

Fine for ‘fake’ weather news

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has alerted amateur weather forecasters and social media users against publishing inaccurate and fake forecasts and warnings related to weather conditions that affect the Sultanate of Oman. The statement said: “The CAA has monitored that a number of media and personal accounts publish forecasts and warnings during weather conditions that affect the Sultanate of Oman, contrary to what is issued by official sources.” **DETAILS ON P2**



P10

NATIONAL SHOOTERS EYE STURDY START



P13

MAHA ENERGY IN FARMOUT PACT WITH MAFRAO ENERGY



P20

A COMFY AND SAFE SPACE FOR LADIES



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO SINGAPORE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Halimah Yacob of the Republic of Singapore on the occasion of her country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes for President Halimah and the friendly people of Singapore further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

1,641 JOB VACANCIES UNDER ‘SAHIM’ DRIVE

The Ministry of Labour on Monday announced the inauguration of ‘Sahim’ or ‘Contribute’ initiative to provide 1,641 jobs under temporary contracts in government units in different governorates. The drive aims to consolidate decentralisation and allow national cadre to contribute in developing the governorates. The jobs are distributed for holders of various degrees, starting with 1,190 contracts for Bachelor's degree holders, 451 for General Education Diploma (GED) and below GED holders. Registration is open for a duration of two weeks from the date of announcement, which is considered the third of its kind in 2022 and the eighth in terms of announcements for jobs in the State's Administrative Apparatus.

— ONA

PART OF OMAN VISION 2040 TO DIVERSIFY ECONOMY

New plans to develop more sites for tourism

SAMUEL KUTTY
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Taking advantage of the characteristics of a premier tourist destination, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is in the process of formulating new plans to make the Sultanate of Oman a truly unique tourism location.

In the first phase of the plans, the ministry is developing tourist sites in the governorates of Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Dhofar and Musandam, and followed by the rest of the governorates.

According to Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, the plans include establishing a system for governance, modernising the legal framework, and updating tourism laws and their executive regulations.

“The plans aim at achieving quick gains through the



implementation of priority projects in accordance with the current needs of the tourism market and form part of the recovery plan as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic which hit several support projects in the sector”, the minister has said.

The plans are part of Oman Vision 2040 to diversify the economy and reduce its reliance on oil. Oman has already attracted RO 1.7 billion in tourism investments out of a planned RO 3 billion between 2021 and 2023.

TURN TO P3

VAT revenues stand at RO 345 million

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As Sultanate of Oman's state general budget achieved a financial surplus of RO 784 million at the end of the first half of this year, the contribution of taxes (excise and VAT) to the national economy is significant.

According to the fiscal performance bulletin of the Ministry of Finance, the excise tax and VAT revenues amounted to RO 48 million and RO 345 million respectively as of end of first quarter.

As per the State Budget 2022 estimates, the current revenue was expected to be around RO 3,160 million, of which income from excise and VAT was expected to be RO 535 million.

Corporate tax was expected to bring in revenues to the tune of RO 465 million in 2022.

VAT was introduced in Oman in 2021 at the rate of 5 per cent in the GCC framework. The tax is levied on the supply of goods and services in the country.

Speaking to the Observer, a

Excise tax and VAT revenues amounted to RO 48 million and RO 345 million respectively as of end of first quarter

market analyst said: “Five per cent VAT might be the lowest slab, but it is important to note that the rollout was quick, and we have already started seeing the results over the past year.”

It may be noted that the country has introduced excise tax with effect on tobacco (including tobacco derivatives), alcoholic beverages, energy drinks, sugar-sweetened beverages, and carbonated drinks.

In the financial statement, the government said that development expenditure will be increased to RO 1,100 million compared to budgetary figures, up by RO 200 million, which will be allocated for priority projects and economic and social impact schemes.

TURN TO P2

EU submits ‘final text’ at Iran nuclear talks

VIENNA: The European Union submitted a “final text” at talks to salvage a 2015 deal aimed at reining in Iran's nuclear ambitions and Tehran said on Monday it was reviewing the proposals.

Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran and Russia, as well as the United States indirectly, resumed talks on Thursday in Vienna, months after they had stalled.

The European Union has submitted a “final text”, a European official said on Monday. “We worked for four days and today the text is on the table,” the official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

“The negotiation is finished, it's the final text... and it will not be renegotiated.”

“Now the ball is in the court of the capitals and we will see what happens,” the European official added. “No one is staying in Vienna.”

The official said he hoped to see the “quality” text accepted “within weeks”.

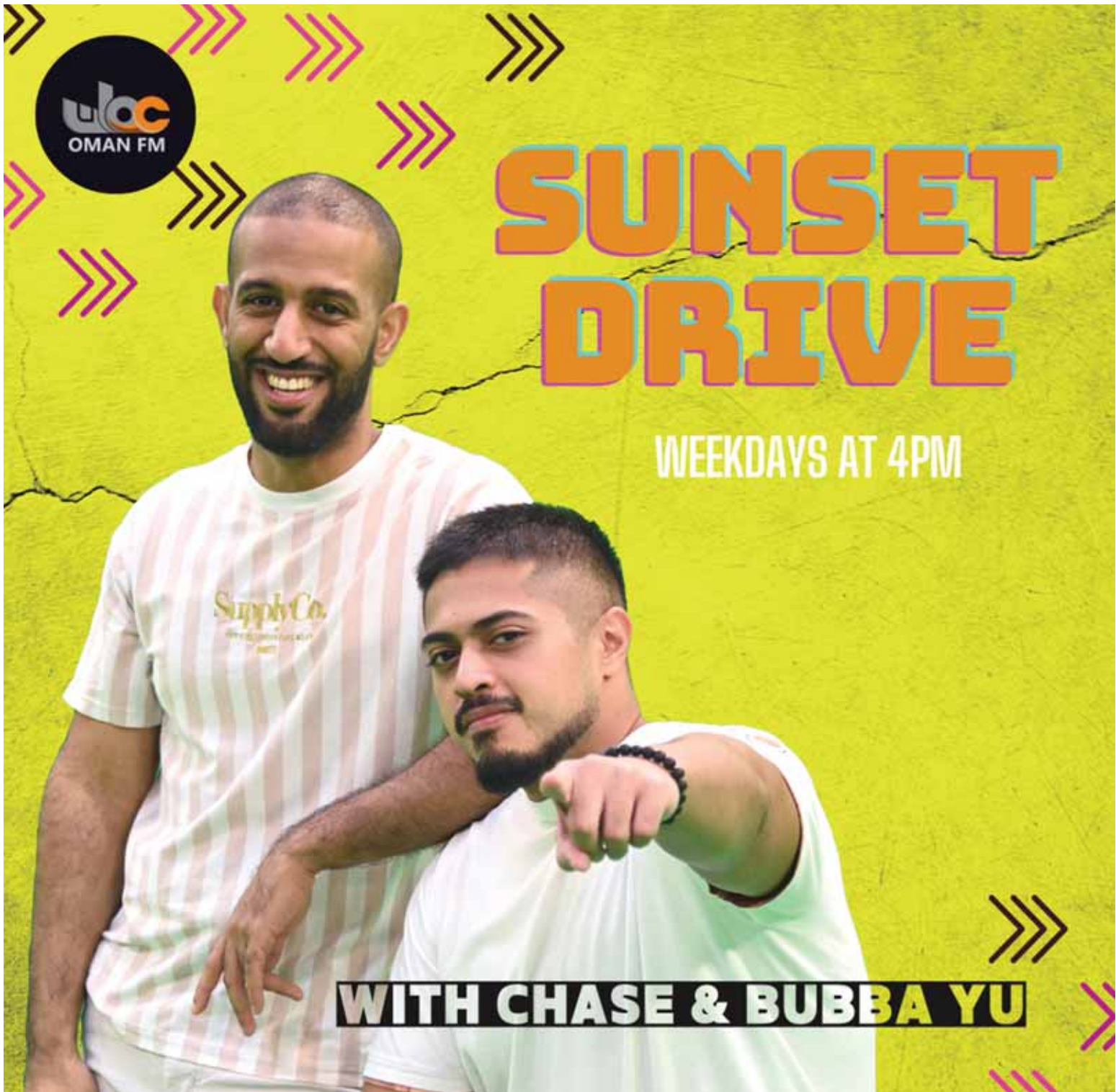
Iran said it was examining the 25-page document.

“As soon as we received these ideas, we conveyed our initial response and considerations,” state news agency Irna quoted an unnamed foreign ministry official as saying. “But naturally, these items require a comprehensive review, and we will convey our additional views and considerations.” — AFP



UN SECURITY COUNCIL TO MEET OVER GAZA

A Palestinian man removes glass shards from a broken window at his home in Rafah. The UN Security Council was to hold an emergency meeting to discuss the situation in Gaza, where a truce is holding after three days of deadly conflict. **SEE P6**



uoc OMAN FM

SUNSET DRIVE

WEEKDAYS AT 4PM

WITH CHASE & BUBBA YU



PAY RO 50,000 PENALTY FOR UNOFFICIAL WEATHER NEWS

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has alerted amateur weather forecasters and social media users against publishing inaccurate and fake forecasts and warnings related to weather conditions that affect the Sultanate of Oman.

The statement said, “The Civil Aviation Authority has monitored that a number of media and personal accounts publish forecasts and warnings during

People must only share or tweet forecasts made by Omani Meteorology of the Civil Aviation Authority.

weather conditions that affect the Sultanate of Oman, contrary to what is issued by the Omani Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority, through various social websites.”



It explained “ this leads to confusion for official bodies and individuals as a result of the spread of rumours and intimidation or the broadcasting of statements other than the truth, which is a violation of the prohibition imposed by the Civil Aviation Law on these acts”.

The Authority cautions that it will not tolerate taking legal measures to implement all the penalties stipulated by law to address these violations in coordination with the concerned government agencies. Article 30, Chapter Six: Approvals,

Civil Aviation Law states: “It is prohibited to exercise civil aviation activities, air navigation services and forecasts without the approval of the competent authority”.

Article 13, Chapter Thirteen: Penalties, stipulates: “Anyone who violates the provision of Article 30 shall be punished with imprisonment for a period of no less than one year and not exceeding 3 years, and a fine not less than RO 15,000, and not exceeding RO 50,000, or one of these two penalties.”

