more sustainable and greener,” said Zulfa al Kharousi, Tadweer Co-Founder.

Maher al Habsi, Wakud CEO, added: “We intend to transform all the cooking oil collected by Tadweer into local biodiesel. Providing our community with Oman’s cleanest fuel. Our partnership is a great example of how as SMEs we can work together to fulfil our ambitions of Vision 2040 and create a localised, circular green economy that puts an emphasis on environmental protection.

Tadweer will soon be rolling out an app where households will be able to schedule pickup of used cooking oil in environmentally safe bottles.

Increase in Oman’s electricity and water production

MUSCAT: The Dhofar Governorate recorded an increase in total electricity production by 9.2 per cent to 2,100 gigawatts per hour, and the governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah recorded an increase in total electricity production by 6.5 per cent to 12,925 gigawatts per hour.

Meanwhile, the Sultanate of Oman’s net production of electricity until the end of June 2022 reached 19,478 gigawatts per hour, an increase of 1.7 per cent.

The largest amount of net electricity production came in the Governorate of Dhofar, with an increase of 9.5 per cent to reach 1,999 gigawatts per hour. The governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah also recorded an increase in net electricity production by 6.8 per cent to reach 12,512 gigawatts per hour.

On the other hand, the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed an increase of 6 per cent to reach 251, 709,600 cubic metres until the end June. The governorates of Dhofar and Muscat recorded an increase in water production by 8.9 per cent and 8.5 per cent respectively.

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is leveraging golf as an elegant ambassador to highlight the natural beauty of the Sultanate of Oman for travellers and to promote its numerous investment opportunities.

In conversation over a game of golf, Francesco Palau Greig, Honorary Consul of Oman in Milan, Italy, and Ali Daud, CEO of Daud Group discussed how Golf can be the vehicle to bring Oman to Italy and Italy to Oman, and one year later, this fantastic joint initiative is being launched with the blessing of the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth and enjoys national support.

The Oman Golf Trophy invites Italians/Europeans to discover Oman’s exclusive tourism experiences and rich business opportunities.

The initiative which was formally launched yesterday at a ceremony held at Kempinski Hotel Muscat under the auspices of Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, underlines the collaborative efforts between the public and private sectors in Oman to forge a robust partnership in promoting Oman as a unique tourism and investment destination in line with Oman

Oman Fisheries signs pact with Al Wusta Fisheries Industries

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Publicly listed Oman Fisheries Company, minority owned by Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) – an affiliate of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – announced on Sunday the signing of a purchase and marketing agreement with Al Wusta Fisheries Industries LLC.

The announcement came in a filing to the Capital Market Authority (CMA). The signing is part of the plans and ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 to enhance Omani fish exports at the global level, it stated.

Al Wusta Fisheries Industries (a subsidiary of FDO) was



established in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources as part of the nation’s desire to

further develop the fisheries sector. The company has been tasked with raising production from the pelagic fish stocks that

abound in Oman’s coastal waters and the Indian Ocean.

Better known by its trade name, Oman Pelagic, Al Wusta Fisheries’ operations will focus on the development of horse mackerel stocks along Oman’s coast in the Arabian Sea and skipjack, yellowfin and big eye tuna in the Indian Ocean.

The company is also building dedicated fleets targeting, on the one hand, small pelagics - mackerel in particular, and on the other hand, large pelagics with a focus on tuna. Envisioned is a fleet of frozen fishing vessels that when fully deployed will contribute around 200,000 tonnes per year of horse mackerel to the company’s annual production.

Oman’s 105-MW Amin solar PV plant gets global certificate

FROM PAGE 13

He said that work is continuing in PDO to identify opportunities for decarbonisation with the remarkable progress that has already been made to identify climate, environmental and sustainability challenges, in parallel with achieving sustainable growth. Strategic goals have been set as part of these efforts, where the Amin project contributes, reducing about a quarter of a million carbon emissions annually from the networks.

On the other hand, Najla bint Zuhair al Jamaliyah, CEO of Alternative Energy at OQ, described the event as another successful achievement in this pioneering project, saying it is a clear testament to OQ’s efforts in supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s ambitious plans towards its decarbonisation journey.