Omani youth qualifies for Jordan innovation contest

AMMAN: Ahmed bin Amer al Jabri has qualified for the final round of the 6th edition of King Abdullah II Award for Youth Innovation and Achievement in Jordanian capital Amman on Monday. Al Jabri's project, codenamed Qatra or “droplet”, utilises modern techniques to rationalise water use in irrigating plants. The winners of the contest will receive \$50,000 for the development of his/her prototype. The winning projects are shortlisted by a specialised technical committee from the Arab world. Over the past five chapters, the biennial award was won by 41 competitors from eight Arab countries and it generated 85,000 direct and indirect jobs.

The King Abdullah II Award for Youth Innovation and Achievement recognises, celebrates and supports young Arab leaders who are active citizens in their communities.

The award strives to promote innovation and encourage cross-border dialogue and cooperation among Arab youth from the region and around the world and is open to applicants from any country in the Arab world aged between 18 and 30.

— ONA

Muscat to host second Asian Arabic Debating Championship

RAWAN AL NADABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

The Sultanate of Oman will host the second Asian Arabic Debating Championship which will take place early in 2023, QatarDebate announced on Sunday. The competition will feature free thought, open discussions, and constructive debate with around 50 teams participating from around the world.

The Oman Debate Center and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth as a logistics sponsor, had submitted a proposal to host this championship. Nasser al Hinai, the CEO of the Oman Debate Centre, said “the first edition of the competition was in Malaysia and the second is going to be in Oman in 2023”, adding that “we have won because of the competency Oman Debate Centre and the ministry have shown in the past years”.

The Centre and the ministry are expected to play a pivotal role in this championship by providing administrative, logistic, and technical support. The ministry will be responsible for providing the administrative, logistic, and technical support, while Oman Debate Centre will be responsible for nominating the local debating teams and arbitrators.

This championship is expected to witness more participation of debating teams from the higher education institutions and debate



The first edition of the competition was held in Malaysia in 2020.

arbitrators of Oman. Al Hinai said “the championship is an opportunity for Omani youth to exchange organisational experiences with international youth”.

He also confirmed “the championship will be held in Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre at the end of January and the beginning of February, next year.

Besides, the event will also boost

tourism prospects as international participants from around 20 Asian countries will be taken around the Sultanate of Oman's key tourism sites by the organisers.

QatarDebate, a member of Qatar Foundation and the National Debating Organisation for Qatar, is a civic engagement initiative which aims to develop and support the standard of open discussion and debate among students and youth in Qatar and

the broader Arab world.

QatarDebate was established in 2008 under the direction of Moza bint Nasser, chairperson of Qatar Foundation, with support from the team behind the Doha Debates.

QatarDebate's aim is to “shape the global citizens of today and the intellectual leaders of tomorrow in Qatar and the region” through the introduction of a variety of English and Arabic debate programmes.

VAT contributes RO 345 million

FROM PAGE 1

The government aims to allocate RO 650 million for implementing additional development projects under the Tenth Five-Year Development Plan (2021-2025), especially in sectors such as health, education, housing, transport, tourism, and municipal services.

It may be noted that the Ministry of Finance recently qualified 10 local and international developers in the first stage for a competitive tender for development of 42 schools via the Public Private Partnership (PPP) route.

The government has also proposed to set up a haemodialysis services project, a drugs rehabilitation centre and fishing ports in Musannah and Liwa.

Public spending by the end of the first half of 2022 reached RO 5.941 billion, rising by 8.6 per cent compared to the same period in 2021. Public spending amounted for 48.9 per cent of the 2022

Budget estimates of RO 12.130 billion. Development expenditure amounted to RO 413 million, up by 38.1 per cent compared to RO 299 million reported over the same period in 2021.

Wadi Sabt in S Sharqiah a popular haunt among tourists

TEXT & PHOTOS
YAHYA AL SALMANI

The road network that connected the various governorates contributed to bringing the distances closer and making it easier for tourists to explore nature and unique tourist sites in the Sultanate of Oman. Today, whoever wants to get away from the city's bustle, he has to drive his car towards the destination he wants to visit, to spend his day on the banks of the Wadis and enjoy the shade of trees.

Wadi Sabt, which is located in the Wilayat of Al Kamil W'al Wafi (250 km from Muscat) is classified among the exceptional sites that can be easily accessed.

This valley in South Al Sharqiyah is located between two banks, one mountainous and the other full of agricultural farms. Farmers cultivate date palms,



bananas, mangoes, lemons, and these trees form a green belt that protects the area from floods. This bank attracts dozens of species of resident and migratory birds. It is a refuge for many types of butterflies and reptiles.

The people of Wadi Sabt depend on agriculture. Therefore, the

heavy rains that fell during this month brought them happiness.

“Now Aflaj are full of water and we thank God for this blessing. We are happy and we are getting ready to plant the seeds and saplings,” the farmers said.

The eastern bank of the valley consists of mountains and volcanic



rocks, which form a natural barrier to control flooding valleys after heavy rains. These mountain slopes are characterised by unique geological formations that the visitor rarely finds except in a limited number of Omani villages and valleys.

Some compare the geological

formations in Wadi Sabt to those in the village of Wadi al Arbiyeen in the Wilayat of Qurayat. A visitor to Wadi Sabt will be mesmerised by the crystal clear water that act as a mirror to the majestic mountains, especially at sunrise and sunset.

On the eastern side of the

valley, the water flows into the water channel (falaj), and farmers consider it one of the main channels for delivering water to the farms surrounding the valley from the western side. Today, the waters of the falaj are in full flow thanks to the heavy rains recently after a dry spell

This valley provides opportunities for those interested in discovering rare geological sites in the Sultanate of Oman, as well as other opportunities for photography enthusiasts.

But the site blessed with natural diversity lacks basic facilities. “After the rain, dozens of tourists flock to this site, and all of them are in dire need of some necessary services, including toilets and cafes.”

Tourists urged authorities to conduct a field survey to develop this unique site, which is now trending on social media.



23 Omanis get training to become entrepreneurs

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

The Department of Family Development and Empowerment at the Ministry of Social Development celebrated on Monday the graduation of 23 participants in entrepreneurship programme, all from social security and limited income families.

The ceremony was held under auspices of Sayyidah Maani bint Abdullah al Busaidiyah, Director-General of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development, at the Grand Millennium Hotel, in presence of a number of ministry officials and representatives of partner agencies.

During an eight-week period, the programme focused on professional and personal development, refining the capabilities of these graduates in the field of entrepreneurship, introducing them to the services and procedures provided to them by all parties related to entrepreneurship, holding periodic meetings with these bodies, and reviewing successful experiences in this aspect.

Five projects, out of the 18 projects, won the award for the best projects.

The “Prestigo” project won first place. Its idea is to recycle materials and use them to sew clothes in an elegant manner. The “Oman sacrifices” project came in second place. It is a application for delivering livestock and fresh meat. Third place went for the “Tala” project, which is about designing clothes for girls.

Fourthly, the “Aoun” project, which is an application for clearing the transactions that Sanad offices operate in and serves investors and citizens inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. “Zelza” project took the fifth place. It is related to the manufacture of healthy spices and pickles.

Besides the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Oman Development Bank, Mohsin Haider Darwish Group, Modern College of Commerce and Science, and Qabas Company participated in the implementation of this training programme.

Fatma bint Abdullah al Rashidiyah, Assistant Director of the Department of Family Development and Empowerment, said in her speech: “Oman 2040” vision is the Sultanate of Oman’s gateway to meet challenges, keep pace with regional and global changes, exploit available opportunities and generate new ones in order to enhance economic competitiveness and social welfare and stimulate growth of confidence in the economic, social and developmental relations in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. One of the main priorities of the vision is to provide a decent and sustainable life for all, and to ensure welfare and societal protection so that the community is covered by insurance with an effective, sustainable and fair social safety net especially women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the needy”.

STAFF REPORTER
SALALAH, AUGUST 8

Salalah Grand Mall was opened on Thursday. The RO-35 million commercial complex will lend support to the retail sector and entertainment industry.

Salalah Grand Mall has been developed through partnership between the Defence Ministry’s Pension Fund, a number of government investment funds and Al Madina Real Estate company. It has an overall area of 55,000 square metres and a construction area of 103,000 sqm. It comprises a hypermarket and outlets selling top local, regional and international brands.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and attended by Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za’abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence.

On this occasion, HH Sayyid Marwan said that the Sultanate of Oman witnesses concerted efforts to secure the success of the economic diversification policy and motivate growth across all sectors towards the achievement of Oman Vision 2040’s goals.

He added that plans and initiatives for the improvement of the business climate augmented the volume of investment in many sectors, including the tourism



sector, which attracted many projects recently.

The project includes a hypermarket, entertainment games, famous brands, a restaurants lounge, and cafes with stunning views of Salalah

His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, “The Sultanate of Oman enjoys unrelenting efforts to achieve economic diversification and to increase the investment in various sectors. The Sultanate of Oman has been making efforts to achieve economic diversification and increase the investment in various sectors, to ensure the achieving of the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.”

He said that such projects

contribute to enhancing the presence of the Governorate of Dhofar on the investment and tourism map of the Sultanate of Oman and the world.

Hamed bin Mohammed bin Hamoud al Wahaibi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Salalah Commercial Complexes Company, stated: “The tourism sector is considered as one of the pillars of economic diversification and the sector is recovering from the slowdown witnessed due to the pandemic.”

Khamis bin Mubark al Kiyumi, Chairman of Al Madina Real Estate, said, “Al Madina Real Estate aims at putting its own mark on real estate development projects

in the Sultanate of Oman. The Salalah Grand Mall was developed following the tremendous success of the Muscat Grand Mall, which has encouraged us to repeat the experience for the people of the Dhofar Governorate. The mall opens doors for foreign investments in the retail sector and job opportunities for the people of the governorate. It is worth mentioning that Al Madina Real Estate Company is one of the first real estate development companies in the Sultanate of Oman and is working on several other projects”.

The list of brands that will operate in Salalah Grand Mall includes Lulu Hypermarket.

New plans to develop more sites for tourism

FROM PAGE 1

The number of integrated tourism complex projects in the country currently stands at 21, out of which 11 are on government lands owned by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, and there are five development agreements already signed for these complexes and eight usufruct contracts.

Ten projects are on private lands, two of which are in the process of implementation, and for four of them development agreements have been signed.

Oman Tourism Development Company (Omrans) signed a cooperation agreement with the

office of the Governor of South Al Sharqiyah in May to develop a number of tourism projects in different locations in the governorate.

According to the agreement, Omran will provide technical support and supervision for the implementation of projects that will be developed in several phases in tourist destinations in the governorate.

The first phase includes the development of a park in the Suwayh area, on an area of more than 65,000 sqm. Another park will be developed in Al Ashkharah, spread over 14,000 sqm.

In cooperation with the Ministry

of Heritage and Tourism, Omran is also developing several tourist destinations in Dhofar.

As tourism slowly recovers with the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions by many countries, the Sultanate of Oman received over 794,000 inbound travellers in the period between January 1 and May 31 this year.

TOURISM RECOVERY

Fitch Solutions in its latest report maintained a positive outlook for tourism recovery in Oman during 2022 and 2023, with stronger growth projected in the medium term between 2024 and 2026.

“Underlying growth momentum

over the coming years will be supported by the strategic Vision 2040 economic diversification agenda and the highly capitalised position of the state’s tourism development authority, Omran”, the global agency said.

As of late in May, the government continues to aggressively implement its rebound strategy, unveil digital marketing initiatives and announce new sector specific investments, it said.

According to the tourism indicators for May 2022 released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), while 1.5 million travellers had departed Oman by the end of May 2022.

Take breaks and be careful while driving to Salalah

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Despite plenty of flights to fly to Salalah, there are many visitors who opt to drive across, especially from the United Arab Emirates.

The summer getaway, Dhofar, has been growing in popularity and there are extensive network of roads. Due to this demand, Observer spoke to Ahmed al Mahrouqi, adventurer and traveller who is also health and safety expert, a person who has travelled to the summer destination by road as well as on camels. He said there are three different ways one can manage the road trip to Dhofar.

“A popular route is to cross the border entering Al Batinah Governorate from Suhar, Batinah Expressway and then join Muscat Expressway to spend one day in Muscat before continuing the journey,” said Ahmed.

The journey then would start from Muscat to Dakhiliyah Governorate to reach Nizwa and there are clear sign boards



The vehicle should be well maintained with strong tires. One should always maintain the distance and speed.

indicating the route to Salalah.

One would have to go through Izki, Adam, Ghaba, Haima, Al Ghaftain, Maqshin, Qatbeet, Dokha, Thamrait and Salalah.

Ahmed added, “Dokha is the area in the Empty Quarter where agriculture is being introduced and you can see a variety of vegetables grown amidst the desert. The sight is magical!”

He explained the other route for visitors from UAE, “The other route is from Al Ain entering through the border to Ibri in Al Dhahirah Governorate. From Ibri to Awaiyya near Fahud from here you drive to Ghaba and then follow the same route.”

The most beautiful journey is the long one and can be difficult and Ahmed said this route has to be taken slowly, taking breaks for two to three days. “The beach road is the most beautiful experience. It will take two to three days. Once you enter the Sultanate of Oman the route to take is Muscat to Sur to Salalah,” he said.

The factors to keep in mind are

weather related aspects such as wind, dust, dust storms in addition to rain if any.

As recently the Royal Oman Police had issued an alert to the public road users in Maqshin, as there was a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility due to dust, and had requested everyone to take care and be cautious. When there is strong wind there could be sand on the roads.

Ahmed said the points to remember are the vehicle should be well maintained with strong tires. One should always maintain the distance and speed, he pointed out.

“Maqshin to Thamrait the drivers have to watch out for camels on the road. Remember to always carry water with you. Just multiply the number of passengers with two. Petrol pumps can be found each 150 km,” Ahmed advised.

Most importantly, the objective is to enjoy the journey and the trip so as to drive safely and rest when you are tired to drive as well as maintain speed limit.



WITH HOME-
BASED BUSINESSES
GROWING IN POPULARITY THANKS
TO THEIR FLEXIBILITY AND SMALL
COSTS, INSTEAD OF HIRING OUTSIDERS,
THESE MICRO-ENTREPRENEURS RELY ON
FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS TO
HELP INDIVIDUALS SUPPORT WHILE
MAINTAINING THEIR
DAY JOBS

WORK AT HOME FOR AN EARNING

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkutyyp](#)

Recent years have seen a major thrust towards inculcating the culture of home-based businesses in the Sultanate of Oman as the government is encouraging its citizens to contribute independently to the country's socio-economic growth.

This means that the Omani leadership is putting into perspective the capabilities of its people in line with the goals in Vision 2040 through the development of mechanisms and programmes related to micro-entrepreneurship.

For business, Vision 2040 provides an incentive for change that calls for a paradigm shift in all aspects of doing business. With Vision 2040, small businesses step up to play a leading role in the Renewed Renaissance, and contribute to the company's growth and Oman's sustainable future through the successful implementation of this vision.

With home-based businesses growing in popularity thanks to their flexibility and small costs, instead of hiring outsiders, these micro-entrepreneurs rely on family members and friends to help individuals support while maintaining their day jobs.

An entrepreneur of a home-based business doesn't have to own the property but does need to be running a business out of the same premises where he or she lives for the business to be considered a home business.

The Omani government's approach to hand-holding small business ideas, owners, and innovators has been all-encompassing, targeting various sectors which vary from ICT, science, food, and environment to handicrafts to name but a few.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, a home business can be practiced by citizens in their homes to find an income mechanism that helps them meet the requirements of daily life.

"These businesses are considered micro-projects not only to help develop an income for the family but they can also be expanded by opening shops and small and medium enterprises in the future. This in turn will contribute to the national economy", the ministry says.

The ministry confirms that home business owners can electronically obtain a commercial registry through self-service or service-providing offices in a number of home business activities that are allowed to be practiced.

To encourage the citizens to do home businesses, which according to a decision by the ministry, can be practiced only by citizens and need a licence from the competent authorities.

"Home businesses can be practiced only by citizens in their homes, and these businesses are considered micro-projects to develop an income for the owners, with a valid license or the usual commercial registration to ensure the rights of the seller and the buyer alike and to ensure the confidence of dealers in transactions", the decision says.

Statistics issued by the ministry show that the number of registered records for home business reached 9,092 in various domestic activities at the end of 2021.

According to the decision, a number of activities including packaging, retail sale of flowers and natural plants, retail sale of artificial flowers and plants, hairdressing and cosmetics for women, retail sale of textiles and fabrics of all kinds and retail sale of ready-made garments.

Other activities are manufacture of Omani khanjars, silver handicraft making, products made from ingredients distilled from flowers and herbs, manufacture of craft products for the production of frankincense water and oil, production and refining of olive oil, manufacture of handicraft products from cotton fabric or wool and manufacture of craft products from leather.

In addition to them are the manufacture of craft products from fronds, manufacture of craft products from wood, manufacture of craft products for cosmetics and perfumes; manufacture and processing of incense, manufacture of handicraft products of pottery and earthenware, manufacture of handicraft products from stone and gypsum etc.



This book helps tourists to see best Oman can offer

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

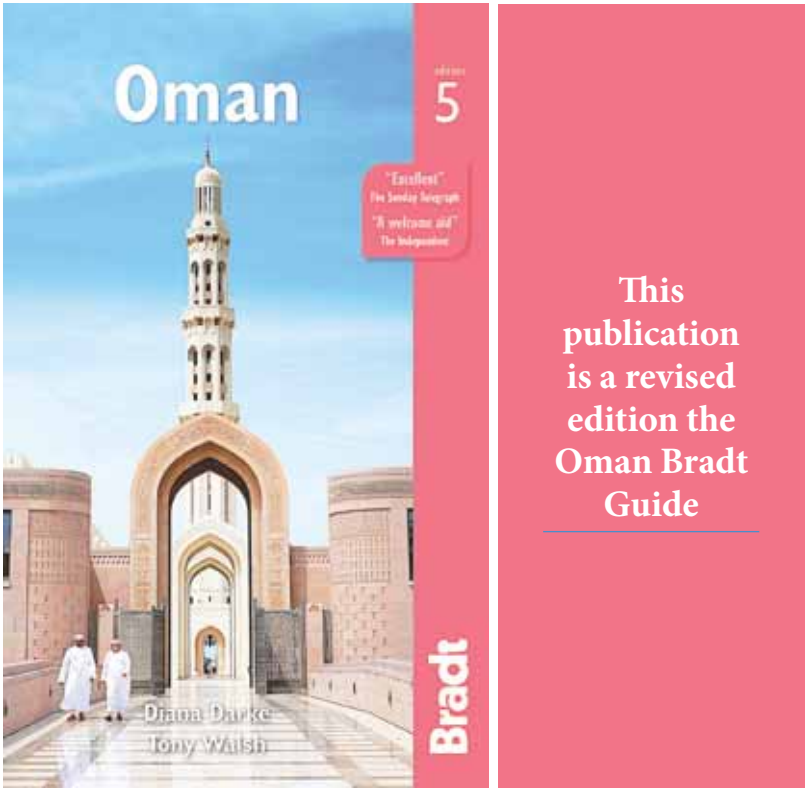
From shopping in the souqs to driving in the dunes, the new 2022 Oman guide by Tony Walsh helps optimise any Oman visit. Tony is no stranger to Oman. He lived in the Sultanate of Oman between 1986 and 2016 and has now written five books about the country.

This new guide is a revised update to his own edition 4 of the Oman guide for Bradt Guides. Tony explains; “Oman is rapidly changing and so Bradt Guides asked me to revise the Oman guide and produce edition 5. It’s now available to readers worldwide.” Oman has a unique culture and impressive historical monuments that are spread in some stupendous scenery. The Bradt Guides book on

Oman enables visitors to plan all aspects of their stay, so they see the best Oman can offer.

The book is split into three main sections to help anyone visit the Sultanate of Oman. The first part is background information about the country. This is an overview of Oman’s history, even areas such as Oman’s equine diplomacy. While operating a tour company in Oman, Tony found that many European visitors were keen to see Oman’s nature. Therefore, he includes pages about Oman’s wildlife, especially birds and good places to see specific species.

The second part of the book has practical information, including the new international road between Oman and Saudi Arabia, health topics and readers can even learn the type of electrical power



sockets found in Oman. This practical information helps visitors pre-plan most aspects of their visit to Oman. Having got his own car stuck in the Sharqiya Sands and broken down in the Jiddat Al Harasis, Tony included safe driving suggestions, so readers can avoid similar driving problems.