The Amin Renewable Energy Plant — the first utility power plant in Oman — is located near the Nimr area (Dhofar Governorate) in the PDO Block 6 concession. Amin Renewable

Energy Company (AREC) is a consortium led by Japanese – based international conglomerate Marubeni Corporation (50.1 per cent stake), Oman Gas Company with 30 per cent stake, Bahwan Renewable Company with 10 per cent stake and Nebras Power with 9.9 per cent stake.

All the electricity produced and capacity made available by AREC is purchased by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) under a long-term Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) until 2043. *(With inputs from ONA)*

Oil prices up after Basra spill, but log weekly decline



Three chimneys belch flames and smoke out of an oil refinery in Basra southern Iraq. – Reuters

NEW YORK: Oil prices rose slightly on Friday as a spill at Iraq’s Basra terminal appeared likely to constrain crude supply, but remained down on the week on fears that hefty interest rate increases will curb global economic growth and demand for fuel.

Brent crude futures settled at \$91.35 a barrel, up 51 cents, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures settled at \$85.11 a barrel, up 1 cent.

Both benchmarks were down by nearly 2% on the week, hurt partly by the US dollar’s strong run, which makes oil more expensive for buyers using other currencies. The dollar index was largely flat on the day but up for its fourth week in five weeks.

In the third quarter so far, both Brent and WTI are down about 20% for the biggest quarterly percentage declines since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Oil exports from Iraq’s Basra oil terminal are being gradually resumed after they were halted last night due to a spillage, which has been contained, Basra Oil Company said.

The spill at the port, which has four loading platforms and can export up to 1.8m barrels per day, drove up prices on the prospect of lower global crude supply.

“That definitely threw a scare into the market because the initial report was that those barrels were going to be out of the market for some time,” said John Kilduff, partner at Again Capital LLC in New York.

Investors are bracing for a large increase to US interest rates, which could lead to a recession and reduce fuel demand. — Reuters

Golf Diplomacy highlights Oman’s tourism and investment potential



Vision 2040.

Qais al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion says: “Building new relationships through the game of golf is a concept as timeless as the game itself. This initiative takes things a step further, by inviting our honoured guests to discover Oman as an investment destination. In the last ten years, there have been substantial private investments for the development of new services for golf enthusiasts and professionals.

We are proud of the newest developments to Oman’s fast-growing sports tourism industry — an award-winning international airport, brand new 5-star luxury resorts, some of the top golf courses in the world,

and a breathtaking coastline will make the Grand Final an event to remember. The Oman Golf Trophy represents an excellent opportunity to attract tourists and foreign investors to our country.”

Coordinating this unique promotional initiative on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman, Chairman of Oman Golf Association, Mundhir al Barwani said, “We are delighted to be assigned by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth to coordinate and organise the inaugural Oman Golf Trophy. Over the last 10 years, golf has become an important vehicle in the growth of Oman as a tourist destination, with 3 exceptional 18-hole championship golf courses in the capital Muscat, the links between golf and industry

and investment are undeniable, highlighted within the Sultanate of Oman through events such as the Oman Open on the European Tour calendar which has welcomed international calibre professionals.

We are excited about introducing Oman as a destination for tourism and investment to the Italian market and also welcoming the winners of the Oman Golf Trophy qualifying series to Oman in March 2023. Those who win their invite to the Grand Final can expect to enjoy a luxury all expenses paid experience of renowned Omani hospitality, gain insight into the business opportunities in this Jewel of the Arabian peninsula and play at the Al Mouj Greg Norman designed course — an elite oceanfront golfing venue beyond compare.”

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Investing in nature

By Samuel Kutty

As part of environmental conservation and to attract visitors, nature reserves in the Sultanate of Oman are being developed as tourist destinations. In this regard, the Environment Authority has announced investment opportunities in eco-tourism projects including Khor Al Qurum Al Kabeer Reserve in Dhofar Governorate. "Interested companies must submit a report on how it proposes to develop the reserve and an action plan for its management", the Authority said in a statement. It adds that the investor must adhere to the principles of sustainable tourism development, preserve natural and cultural heritage, and



refrain from engaging in any activity that adversely affects the environmental and cultural values of the site. During the last few decades, the Sultanate of Oman has made significant strides in environmental conservation, declaring many of these sites protected nature reserves. Species that were once extinct in the wild have been brought back through breeding and conservation programmes, and sustainable tourism efforts are ongoing. In December last, the Authority unveiled plans of unique investment opportunities for companies, specialised institutions and others wishing to invest and manage some eco-tourism projects like the Khor Ad Dahariz Reserve, the Khor Al Qurum Al Kabeer Reserve, and Khor Sawli Reserve in the Dhofar Governorate. Cited as spectacular reserves for 'worth a visit' by different trip advisors including Lonely Planet, khors of the Salalah Coast are also known as the Dhofar lagoons, they are prime nesting sites for indigenous and migrating birds, thanks to their rich biodiversity and a major attraction for tourists. With valleys and plains turned verdant by the annual khareef (monsoon), the Dhofar Governorate attracts scores of visitors in search of a change of scenery from sandy deserts and parched wadis. "An easy road trip from Salalah, a group of lagoons lies along the coastline, providing a hospitable ecosystem for hundreds of birds, fish and plants", the Lonely Planet said in its recent report recommending khors of the Salalah as "best" to tourists.

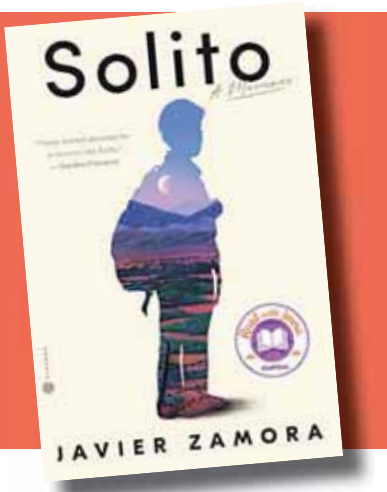
A celebrated local beauty spot, this khor is often partitioned from the sea by a sandbar that shrinks and grows according to the season. In the summer, water chasing through Wadi Darbat sometimes breaches the bar, dissolving the lagoon back into the sea. After a heavy storm surge, it can take months for the beach to rebuild. As tempting as it looks, swimming here is very dangerous as the waves are powerful and there is a strong undertow. The Khor Awqad sanctuary is one of the sites where birds like heron frequently come and nest. Among other creeks are Khor Al Qurum Al Sagheer and Al Kabeer located on the road which leads from Salalah to Raysut. These two creeks are known for the unique diversity of plants. There are 13 species of plants and nine types of fish. The Crimean trees are also there in large numbers. The Kot Hamran fort is an archaeological landmark of the wilayat. It is situated about 14 km away from the Salalah city on the road leading to Wilayat Taqah. In accordance with United Nations Sustainable Goal 15, Oman is making all-out efforts to protect natural and productive habitats in addition to renewable resources for a rational and sustainable use, and preserve fauna and flora biodiversity, particularly rare and specifically important species. "It seeks to improve knowledge on ecological systems, and raise awareness on the importance to preserve biodiversity and sustainably use biological resources", states the first voluntary report in this regard.

READ

SOLITO

BY JAVIER ZAMORA

The poet describes his journey over two months from El Salvador to the United States to reconnect with his parents who left years earlier.



THE FAIRY TRAIL

Skeleton statues line the Fairy Trail in the Lily Dale Assembly Spiritualist community of Lily Dale, New York. Lily Dale Assembly is a Spiritualist community with close to 40 registered and practicing mediums living within its gates. It started as a meeting place and camp for Spiritualists and Freethinkers, and has become a destination that draws thousands of visitors each year, from curious road-trippers to mourners looking to find peace. — AFP