Chapters covering places to visit form the last section of the guidebook. Tony says, “Having lived in Arabia for 30 years, I put my explorations and experiences to use for the owners of this guide and created, what I hope, is an informative book for Oman.” There are comprehensive suggestions on restaurants throughout each governorate and hotel options at all prices. This is not to provide the ultimate review of a property, but more to let readers know it’s there

and give an insight into what the establishment is like.

“I’ve stayed in so many hotels in Oman that I have lost count,” says Tony. “These include properties on the coastal road between Muscat and Salalah, and super luxury resorts at either end of it. Many are included in the guide so that people on all budgets can make an informed choice.” For the guidebook, Tony also created many maps so that places mentioned in the book could be found by any independent traveller.

“I am delighted with the book,” Tony says, “with 221,796 words, carefully squeezed into 416 pages, each chapter is bursting with information. I hope all readers enjoy the guidebook as much as I did researching it and they will have a superb visit.”

IHE team qualifies for VISTA finals in Sweden



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

The IHE team, ‘Team Aditya’, entered the VISTA ((Volvo International Service Training) Technical competition finals, which will held in in Gothenburg, Sweden.

The VISTA event is an international competition open to all service market professionals within the Volvo Trucks’ and Volvo Buses’ global service network. VISTA 2022 witnessed the presence of 4,300 dealers from across the globe, with 153 teams from the Middle East, Africa and Turkey competing within the region.

Commenting on this achievement, Vijay Chandgude, workshop supervisor said, “It is truly an honour to be part of the team and working together to achieve this incredible milestone. Despite the challenges and the presence of several other teams competing across the region, we successfully were able to prevail and qualify for the finals. On behalf of the team, we would like to thank IHE for this incredible opportunity in enabling us to showcase our skills and support in enhancing our calibre and providing us this opportunity.”

Team Aditya comprising Ali al Jabri, Vijay Chandgude, Chanbasha Shaikh and Anto Tekkekara, rose above the competition in the semifinals. After the first three tests that were conducted online, 6 out of the 153 teams made their way to the semifinals, including ‘Team Aditya’. This stage comprised of four stations based on different topics with relevant technical challenges that required teamwork, analytical and problem-solving skills.

Currently, it is the world’s largest competition for service market personnel.

The competition’s aim is to help employees develop and improve their knowledge, skills, and ability to work as a team. Participants take part in teams of two to four people. The competition starts with two parts of theoretical questions, which teams complete in their workshops. After these two parts, the best performing teams qualify for the world semi-final, conducted digitally this year. From the digital Semifinal, 44 teams will qualify for the world final in Gothenburg – the home of Volvo Trucks and Buses.

The VISTA event is an international competition open to all service market professionals within the Volvo Trucks’ and Volvo Buses’ global service network

شركة عمان للاستثمارات والتمويل OMAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE Co. SAOG



Report of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I have the pleasure to present the un-audited financial results for the six months period ended 30th June 2022.

Operating & Financial Performance

The Group made a net profit after tax of RO. 2.968 million for the six months period ended 30th June 2022, compared to RO. 1.955 million during the corresponding period of the previous year. The net profit after tax of the Parent Company was RO. 3.057 million for the six months period ended 30th June 2022, compared to RO. 1.889 million during the corresponding period of the previous year.

The Group made a profit before investment income & finance cost for the six months period ended 30th June 2022 of RO 1.982 million compared to a profit of RO 0.976 million in the corresponding period of the previous year. This profit was mainly due to increase in the collection business revenue dividend income from investments and partial recognition of one time gain from Omantel Recourse Settlement.

Investments

The Parent company holds the following Investments in associates:

S	Company Name	Holding %	
		June 2022	June 2021
1	Sohar International Bank SAOG	15.42%	15.37%
2	The Financial Corporation Co. SAOG (FINCORP)	21.86%	21.82%

The shares in profits or losses from associates are accounted as per the standards laid down by the International Financial Reporting Standards.

The Parent Company holds the following Investment in subsidiaries

S	Company Name	Holding %	
		June 2022	June 2021
1	Wasel Exchange SAOC	100%	100%
2	Afaq Al Musanah LLC	92%	92%

The Financial statement of the subsidiary companies have been consolidated as per the standards laid down by the International Financial Reporting Standards.

Business Outlook

The collection revenues are steadily improving and we expect this improvement to continue. Further the company consistently pursues new business opportunities with public and private institutions, to increase its revenue and profit margin. The increase in revenue generated by the collection business prevented a decrease in total revenue, despite losing the contract for Meter Reading in Zone 3 this year. The company is actively working on areas for pruning costs and increase efficiencies to without affecting the quality of its services or compensating on the work environment

Acknowledgement

The Board of Directors wishes to express its sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman. The Company appreciates the support received from Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, Muscat Clearing & Depository Co. SAOC, Central Bank of Oman, Authority of Public Services Regulation, Public Authority for Social Insurance, Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company SAOC, Oman Telecommunications Co. SAOG, Nama Holding Company, Muscat Electricity Distribution Co. SAOC, Mazoon Electricity Company SAOC, Majan Electricity Company SAOC, , Rural Areas Electricity Company SAOC, Dhofar Integrated Services Company SAOC, Oman Post, Omani Qatari Telecommunications Company SAOG, Awasi, Vodafone, Dhofar Insurance Co. SAOG, the company’s bankers, business partners, shareholders and employees of the company for their continued support.

Nasser Mohammed Salim Al Harthi
Chairman – Board of Directors

Consolidated Unaudited Statement of Income for the period ended 30th June 2022

	Group 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Group 30-Jun-21 RO'000	Parent 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Parent 30-Jun-21 RO'000
Operating income	8,774	9,422	5,940	5,911
Operating expenses	(7,723)	(8,482)	(5,405)	(5,526)
Doubtful debts	1,057	94	1,139	253
Depreciation	(406)	(548)	(238)	(351)
Investment income	609	117	609	117
Other Income	84	266	75	101
Reversal of Liabilities	-	545	-	545
Other expenses	(414)	(438)	(305)	(319)
	1,981	976	1,815	731
Share of profit in associates	2,796	2,500	2,796	2,500
Finance charges	(1,777)	(1,485)	(1,554)	(1,320)
Profit before taxation	3,000	1,992	3,057	1,911
Taxation	(32)	(37)	-	(22)
Net profit attributable to OIFC shareholders	2,968	1,955	3,057	1,889
Attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent company	2,984	1,956	3,057	1,889
Non-controlling interests	(16)	(1)	-	-
Profit for the period / year	2,968	1,955	3,057	1,889
Basic Earnings per share (RO)	0.013	0.008	0.013	0.008

Consolidated Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income for the period ended 30th June 2022

	Group 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Group 30-Jun-21 RO'000	Parent 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Parent 30-Jun-21 RO'000
Profit/(Loss) for the period	2,968	1,955	3,057	1,889
Other Comprehensive Income				
Net release to income statement on sale of available for sale financial assets	(573)	290	(573)	290
Share of reserves movement of associates	-	149	-	149
Total Comprehensive Income for the period	(573)	440	(573)	439
Profit/(Loss) for the period after Comprehensive Income	2,395	2,394	2,484	2,328
Attributable to:				
Equity holders of the Parent company	2,411	2,395	2,484	2,328
Non-controlling interests	(16)	(1)	-	-
Profit for the period / year	2,395	2,393	2,484	2,328

Consolidated Unaudited Statement of Financial Position at 30th June 2022

	Group As on 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Group As on 30-Jun-21 RO'000	Group As on 31-Dec-21 RO'000	Parent As on 30-Jun-22 RO'000	Parent As on 30-Jun-21 RO'000	Parent As on 31-Dec-21 RO'000
ASSETS						
Non-Current Assets						
Property and equipment and intangible	3,956	3,926	4,087	1,528	1,802	1,599
Investment properties	1,831	1,880	1,768	1,831	1,880	1,768
Deferred Tax asset	1,954	2,038	1,966	1,954	1,999	1,954
Investment in associates and subsidiary	71,868	63,356	72,081	78,323	69,811	78,537
Financial Asset at FVOCI	7,199	7,898	7,764	7,199	7,898	7,764
Financial assets at amortised costs - non-current	-	750	-	-	750	-
Deposits	200	100	100	-	-	-
	87,008	79,948	87,766	90,836	84,140	91,623
Current Assets						
Inventories	496	582	511	45	74	41
Trade and other receivables	25,782	26,636	26,284	23,519	22,671	22,348
Investments at fair value through profit & loss	1,491	63	1,353	1,491	63	1,353
Cash and bank balances	3,396	3,842	3,100	402	651	675
	31,165	31,123	31,248	25,457	23,459	24,417
	118,173	111,071	119,014	116,293	107,599	116,040
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES						
Shareholders Funds						
Share Capital	23,700	23,700	23,700	23,700	23,700	23,700
Legal Reserve	7,234	6,902	7,234	7,162	6,842	7,162
Change in fair value through OCI	(1,385)	4	(811)	(1,385)	4	(811)
Associate reserves	(459)	(427)	(459)	(459)	(427)	(459)
Properties revaluation reserve	501	535	501	501	535	501
Retained earnings	(2,117)	(1,838)	(2,038)	2,525	2,687	2,531
Shareholder's equity	27,474	28,876	28,127	32,044	33,341	32,624
Non-controlling interest	(214)	(192)	(198)	-	-	-
Total equity	27,260	28,684	27,929	32,044	33,341	32,624
Non-current liabilities						
Non-current portion of term loan	34,478	16,775	23,846	31,716	14,400	20,800
Other non current liabilities	903	782	790	750	776	750
End of service benefits	421	421	432	203	211	214
Deferred tax liability	48	54	48	48	54	48
	35,850	18,032	25,116	32,717	15,441	21,812
Current liabilities						
Bank borrowings	27,203	29,290	30,008	25,078	27,547	27,568
Trade and other payables	26,457	31,438	30,247	25,769	28,169	28,962
Current portion of term loan	1,403	3,627	5,714	684	3,100	5,075
	55,063	64,355	65,969	51,532	58,817	61,605
Total Liabilities	90,913	82,387	91,085	84,249	74,258	83,416
Total Equity and Liabilities	118,173	111,071	119,014	116,293	107,599	116,040
Net assets per share (RO)	0.116	0.121	0.119	0.135	0.141	0.138

Gaza counts cost of deadly conflict

GAZA CITY: Shell-shocked Gazans on Monday sifted through the rubble of three days of deadly conflict between Israel and an armed group as a truce held and life slowly returned to normal with power restored.