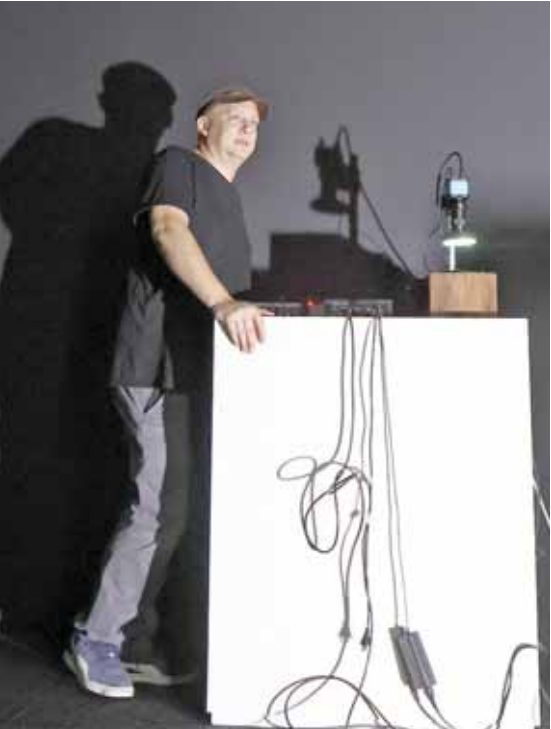
FASHION TREND

Models present creations for Paul & Joe at the end of the Spring/Summer 2023 catwalk show on the third day of London Fashion Week June Edition, in London. — AFP





Qatar-based sound artist says it's time to slow down and listen



IN A NOISY, chaotic and fast-paced world, the Qatar-based sound artist Guillaume Rousere is on a mission: to get people to slow down and listen again.

Birdsong, insects chirping, the sound of wind brushing through tall grass or over sand dunes — all these form part of what the 44-year-old Frenchman calls his “sound art”.

“Sound art is a discipline where the principal medium is sound and where the aim is to listen,” said Rousere, who lives in the Gulf state that will soon host the World Cup.

For a recent audio project, he set up a microphone at an organic farm in Qatar, where he also recorded man-made sounds such as those of cars, planes and farm machines.

“I walk around the site I want to explore and let my ears guide me if I hear anything that draws me,” he said, adding that often “it’s a matter of luck”.

“I place the microphone and leave,” Rousere said. “I don’t listen to it before I’m back in my studio.”

His sonic artwork is “not to be confused with music” made up of “organised sounds”, stressed Rousere, who explained that his passion started in childhood when he would pop balloons to study the noise it made in different environments.

LISTEN AND DISCONNECT

His new, water-themed installation, “The World As We Know It Is Changing”, aims to “take the audience on a journey, to listen and disconnect from the world,”

Rousere said.

“It’s become all the more important to me because... we live in fast-paced societies that have stopped listening”

Visitors sit in a darkened room, surrounded by four loudspeakers, for their experience of “profound listening”, at Mathaf, a modern art museum in Doha’s university district Education City.

They soon find themselves immersed in an ever-shifting soundscape, with flowing river water and the noise of human activity, but also narrated memories connected to water in different languages, as related images are projected on the wall.

A previous installation, “Fragile Resilience”, inspired by the sails of dhows that ply Arabian seas, was shown at the Paris Unesco head-

quarters, at an event organised by a Qatari foundation.

Rousere, who in the past managed musicians in Britain and studied sound art in Belgium, has lived in Qatar for nine years and was a resident artist at the contemporary art space Fire Station.

His sculpture “Allow Me” — this one made of stone — is displayed at the Msheireb metro station in downtown Doha.

“Ever since I’ve been here, there has always been support for local and international artists,” he said.

The World Cup, which kicks off on November 20, has given the local art scene an additional boost, he said.

“I think there was already a great dynamic, but everyone realised that there was an international opportunity for visibility.” — **AFP**

DISCOVERY

Long lost moon could have been responsible for Saturn's rings



DISCOVERED BY Galileo 400 years ago, the rings of Saturn are about the most striking thing astronomers with small telescopes can spot in our solar system.

But even today, experts cannot agree on how or when they formed.

A new study published on Thursday in the prestigious journal *Science* sets out to provide a convincing answer.

Between 100-200 million years ago, an icy moon they named Chrysalis broke up after getting a little too close to the gas giant, they conclude.

While most of it made impact with Saturn, its remaining fragments broke into small icy chunks that form the planet’s signature rings.

“It’s nice to find a plausible explanation,” Jack Wisdom, professor of planetary sciences at MIT and lead author of the new study, said.