The sole power plant in the blockaded enclave “started working to generate electricity” after a two-day shutdown, distributor spokesman Mohammed Thabet said, hours after fuel trucks for the plant entered Gaza.

A ceasefire reached late on Sunday has raised hopes of ending the intense fighting that killed 44 people according to Gaza’s health ministry, with 15 children among the dead.

The power shutdown on Saturday had sparked concern about the impact on hospitals treating casualties and on other vital services, amid the worst fighting in Gaza since an 11-day war last year.

The Israeli military said roads would slowly reopen in the border area.

“It was decided to gradually lift the restrictions,” which have seen Israelis living near Gaza remain close to their bomb shelters, the army said.

Across areas hit by air strikes in Gaza, Palestinians tried to salvage belongings from the rubble of shattered homes and to start clearing the debris.

Mohammed Alai, who lives east of Gaza City, described the situation as “tragic and tough”.

“We have a lot of martyrs and wounded, and devastation and destruction, but Gaza is tending to its wounds,” he said.

HUNDREDS WOUNDED
US President Joe Biden welcomed the ceasefire and thanked Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi for his



A Palestinian woman looks for salvageable items amid the rubble outside her home, heavily damaged in Israeli air strikes. – AFP

Areas hit by air strikes in Gaza, Palestinians tried to salvage belongings from the rubble of shattered homes and to start clearing the debris

thanked “Egypt for its efforts” as it agreed to the truce, but said that “if the ceasefire is violated”, Israel “maintains the right to respond strongly”.

The armed group also accepted the truce but said it too “reserves the right to respond” to any aggression.

Starting on Friday, Israel had launched a heavy aerial and artillery bombardment of the group’s positions in Gaza, leading the gunmen to fire hundreds of rockets in retaliation.

In addition to those killed, Gazan health officials said 360 people were wounded in the Palestinian enclave, which is run by the Hamas.

A senior Israeli diplomatic official said on Monday that “most of the civilians that were

killed in Gaza were killed by gunmen rockets” that fell short or misfired.

The armed group on Monday said 12 of its leaders and members had been killed.

Three people in Israel were wounded by shrapnel, while 31 others were lightly hurt while running for safety, emergency services said.

The group member Mohammad al Hindi said the ceasefire deal “contains Egypt’s commitment to work towards the release of two prisoners”.

They were named as Bassem al Saadi, a senior figure in the group’s political wing who was recently arrested in the occupied West Bank, and Khalil Awawdeh, also in Israeli detention.

— AFP

Israeli army razes homes of two Palestinians

RAMALLAH: Israel demolished the homes of two young Palestinians in the occupied West Bank on Monday suspected of carrying out an axe attack in May that killed three people.

Bulldozers tore down the family homes of Assad Yusef al Rifai, 19, and Subhi Imad Abu Shukair, 20 in the village of Rummanah, near Jenin in the north of the West Bank, the army said.

Both men are awaiting trial, after a stabbing frenzy in the mainly ultra-Orthodox Jewish city of Elad.

Israel launched a massive manhunt following the attack, ultimately finding the pair hiding in bushes inside Israel.

“Tonight, the Israeli army destroyed the home of the people who carried out the attack in Elad, in which Boaz Gul, Oren Ben Yiftach and Yonatan Habakkuk were killed and others were wounded,” the army said in a statement.

Kamal Abu al Rub, deputy governor of Jenin, said that more than 50 military vehicles had stormed the town overnight.

“The electricity was cut off from the area, and the vehicles continued to attack the two houses until Monday morning,” he said.

Families of the two men had lost appeals filed with Israel’s supreme court to prevent the demolitions.

Israel routinely demolishes the homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out attacks.

It argues such measures act as a deterrent, but critics say it amounts to collective punishment.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

About 475,000 Jewish settlers currently live in the West Bank in communities considered illegal by most of the international community, alongside some 2.8 million Palestinians.

— AFP



Israeli soldiers deploy to demolish houses in Rummanah town in the occupied West Bank. – AFP

10 killed in stabbing spree in southern Iran

TEHRAN: An attacker stabbed 10 people to death in Kerman province in southern Iran due to “personal differences”, before being arrested by police, state media reported on Monday.

On Sunday, “an Afghan national killed ten people due to personal differences in Rafsanjan,” Hossein Rezai, acting governor of the city, was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA.

He “was arrested by the police as he attempted to leave the province” in the evening, Rezai added. Six Afghans and four Iranians were killed in the attack in a rural area, he said.

One person was also wounded. State broadcaster IRIB said that the suspect was reportedly “mentally unstable” and addicted to drugs. Iran has hosted millions of Afghan refugees for decades, but fresh waves have flooded through the shared 900-kilometre border between the countries since the Taliban’s return to power in Afghanistan last year. — AFP

China offers supports for Rohingya repatriation

DHAKA: Beijing has assured Dhaka of assistance for the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas living in Bangladeshi camps, with China constructing some 3,000 homes to accommodate returnees.

Bangladesh has been hosting more than 1 million Rohingyas in crowded camps after they fled violent persecution in Myanmar. Some 750,000 people crossed the border after Myanmar launched a military crackdown on the minority group in 2017.

Bangladeshi Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told a news conference he had met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Dhaka on Sunday. — AFP

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
119/2022	General Maintenance Work for Al-Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in the Wilayat of Buraimi	Companies specialized in building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Second Degree	Sunday 28-8-2022 02:00 PM	Sunday 18-9-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Tuesday 9/8/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

www.mosd.gov.om

TENDERS NOTICE

The Tenders committee of **Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources** Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
275/2021/MAFWR/HQ-29 Retenders	Maintenance Works of Wadi Sahalnawt Recharge Dam in Wilayat Salalah Governorate of Dhofar	25/-	Third	Monday 15/8/2022	Thursday 25/8/2022
439/2022/MAFWR/HQ-52	Rehabilitation and Improvement of Al-Khamil Falaj in Al-Khamil Village at Wilayat AL-Khamil Wa AL-Wafi at AL-Sharqiyah South Governorate	25/-	Fourth	Wednesday 24/8/2022	Wednesday 14/9/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk: email address and phonenumber: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



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In brief

■ DOHA



CHAD GOVT SIGNS DEAL TO LAUNCH PEACE TALKS

Chad's military government on Monday signed a deal with more than 40 opposition groups to launch national peace talks later this month, although the main rebel outfit refused to take part. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the African Union urged the junta and opposition to seize the latest opportunity to stabilise a country considered key to international efforts to stamp out extremists in the Sahel region.

But after five months of mediation efforts by Qatar, the main rebel Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) announced hours before the ceremony at a Doha hotel that it would not sign the deal.

■ COLOMBO



STALIN RELEASED ON BAIL AFTER ARREST DRAWS OUTCRY

A Sri Lankan court on Monday released on bail top leftist trade union leader Joseph Stalin, whose arrest had sparked international condemnation and widespread protests. Police have arrested scores of people on charges of damage to public property during months of protests, which peaked with the flight and resignation of president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July. Stalin, 57, was arrested on Thursday for contempt after he participated in an anti-government demonstration that was banned by a court in May. Stalin thanked UN Human Rights Council officials who had called for his release.

■ BRUSSELS



BIGGEST CHOCOLATE PLANT RESTARTS AFTER HEALTH SCARE

A factory in Belgium billed as the world's biggest chocolate-making plant said it restarted operations on Monday after closing for six weeks to clean up a salmonella contamination. Three of the 24 production lines at the plant in the town of Wieze resumed and the first delivery took place, said Barry Callebaut, the Swiss company that runs the factory. The plant was shut down at the end of June after salmonella bacteria was found in one lot. Zurich-based Barry Callebaut said it halted shipments and informed clients in time to prevent contaminated chocolate making its way to shops.

US Senate approves bill to fight climate change

WASHINGTON: After 18 months of arduous negotiations and a marathon night of debate, the US Senate on Sunday passed Joe Biden's ambitious climate, tax and healthcare plan — a significant victory for the president ahead of crucial midterm elections.

Voting as a unified bloc and with the tie-breaking vote cast by Vice President Kamala Harris, Democrats approved the \$430 billion spending plan, which will go to the House of Representatives next week, where it is expected to pass before being signed into law by Biden.

The plan, crafted in sensitive talks with members on the right wing of his Democratic Party, would include the biggest US investment ever on climate — \$370 billion aimed at effecting a 40 per cent drop in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

That would give Biden a clear victory on one of his top agenda items and go some way towards restoring US leadership in meeting the global climate challenge.

ELECTRIC CARS

The bill would provide ordinary Americans with a tax credit of up to \$7,500 when purchasing an electric car, plus a 30 per cent discount when they install solar panels on their roofs.

It would also provide millions to help protect and conserve forests — which have been increasingly



Democrats scored a major policy victory when the US Senate passed a \$430 billion climate change, healthcare and tax bill that will help reduce the carbon emissions. — Reuters

ravaged in recent years by wildfires during record heat waves that scientists say are linked to global warming.

Billions of dollars in tax credits would also go to some of the country's worst-polluting industries to help their transition to greener methods — a measure bitterly opposed by some liberal Democrats who have, however, accepted this as a least-bad alternative after months of frustration.

Biden, who came to office with promises of sweeping reforms,

has seen his hopes dashed, then revived, then dashed again.

Democrats' narrow edge in the Senate has given a virtual veto to moderates like Joe Manchin of West Virginia, who earlier had used that power to block Biden's much more expansive Build Back Better plan.

But in late July, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer managed to wangle a compromise with the West Virginian, whose state's economy depends heavily on coal mining. And on Saturday, senators finally opened their

debate on the text.

VOTE-A-RAMA

Late in the day, senators kicked off a marathon procedure known as a "vote-a-rama," in which members can propose dozens of amendments and demand a vote on each one.

That allowed both Republicans, who view Biden's plan as too costly, and liberal Democrats, who say it does not reach far enough, to make their opposition clear.