Saturn, the sixth planet from the Sun, was formed four and a half billion years ago, at the beginning of the solar system.

But a few decades ago, scientists suggested that Saturn’s rings appeared much later: only about 100 million years ago.

The hypothesis was reinforced by observations made by the Cassini probe, which orbited Saturn from 2004 to 2017.

“But because no one could think of a way to make the rings 100 million years ago, some people have been questioning the reasoning that led to that deduction,” said Wisdom.

By constructing complex mathematical models, Wisdom and colleagues found an explanation that both justified the timeline, and allowed them to better understand another characteristic of the planet, its tilt.

Saturn has a 26.7 degree tilt. Being a gas giant, it would have been expected that the process of accumulating matter that led to its formation would have prevented tilt.

GRAVITATIONAL INTERACTIONS

Scientists recently discovered that Titan, the largest of Saturn’s 83 moons, is migrating away from the planet, at a rate of 11 centimetres a year.

This changes the rate at which Saturn’s axis of tilt loops around the vertical — the technical term is “precession.” Think of a spinning top drawing circles.

Around a billion years ago, this wobble frequency came into sync with Neptune’s wobbly orbit, creating a powerful gravitational interaction called “resonance.”

In order to maintain this lock, as Titan kept moving out, Saturn had to tilt, scientists argued.

But that explanation hinged on knowing how mass was distributed in the planet’s interior, since the tilt would have behaved differently if it were concentrated more at its surface or the core.

In the new study, Wisdom and colleagues modelled the planet’s interior using gravitational data gathered by Cassini during its close approach “Grand Finale,” its last act before plunging into Saturn’s depths.

The model they generated found Saturn is now slightly out of sync with Neptune, which necessitated a new explanation — an event powerful enough to cause the drastic redistribution.

Working through the mathematics, they found a lost moon fit the bill.

“It’s pulled apart into a bunch of pieces and those pieces subsequently get pulled apart even more, and gradually rolls into the rings.”

The missing Moon was baptized Chrysalis by MIT’s Wisdom, likening the emergence of Saturn’s rings to a butterfly emerging from a cocoon.

The team thinks Chrysalis was a bit smaller than our own Moon, and about the size of another Saturn satellite, Iapetus, which is made entirely of water ice.

“So it’s plausible to hypothesize that Chrysalis is also made of water ice, and that’s what it needs to make the rings, because the rings are almost pure water.”

Asked whether he felt the mystery of Saturn’s rings stood solved, Wisdom replied, soberly, “We’ve made a good contribution.”

The Saturn satellite system still holds “a variety of mysteries,” he added. — **AFP**