Influential progressive Senator Bernie Sanders used that platform

Hundreds of children strip searched by London police

LONDON: London's under-fire police force strip-searched more than 600 children over a two-year period, most of them black boys, according to new data released on Monday.

England's commissioner for children, Rachel de Souza, said she was "deeply shocked" by the figures after obtaining them from the Metropolitan police.

De Souza's request came after Britain's biggest police force was forced to apologise in March over the case of "Child Q", which has sparked an investigation for gross misconduct into four officers.

The 15-year-old black schoolgirl was strip-searched by female officers in 2020 after being wrongly suspected of carrying cannabis, despite them being aware she was menstruating.

She was searched without an "appropriate adult" present, and neither was an adult in attendance in 23 per cent of the cases unearthed by de Souza.

In total, 650 minors aged 10-17 were strip-searched by Met officers between 2018 and 2020, she found.

More than 95 per cent were boys, and 58 per cent of the 650 were described by the officer as being black.

De Souza said she was "extremely concerned" at the ethnic imbalance, and said Child Q may be part of a bigger "systemic problem around child protection" in the Met.

The figures had gone up sharply year after year, she said, and showed that a significant number of children "are being subjected to this intrusive and traumatising practice each year".

The London force has been rocked in recent years by a succession of incidents involving officers, including last year, when a diplomatic protection squad member was jailed for the kidnap, rape and murder of Sarah Everard.

A crisis of public confidence in the police saw Cressida Dick resign as Met commissioner in February.

In response to de Souza's findings, the Met said it had already instituted changes "to ensure children subject to intrusive searches are dealt with appropriately and respectfully".

Some children may themselves be a "vulnerable victim of exploitation" by gangsters and drug criminals, it conceded.

London mayor Sadiq Khan redoubled his criticism of the Met after slamming the force over the Child Q case and other incidents.

It was "deeply concerning" that so many body searches were happening without an adult present, a spokesman for Khan said. "And there remain serious wider issues with regard to disproportionality and the use of stop and search on young black boys," the spokesman said.

— AFP



London mayor Sadiq Khan says he is 'extremely concerned' by police strip searches of children. — AFP



UN Secretary General Antnio Guterres addresses a press conference in Tokyo on Monday. — AFP

Any attack on N-plant 'suicidal': UN chief

TOKYO: Any attack on a nuclear plant is "suicidal", United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned on Monday after fresh shelling hit a huge atomic power complex in southern Ukraine.

Moscow and Kyiv blame each other for the latest strike at the Zaporizhzhia plant, Europe's largest nuclear power site, which has been under Russian control since the early days of the war.

The fighting on Friday at the plant has prompted the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to warn of "the very real risk of a nuclear disaster".

At a press conference in Tokyo, Guterres condemned such attacks without saying either side was responsible.

"We support the IAEA on their efforts in relation to create the conditions of stabilisation of that plant," he said.

"Any attack to a nuclear plant is a suicidal thing. I hope that those attacks will end, and at the same time I hope that the IAEA will be able to access the plant."

His comments followed a visit

through the evening to propose several amendments aimed at strengthening social planks in the legislation, which were considerably weakened during the months of negotiation.

The bill would provide \$64 billion for healthcare initiatives and ensure a lowering of some drug costs — which can be 10 times more expensive in the United States than in some other rich countries.

But progressive Democrats long ago had to give up their ambitions for free preschool and community colleges and expanded healthcare for the elderly.

"Millions of seniors will continue to have rotten teeth and lack the dentures, hearing aids or eyeglasses that they deserve," Sanders said from the Senate floor. "This bill, as currently written, does nothing to address it." But fellow Democrats, eager to pass the legislation ahead of November midterms when control of Congress is at stake, have rejected any change in the text.

To help offset the plan's massive spending, it would reduce the US deficit through a new 15-per cent minimum tax on companies with profits of \$1 billion or more — a move targeting some that now pay far less. That measure could generate more than \$258 billion in tax receipts for the government over the 10 next years, by some estimates. — AFP/dpa

to Hiroshima over the weekend, where Guterres gave a speech to mark the 77th anniversary of the world's first nuclear bomb attack.

In the Japanese city on Saturday, he warned that "humanity is playing with a loaded gun" as crises with the potential for nuclear disaster proliferate worldwide, from Ukraine to the Middle East and the Korean peninsula.

The Portuguese 73-year-old also delivered a stark warning against the horrors of atomic weapons a week ago in New York at a key nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty conference, which he reiterated on Monday.

"We are witnessing a radicalisation in the geopolitical situation that makes the risk of a nuclear war again something we cannot completely forget," he said.

When asked about China's massive military exercises around Taiwan, sparked by a visit last week to the self-ruled island by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Guterres said the UN "abides by a resolution of the General Assembly, the so-called One China policy". — AFP

Fats may not be as bad as you think



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a content creator and wellness adviser

Fats have gained ill fame over time regarding their consumption particularly in today's world when lifestyle diseases are on the upswing. However, not all fats can be labelled as demons and one should know what type of fats should make up their food plate.

Adding a little number of healthy fats to your food not only adds flavour to it but also reduces unwanted snacking in between the meals by keeping you fuller.

No one can survive on tasteless food forever, so if you are eliminating fat from your plate, chances are high you will end up adding an alternate in the form of sugar or other chemicals to compensate for the lost taste.

So, how fats are good?

Fats are one of the major food groups that our body needs to maintain health and carry out cardinal bodily functions. In fact, AHA (American Heart Association) recommends up to 30 per cent of your total energy intake should come from healthy fat.

Apart from acting as a major source of energy, fats provide cushioning to the various organs in the body, form the structural network of cells, and help in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) as well as keep you satiated for longer.

According to a chapter published in the National Library of Medicine, fats affect satiety and control the

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION RECOMMENDS UP TO 30 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL ENERGY INTAKE SHOULD COME FROM HEALTHY FAT

appetite through the regulation of appetite hormones. Moreover, your skin loses shine and hair becomes frizzy when the body is not getting adequate fat.

What are the good and the bad ones?

There are major three types of fats namely saturated, unsaturated, and

trans fats.

Saturated fats are present in fatty meats, full-fat dairy, poultry skin, as well as oils like coconut and palm oils. Saturated fats solidify at room temperatures and should be consumed in a very limited way.

Then we have unsaturated fats which stay liquid at room temperatures because of the nature of chemical bonds present in them and can be found in plant vegetable oils such as olive, canola, sunflower, nuts and nut oils, salmon and mackerel.

Further categorised into monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids), they are considered heart healthy and must

be included in your foods.

Lastly, trans fats (present in partially hydrogenated oils) which is the actual culprit and should be avoided at all costs; it is found in processed snacks, margarine, fried fast food items, vegetable shortenings, and baked goods. Even in small quantities they are harmful and disease inducers.

When to avoid or limit?

If you have any lifestyle disease (diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular problems) your healthcare provider will decide the fat intake for you best suited depending on your health status. Other than that, for healthy individuals, make sure you are providing yourself with the right fat content your body needs.

Drought overlooked as Kenya prepares to vote

NICK PERRY

In the dust bowl of Kenya's drought-stricken north, the people of Purapul are edging closer to starvation, surviving on nothing but wild berries as their children waste away from hunger.

Loka Metir knows the bitter fruits make her children sick, further weakening their frail condition. But it hasn't rained properly in three years, and there's simply nothing else to eat.

"This is the only way to survive," the mother of five said in Purapul, a scattering of thatched huts a two-day walk from the nearest town in the bone-dry Marsabit county.

At least 18 million people across the Horn of Africa are facing severe hunger as the worst drought in 40 years devastates the region.

Over four million are in Kenya's often-forgotten north, a number that has climbed steadily this year, as the crisis struggles to attract national attention in the midst of a hard-fought — and expensive — election campaign.

Nearly 950,000 children under five years and 134,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women in Kenya's remote arid regions are acutely malnourished and need aid, according to government figures from June.

The World Bank forecast in June that the drought, coupled with economic disruption from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, would drag on Kenya's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

Yet it has barely featured on the election agenda as Kenya's political giants have criss-crossed the country drumming up votes.

In the hustings, the soaring cost of living in East Africa's biggest economy has overshadowed other concerns.

Protesters in major cities have threatened to boycott the much-anticipated August 9 poll if prices aren't lowered, chanting "no food, no election".

The plight of northern Kenya has largely gone "under the carpet", said economist Timothy Njagi from the Tegemeo Institute of Agricultural Policy and Development in Nairobi.

"I found it quite sad... Given that this was going to be an election year, we would have imagined that it was going to be a key discussion point," he said.

Four consecutive failed rainy seasons, made worse by a changing climate, have created the driest conditions since the early 1980s.

Rivers and wells have run dry, and grazing land has turned to dust, spurring the death of more than 1.5 million livestock in Kenya alone.

Animal carcasses litter the rocky plains around Purapul, where pastoral families have struggled without milk or meat in their diets, or any means of trading for food. Iripiyo Apothya watched her goats shrink and die. — AFP

In my homeland, the smell of death on a summer afternoon



Natalia Yermak

The writer is a former production coordinator, now working with NYT

There was a mass grave that held 300 people, and I was standing at its edge. The chalky body bags were piled up in the pit, exposed. One moment before, I was a different person, someone who never knew how wind smelled after it passed over the dead on a pleasant summer afternoon.

In mid-June, those corpses were far from a complete count of the civilians killed by shelling in the area around the industrial city of Lysychansk over the previous two months. They were only "the ones who did not have anyone to bury them in a garden or a backyard," a soldier said casually.

He lit a cigarette while we looked at the grave.

The smoke obscured the smell.

It was rare to get such a moment to slow down, observe and reflect while reporting from Ukraine's eastern Donbas region. But that day, the Ukrainian soldiers were pleased after delivering packets of food and other goods to local civilians, so they offered to take reporters from The New York Times to another site that they said we should see: the mass grave.

After leaving the site, I naively thought the palpable presence of death in the air could not follow me home — over all of the roads and checkpoints separating the graves in the Donbas — to my loved ones in the western part of Ukraine.

I was wrong.

I had returned to Kyiv, the capital, to the small apartment I had been renting, and was washing the smoke and dust of the front lines off my clothes when my best friend, Yulia, texted: She had lost her cousin, a soldier, fighting in the east.

I would soon have to stand over another grave.