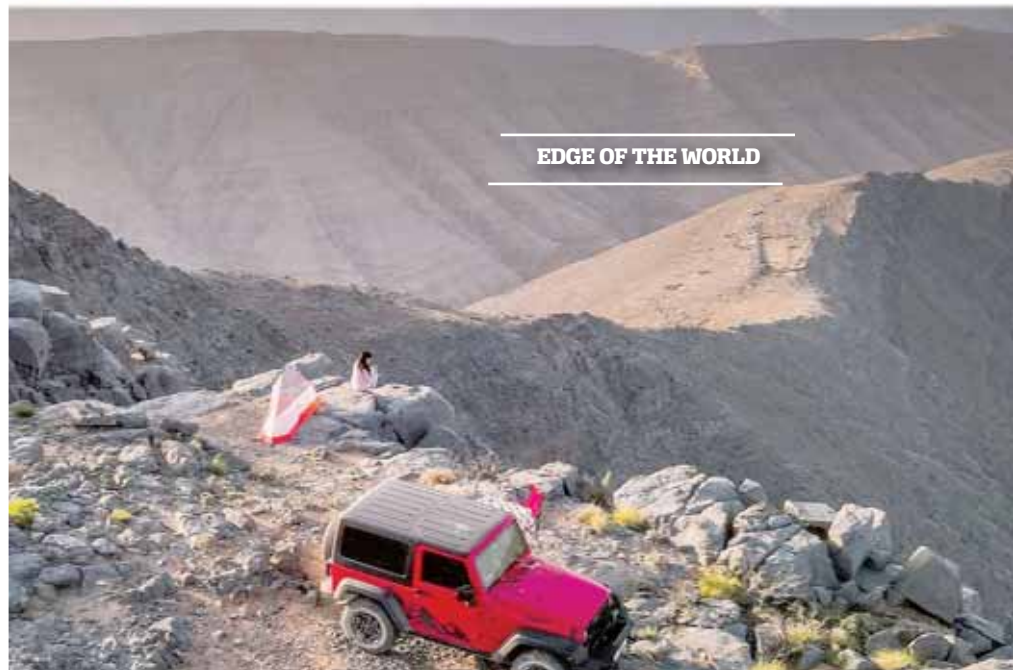
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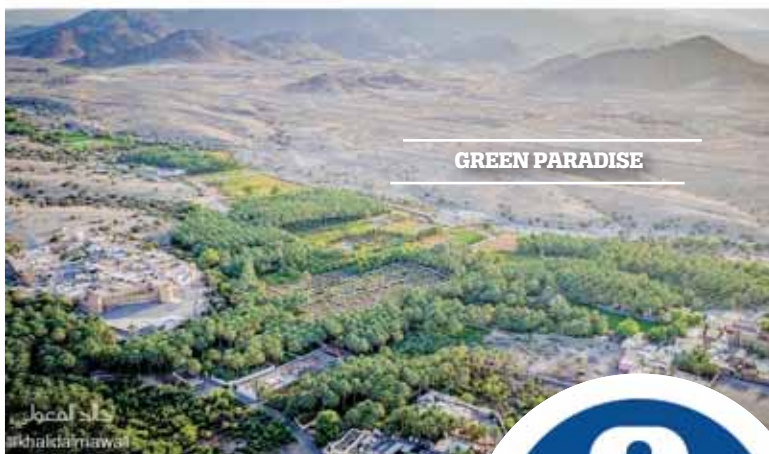
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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

Louvre, Versailles to turn off lights earlier in energy savings push



FRANCE'S FAMED LOUVRE and Versailles museums will turn off their lights earlier as a symbolic measure to remind the public of the energy crisis sparked by the Ukraine war, the culture minister said on Saturday.

The city of Paris announced earlier this week it would start switching off the ornamental lights that grace city monuments it manages hours earlier than usual, plunging the Eiffel Tower and other landmarks into darkness to cope with surging electricity costs.

French Culture Minister Rima Abdul Malak said on Saturday, the Louvre Pyramid would follow suit, going dark at 11:00 pm instead of 1:00 am.



The facade at the Chateau de Versailles, southwest of Paris will switch off its lights an hour earlier, at 10:00 pm.

"Symbols are very important to raise public awareness," she said, adding that symbolic measures alone will not be enough to bring down electricity usage.

She urged French cultural institutions to take energy saving methods like those taken by the Orsay Museum in Paris, which "reduced its energy consumption by a third just by changing bulbs and switching to LED", she said.

She also said there were discussions ongoing with movie theatres to replace their projectors. "If they switch to laser projectors, they could divide their energy consumption by seven."

Energy prices across Europe have skyrocketed in recent months, in part because of the turbulence in energy markets caused by Russia's war in Ukraine and the resulting sanctions slapped on Russia, a top energy producer. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Oscars Academy makes amends over 1973 Native American protest



ALMOST FIVE DECADES after she refused an Oscar on behalf of Marlon Brando over the treatment of Native Americans by the US film industry, Satchin Littlefeather was honoured on Saturday by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

In a moving ceremony in Los Angeles filled with singing and dancing, the Academy publicly apologised to Littlefeather, who was feted by activists in the wake of her protest, but blackballed by the movie world.

Littlefeather, who is Apache and Yaqui, was booed at the 1973 Academy Awards — the first to be broadcast live around the world — while explaining on Brando's behalf why he would not accept his best actor Oscar for "The Godfather."

On Saturday she told a packed audience at the Academy's newly-opened museum how she had arrived at the ceremony just minutes before she took the stage because Brando had taken so long writing his non-acceptance speech.

"I went up there, like a proud Indian woman with dignity, with courage, with grace, and with humility," she said.

"I knew that I had to speak the truth. Some people may accept it. And some people may not."

She was greeted on stage

by Norwegian actress Liv Ullmann and "James Bond" star Roger Moore, who proffered the statuette she refused to accept.

Under strict instructions from Academy managers not to give an acceptance speech longer than 60 seconds, she delivered instead a dignified impromptu address.

"I said okay, and I had made this promise to Marlon (Brando) not to touch the Oscar. And so I wasn't under any pressure that night," Littlefeather quipped.

She said veteran Western star John Wayne had to be restrained from physically assaulting her as she left the stage.

Littlefeather, a member of the Screen Actors' Guild, subsequently found it difficult to get work in Hollywood, with casting directors warned not to employ her.

'COURAGE'

Former Academy president David Rubin, who penned the apology earlier this year, took to the stage to read his words, which invoked "the emotional burden" Littlefeather bore and "the cost to your own career."

"For too long the courage you showed has been unacknowledged. For this, we offer both our deepest apologies and our sincere admiration."

Rubin's apology comes as

the movie industry reckons with what many view as a culture of sexism, racism and impunity.

"The academy and our industry finds itself at an inflection point," Rubin said on Saturday. "We are actively examining our past and focusing on how best we can facilitate healing."

The museum, which opened last September, has pledged to confront the Oscars' "problematic history" including racism. One display already tackles the harassment of Littlefeather. The Academy has also moved to confront accusations of a lack of racial diversity in recent years.

In 2019, "Last of the Mohicans" star Wes Studi became the first Native American actor to receive an Oscar, with an honorary Academy Award recognising his career.

Its museum has also previously hosted events on women who achieved historic Oscars milestones including a talk with Buffy Sainte-Marie — the first Indigenous person to win an Oscar, for best original song in 1983.

Asked by reporters ahead of the ceremony how she felt about having to wait so long to hear the word "sorry", Littlefeather was philosophical.

"It's never too late for an apology," she said.

"It's never too late for forgiveness." — AFP

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



Rasha al Raisi

There Is No Evil

WHETHER YOU'RE a fan of Iranian cinema or had never watched an Iranian movie before, Mohammed Rasoulof's *There is No Evil* is a must-watch.

The original Farsi title of the film is: Satan doesn't exist, which I thought is more powerful than the milder English title choice for it. The movie consists of four different stories with a common theme: execution by hanging, the capital punishment in Iran.

The director has an unlikely approach to this issue: he explores it from the point of view of the executioners. The first story is of Heshmat the family man whose daily routine includes picking up his wife and daughter from school, grocery shopping and helping his old mother-in-law. However, this exceedingly contradicts the job he drives to each morning and performs apathetically.

The second story is of Pouya, the military conscript who's horrified by the idea of having to execute a man as part of his service. The conversation he has with his other four mates before carrying the orders is moralistic: does he have the right to end someone's life even when he's given the orders? What if that person is innocent? How would he live the rest of his life carrying this heavy burden? What if he refuses out of his free will?

Most importantly, how could Pouya escape from this situation? The third story is of another military conscript that has been given three days off. He surprises his girlfriend with his visit yet is shocked to learn about an execution that happened to someone they both knew. How could that affect his morals and their relationship? The last story is of a doctor who lives in a rural area and is visited by his friend's daughter. Unlike the other stories, this one is slow and seems to be disconnected from the rest. Nevertheless, there is an intriguing and unexpected twist at the end that links it directly to the second story. Rasoulof's

message is clear: hanging is inhumane and unacceptable in this day and age. Its psychological impact propagates on everyone from executioners to victims' families. Heshmat — the character from the first story — is obviously keeping his profession a secret from his family. He's living a double life that he can't share nor feels happy about.