It was an experience familiar to many Ukrainians. Five months after the full-scale Russian invasion began, the wars' front lines mean little. Missile strikes and the news of death and casualties have blackened nearly every part of the country like poison.

Yulia's cousin Serhiy was serving in an air mobile battalion around the city of Izium in the east. A few hours before he died, he sent his last message to his mother, Halyna: an emoji of a flower bouquet. Then he drove to the fight on the front line, where a Russian machine gun found him.

FIVE MONTHS AFTER THE FULL-SCALE RUSSIAN ATTACK BEGAN, THE WARS' FRONT LINES MEAN LITTLE. MISSILE STRIKES AND THE NEWS OF DEATH AND CASUALTIES HAVE BLACKENED NEARLY EVERY PART OF THE COUNTRY LIKE POISON

In Donbas, these tragedies are a backdrop to everyday existence, piling up in numbers that seem inconceivable even as they completely surround you, an inescapable reality that feels like the very air in your lungs.

There is no catharsis for the people living in the front-line regions. Instead, they seem overwhelmed by the vastness of what is going on around them — as if it's an existential threat too big for them to do anything about. So they wait numbly for what often seems the inevitable outcome, hypnotised by indecision, all while often forgetting they are directly in harm's way.

It felt different in the west, away from the front. In the Donbas, almost every sudden odd noise was exactly what you suspected it to be: something lethal flying nearby, seeking out the living.

In contrast, Kyiv was almost peaceful. With running water, gas, electricity and Internet, it was far from the medieval conditions of a destroyed Lysychansk. People were playing Frisbee and walking dogs in the parks, devoid of the bodily stiffness and sense of dread that accompanies the threat of sudden death.

The chain of midsummer missile strikes on cities far from the fighting in the east and south had only just started, turning the daily news of killed civilians into a nightmare: unsuspecting people — children among them — blasted apart or burned alive inside malls and medical centers in broad daylight. It left tight knots in our stomachs, but they hadn't transformed yet into something almost genetic, a terror that would be passed on to the offspring by the survivors of this war.

Another nightmare, a private one, was contained in Serhiy's coffin, closed to spare the family the sight of his wounds.

It heralded the war's arrival in Lishchn, a postage stamp of a village in northwest Ukraine where Yulia's family came from. There was no thud of artillery or shriek from a missile, just the quiet hum of a funeral procession.

Because of soldiers such as Serhiy fighting on the front line, the village residents still had their present and future, distorted by war, but protected. That's why, on that Saturday morning, hundreds of them came to Serhiy's parents' yard to share the weight of their grief and take a long farewell walk with the family.

— *New York Times*



A field in the Donetsk region of Ukraine.

The tiger that couldn't be spotted



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

Education is a qualification some say but we would all be studying differently if we were taught earlier in life that it is not just a pathway to a career but toward our understanding of the world and life.

Education need not be just about scientific theories and mathematical solutions but also knowing of our aptitude and develop our sense of inquisitiveness in other subjects.

Was playing with a puzzle the other day and it basically asked whether one could spot the leopard and the deer. Depending on what you see would verify whether one is right brained or left brained.

For the life of me I could not spot the tiger. I turned the screen around, squinted at the art work and so on. All I could see was a deer. Wanted to go and ask others around too about what they could see. Thankfully there was no one around.

So I was said to be right brained as per the puzzle. I had to find out more and this is what habitation.com says — Right brained can be disorganized, unpredictable and be very good with people. They are spontaneous, creative and more emotional than left brained, often pondering and acting on their feelings. Apparently some of the qualities are being intuitive, good at problem solving and more comfortable with the unknown.

So there is more to mankind. The author, John Gray, wrote about Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. The characteristics were fascinating and gave us an in depth understanding about the genders. But now here are the brain hemispheres giving us our attributes in the way we think and act and most importantly learn.

So does the world belong to left brainers? For that we need to understand the qualities of left brainers.

Oh you know them — they are logical, they like to set goals, finish daily goals and has an aptitude for math and science and obviously are well organized.

Well we know one thing we can blame it on brain hemispheres if we are not able to catch up in the Math class or the other way around if it is to do with art.

Can we activate the other hemisphere too and have a balanced outlook? Now that would be a great topic to discuss with an expert. So we will keep that for another day.

This is not all, however, the stomach also has a part in our well being in addition to digestive system and giving us the energy. We are who we are also because of our gut flora or gut microbes. They also have connection to our thought processes. According to experts, gut bacteria can be linked to depression and even anxiety. Wonder if this is what makes us feel the butterflies in the stomach when we are nervous or excited. Could the gut feeling be gut intelligence?

And then imagine when we expose our stomach to unhealthy food we love to consume. Now if only our taste buds like and choose what is health for us. Experts say gut bacteria has connection to the regions of the brain that generates emotions. So the gut actually has a variety of roles and is home to microbes that have influence on us from moods to health.

So no wonder when an Ayurvedic doctor explained the core of the matter is stomach and acidity can lead to various other issues we do not even think of, there were so many life style changes that had to be made.

There is much to our body and the mind. We cannot just blame someone for thinking the way they are. So much to learn while we, as lay persons need go into self treatment, we can most definitely realise where we are going wrong when we consume what we have always had just because of habit and suffer silently. Make slight changes and it is a different life!

Meanwhile, I will continue to wonder how much I could be missing out without being able to spot the tiger in the puzzle.



INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Members of the National Modern and Folkloric Ballet of Guatemala perform the traditional Mayan Q'eqchi' dance "El Paabanc" at the Miguel Angel Asturias Cultural Centre in Guatemala City. The dance "El Paabanc", whose tradition is celebrated by the indigenous people of the Q'eqchi' Mayan ethnic group in the department of Alta Verapaz, in northern Guatemala, was declared as "Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Nation", according to a report published by the Sports and Culture Ministry. — AFP

Rivals vying to lead Britain clash over cost-of-living crisis

GAVIN CORDON

The two lawmakers vying to replace British Prime Minister Boris Johnson have clashed anew over the cost-of-living crisis. Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak will be elected as Conservative Party leader on September 5, the day the Commons returns from its summer recess, and therefore also become prime minister. Johnson continues to serve in a caretaker capacity in the meantime, after resigning earlier this year.

Allies of Truss have insisted she is committed to helping families struggling with soaring bills as the leadership contenders clashed again over the cost-of-living crisis.

Rishi Sunak launched a fresh attack on Truss's plan for tax cuts in an emergency budget describing it as a "big bung" for large businesses and the better off which would do little to help those most in need over the coming winter.

However, Northern Ireland Secretary Brandon Lewis — who is backing Foreign Secretary Truss — said they would look to do "whatever we can" to help people under pressure from rising inflation.

Truss's team was forced on the defensive after she suggested at the weekend that there would be no "handouts" if she won the race for No 10, as the seat of government is known, and that her priority was reducing the tax burden.

Her supporters insisted that her comments had been misinterpreted and that she was not ruling out further direct support for families struggling with mounting energy bills.

But Sunak said her plans to scrap the national insurance hike, which he brought in as chancellor to fund the NHS

RISHI SUNAK LAUNCHED A FRESH ATTACK ON TRUSS'S PLAN FOR TAX CUTS IN AN EMERGENCY BUDGET DESCRIBING IT AS A 'BIG BUNG' FOR LARGE BUSINESSES AND THE BETTER OFF WHICH WOULD DO LITTLE TO HELP THOSE MOST IN NEED OVER THE COMING WINTER

and social care, would leave someone on the national living wage less than £60 a year better off while pensioners would not get a penny.

Writing in The Sun, he said that her proposed cut in corporation tax would do nothing to help small businesses and would simply put money back in the coffers of the biggest companies with the largest profits. With the Bank of England forecasting inflation is set to hit 13 per cent — with average household energy bills predicted to reached almost £4,000 — Sunak said his rival's measures "won't touch the sides".

"Families are facing a long, hard winter with rising bills. Yet Liz's plan to deal with that is to give a big bung to large businesses and the well-off, leaving those who most need help out in the cold," he said.

"These tax cuts simply won't touch the sides. We need clear-eyed realism, not starry-eyed boosterism. That means bolder action to protect people from the worst of the winter." Former Conservative party co-chairman Oliver Dowden, who is backing Sunak, said that while Ms

Truss was putting her emphasis on tax cuts, the former chancellor accepted the need for "bold, big interventions".

"We need to be realistic and honest with people about the scale of the challenge that we're facing," he told Sky News. "Both with the scale of inflation that's coming down the line, something we haven't seen for almost 40 years and with the fact that energy bills are going to go up, possibly towards £4,000.

"There is no doubt that we do need an intervention of a considerable scale to deal with this."

However, Lewis defended Truss's approach, insisting she wants to put more money in people's pockets.

"We will look to do whatever we can to help people - that's what an emergency budget is about," he told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme.

"She's willing to do more to help people but her focus is around doing it in a way that puts more money in people's pockets, creating a high-growth economy with higher wages, more people in work.

"So rather than having handouts, what we do is have a low-tax economy that's driving growth and therefore with people having more money in their pockets, they're better placed to deal with some of the challenges that we see."

Lewis said it was still possible deliver tax cuts while dealing with inflation.

"We want to do both, want to make sure we're getting on top of inflation and you can - to get on top of inflation whilst still putting more money in people's pockets," he told Times Radio. "I think it's a false premise to argue that you can't deal with inflation whilst making sure that people are better off at the same time."

— dpa



Liz Truss or Rishi Sunak will be elected as Conservative Party leader on September 5.

sport

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WALEED AL JAHWARI
KONYA, AUGUST 8

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will inaugurate the fifth edition of the Islamic Solidarity Games, which will be held in Konya from August 9, and run until August 18. Oman will participate with 30 athletes among 5,000 athletes from 55 countries competing in five games through 24 at athletics, cycling, swimming, shooting and weightlifting competitions.

Oman national shooting team completed on Monday their final warm up sessions. The team, which was in the external camp during August 5 to 8, will begin their competitions starting on Tuesday.

They will participate in the formal training to adapt with all shooting alignments, the trace nature, and the weather and referee rules. The official



competition will start on Thursday with 117 shooters from 21 countries. Eight teams will advance to the next stage and four teams only will progress into the finals competition.

Oman men’s shooting team will

be represented by shooters including Salim al Nasiri, Abdullah al Mandhari and Husain al Shahoumi while women’s team will be represented by a squad of shooters like Reem al Hosni, Fakhriya al Jahafi and the

team coach Marco Conte.