Moreover, the philosophical cell debate in the second story is shocking at times, especially when hearing the conscripts describing the experience of pulling the chair from under the accused feet as 'an inevitable part of their duty.' Unfortunately, without military service, these young men can't have insurance, or passports or be able to trade according to Iranian laws. The director uses certain scenes to describe the character's psyche and what they're going through. For example, the walls that keep facing Pouya in the cell signify his sense of entrapment. In March 2020, Rasoulof was sentenced to one year in prison for three of his movies that were considered 'anti-governmental propaganda. The sentence is still not served due to Covid-19 fears. He was also banned from film-making for two years. However, this movie was secretly shot although you could never tell as scenes were filmed on crowded streets and in scenic landscapes such as rivers and mountains. The movie was smuggled out of Iran to win the Golden Bear for best feature in Berlin's 70th film festival in 2020, the third Iranian movie to win this prize after *A Separation* (2015) and *Taxi* (2015).

"There is no evil" is about moral choices and how making them could affect the rest of our lives. A masterpiece. Available on Netflix.

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MONDAY | SEPTEMBER 19 | 2022

Tunisian ‘hanging garden’ farms cling on despite drought

HIGH IN THE HILLS of northwest-ern Tunisia, farmers are tending thousands of fig trees with a unique system of terracing they hope will protect them from ever-harsher droughts.

But the “hanging gardens” of Djebba El Olia have been put to the test this year as the North African country sweltered through its hottest July since the 1950s.

That has exacerbated a long drought that has left Tunisia’s res-ervoirs at just a third of their capacity.

The gardens are supplied with water from two springs high in the mountains.

The water is fed into the orchards by a network of canals that are opened and shut at set times, according to the size of the orchard.

Crucially, a wide variety of crops provides resilience and in-built pest control, unlike the monocul-tures that dominate modern agri-culture and require huge inputs of pesticides to survive.

“We grow figs but also other trees like quinces, olives and pomegranates, and beneath them we plant a wide range of greens and legumes,” said activist Farida Djebbi as insects buzzed between thyme, mint and rosemary flowers.

Djebbi pointed out some of the channels, which irrigate the area’s 300 hectares (740 acres) of steeply sloping orchards.

In 2020, the Food and Agriculture Organization recog-nised the system as an example of “innovative and resilient agrofor-estry”, adding it to an elite list of just 67 “Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems”.

The system “has been able to adapt and take advantage of an inhospitable topography”, the UN agency said.

“Through the use of natural geological formations and the use of stones, local communities have been able to transform the land-



scape into fertile and productive lands.”

The FAO praised the diversity of local crop varieties grown by the area’s farmers, as well as their use of wild plants to repel potential pests and of livestock to “plough” and fertilise the soil.

GROWING UP WITH FIGS

While nobody knows exactly how old the system is, human hab-itation in the area predates the Carthaginian civilisation founded in the ninth century BC.

But while it may have endured for generations, the system is under threat as climate change kicks in.

Activist Tawfiq El Rajehi, 60, says the flow of water from springs irrigating the area has dropped off noticeably, particularly in the past two years.

Unlike in previous years, the

and variety of plants.”

Nevertheless, residents say they are proud of their heritage.

Farmer Lotfi El Zarmani, 52, said there was also growing demand for Djebba figs, which were given a protected designa-tion of origin by the agriculture ministry in 2012 — still the only Tunisian fruit to enjoy the certifi-cation.

“They’re getting a reputation, plus exporting them has become easier, plus they bring higher prices,” Zarmani said, adding that most exports go to the Gulf or neigh-bouring Libya.

Rajehi’s daughter, university student Chaima, put on protective gloves as she set out to harvest the fruit from her family’s small lot.

“Figs are more than a fruit for us. We’re born here among the fig trees and we grow up with them, we learn from a young age



surrounding peaks no longer get covered in snow each winter, and the leaves of many of the trees in the lower part of Djebba are yellowing and sick.

Rajehi, a teacher at the local school, said climate change and low rainfall were compounded by another factor: farmers favouring cash crops.

“Some farmers have moved to growing more figs instead of less water-intensive crops because figs have become more profitable in recent years,” he said.

“We need to keep a good balance

how to look after them,” the 20-year-old said.

Djebbi is working to persuade farmers to preserve traditional ways of processing the products harvested in the area.

She is working with 10 other women on a cooperative that distills essence from wildflowers, dries figs, and produces fig and mulberry jam.

“Products we learnt how to make from our mothers and grandmothers are becoming popular because they’re of such high quality,” she said. — AFP