Commenting on the team’s participation in the tournament, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Hattali, shooting team manager said, “the national shooting team is in full readiness to participate in the Islamic Solidarity Sports Federation Tournament, in which our team will participate in the trap and skeet competitions. Our target is to emerge from this tournament with the maximum benefit that will be added to the team shooters,” he added.

“Definitely, the absence of rifle and pistol competitions in closed and semi-closed fields will affect our team. Oman shooting team is a well-known team at these competitions in which our team has a wide experience, ability and skills. This absence may affect in the results of the team in this tournament” he ended.

Hamilton to host 100th Commonwealth Games in 2030

BIRMINGHAM: The Commonwealth Games are ready to return in 2030 to Hamilton, the Canadian city that launched the multi-sport event 100 years ago, with Niagara Falls providing the backdrop for beach volleyball and a push to add men’s cricket to the programme.

With the federal and provincial governments expressing support and no other cities having formally thrown their hats in the ring, Hamilton bid leader Louis Frapporti told Reuters the ‘Steel City’ is the favourite when the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) makes a decision sometime next year.

“Without jinxing it we are clearly the punitive favourite if only because we have invested so much time and energy in actually creating a proposal,” said Frapporti. “The only country we are hearing any rumblings about is New Zealand.

“What we understand is we are so far ahead of them in terms of preparation of a bid that they are more likely to be interested in 2034 than 2030.” If chosen it would mark the fifth time Canada has hosted the quadrennial event but the first since 1994 when they were held in Victoria, British Colombia.

Hamilton staged the first competition in 1930 when it was known as the British Empire Games and had just six sports; athletics, boxing, lawn bowls, rowing, swimming, and wrestling.

Women competed only in aquatic events.

At the Birmingham Games, which came to close on Monday, nearly 5,000 athletes from 72 nations and territories competed in 19 sports.

For the first time at a major multi-sport event there were more medal events for women (136) than men (134) and a record eight integrated para-sports with podium finishes counting in the overall medal standings.

While the 100th anniversary provides an obvious hook on which to hang a pitch, the Hamilton100 Commonwealth Games Bid Corporation will not be playing the sentiment card but instead focus on the elements that made the Birmingham Games a success.

“We are very light on the centenary celebration elements,” said Frapporti. “Some people, like our (Hamilton) mayor, are very keen on that but from the perspective of us who have actually crafted the proposal we see that as the least compelling part of this.

“We want to get away from the concept of the Games as an event in time.” — Reuters



Sultanate of Oman
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects :-

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Grade In Tender Board Registration
RE-TENDER 6/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL SERVICES, CIVIL, CLEANING AND PEST CONTROL SERVICES TO SULTAN QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX AT BAUSHER FROM 1/1/2023 TO 31/12/2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 7/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SEEB SPORTS STADIUM (INCLUDING SPORTS HALL AT SEEB SPORTS CLUB) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 8/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO AL AMAL SPORTS CLUB FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 9/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRA SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 10/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 11/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO KHASAB SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT LIMA) FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade
RE-TENDER 12/2022	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SALALAH SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY 2023 TO 31st DECEMBER 2024	Excellent Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 14/08/2022.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 22/08/2022

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender.

Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Oman Equestrian Federation champs hosted

KABEER YOUSUF
@KABEERYOUSEF

A reception and dinner were organised by the Oman Equestrian Association (OEA) for the teams from the government cavalry units and the wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman who participated in the two-day championship, at the newly-opened Tulip Inn Majan Hotel in Salalah. Sayyid Munthir bin Said al Busaidy, Chairman of Oman Equestrian Association(OEA) was welcomed by Mark Abboud, General Manager of Tulip Inn Majan Hotel Ahmed al Abri, Secretary-General of OEA.

Ten teams from the government cavalry units and the wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman took part in the two-day championship with a total of 40 horse riders from the Royal Cavalry(two teams), Police Cavalry Headquarters, Royal Guard of Oman’s cavalry, Al Namir School, S3 Stables, Al Mudhaibi Equestrian Committee, Sohar Stables and Dhofar Equestrian Committee. The activities of the Equestrian Week in Dhofar concluded on Wednesday, under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani,



Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. The grand finale of the event also showcased performance of traditional horse sports by skilled champions. A number of horse-related activities and events, including the endurance race and the peg-picking championship were held as part of the Oman Equestrian Week organised by

the Oman Equestrian Federation in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The peg-picking championship which began on August 2 featured ten teams from the government Calvary Units and the Wilayats of the Sultanate with a total of 40 horse riders competing in this championship.



National School Beach Games semi finals today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

The first edition of the National School Beach Games Championship in Salalah is entering the semis round on Tuesday.

Educational governorates teams from Dhofar, Al Wusta, North Al Batinah and Muscat sealed their spot in the semifinal of beach handball competitions. While teams of Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah and Dhofar progressed into semis round of beach volleyball competitions.

The hosts Dhofar team will take on Al Dakhiliyah in the first semifinal match of beach handball competitions while South Al Batinah team will face Al Dhahirah team. At the beach volleyball



competitions, Dhofar team will meet Al Wusta team while Muscat team will play against North Al Batinah team.

The schooling sporting event, which is held under the organisation and supervision of Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) at the sandy fields of Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment venue in Salalah, featured tough competitions among the participated teams. Five clashes took place earlier on Monday. At the beach volleyball competitions, the hosts Dhofar Educational governorate team managed to defeat north Al Sharqiyah team 2-0 while Muscat team beat Al Dakhiliyah team with the same result. The final clash between Al Wusta and Al Dhahirah ended for

the former by 2-1.

At the beach handball competitions, Al Dhahirah team registered a 2-0 win over Al Wusta team while the hosts Dhofar team managed to seal spot in semis after defeating South Batinah team in penalties 4-3 as the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw.

As many as 110 students representing seven different educational governorates from the Sultanate of Oman are taking part in the National School Beach Games Championship in Salalah. The championship targeted on spreading educational moral values and the necessity of sporting culture to the students and aims to act as a crucial event that may contribute to discover and develop the talented students in beach games.

Women cricket stars eye Olympic chance after Commonwealths



BIRMINGHAM: Women cricketers say they would “love to go to LA” to chase Olympic glory after a strikingly successful debut at the Commonwealth Games.

Australia beat India by nine runs in Sunday’s final in front of a big, noisy crowd at Edgbaston to underline their status as the world’s best team.

New Zealand earlier hammered host nation England by eight wickets to take the bronze medal.

Women’s cricket was on the Commonwealth Games programme for the first time in Birmingham and had the spotlight to itself, with no matching men’s tournament.

It is no secret that cricket chiefs want to get the Twenty20 game — the version played in Birmingham — on the list of Olympic sports, even as early as the Los Angeles Games in 2028, although that is a long shot.

International Cricket Council chief executive Geoff Allardice said the Commonwealths had been a “fantastic 10 days of competition” in front of packed-out crowds, describing it as a “superb advert for the women’s game”.

England captain Nat Sciver agreed that the tournament in Birmingham had been a huge shot in the arm for the women’s game.

“This Commonwealth Games has been an incredible experience and I think the crowds have shown that people really love coming to watch whatever team it is,” she said.

“Having that new audience from the Commonwealth Games where everyone’s happy to go and watch any sport is something really special and something that can only help women’s cricket.

“I’d love for cricket to be in an Olympics.” — AFP

Australia smash India to win hockey gold on final day of Commonwealths

BIIRMINGHAM: Australia demolished India 7-0 in the men’s hockey final on Monday to maintain their perfect record at the Commonwealth Games and end their gold medal hunt in style.

The six-time defending champions showed their opponents no mercy in sweltering conditions on the final day of sporting action in Birmingham.

Australia have won every gold medal in men’s hockey since the sport joined the Commonwealth Games programme in 1998.

The dominant Australians were 2-0 up after the first quarter and two goals from Jacob Anderson helped put them 5-0 up after 30 minutes.

Nathan Ephraums scored his second to make it 6-0 and Flynn Ogilvie completed the rout early in the final quarter.

Australia’s Blake Govers said the team had saved their best performance until last.

“That’s what we pride ourselves on,” he said. “It’s awesome to do it without too much of a heart problem.

“We had to play with confidence and play forward and take the game on from the start, and that’s what we did. That’s the difference between the two games (final and semi-final against England).”

Host nation England beat South Africa 6-3 to take bronze.

Australia have topped the medals table with 67 golds — 10



ahead of England. Canada are third with 26 golds and India have 22. The closing ceremony takes place at Alexander Stadium later on Monday, bringing to an end 11 days of sporting action at the 22nd Commonwealth Games.

Elsewhere on Monday, Scotland’s James Heatly and Grace Reid won the mixed synchronised 3m springboard final, with England pair Noah Williams and Andrea Spendolini-Sirieix taking gold in the 10m event.

India celebrated a golden double in badminton.

World number seven PV Sindhu won the women’s singles, overcoming Canada’s Michelle Li while Lakshya Sen beat Malaysia’s

Ng Tze Yong to win the men’s gold.

India’s Sharath Kamal Achanta beat England’s Liam Pitchford 4-1 in the men’s singles table tennis gold-medal match.

“The best two weeks of my 40 years of life,” said the winner, who won three golds and a silver in Birmingham. “It can’t get better.”

Birmingham 2022 CEO Ian Reid said the Games had been a huge boost for the city and the surrounding area.

He said more than 1.5 million tickets had been sold, with most venues above 90 per cent capacity.

“One of the goals at the outset was to put the city on the world map and instil that huge pride across everyone that lives in the

region and I think we’ve achieved that,” he told a briefing on Monday.

Commonwealth Games Federation CEO Katie Sadleir said there had been “huge engagement” with the Games globally.

She added that a number of countries had expressed an interest in staging future Commonwealth Games, including African nations.

She said Birmingham, which already had many facilities in place, could be a blueprint for future Games.

“It is definitely not something we want people to spend huge amounts of money and capital investment if it is not needed and desired by the long-term plans for the country,” she said. — Agencies



Hamilton considers extending F1 career beyond end of next season

LONDON: Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton admits he has considered extending his stay in Formula One beyond the end of next season.

The Mercedes driver has had to make do with fighting to be the best of the rest this season, with his 2021 title rival Max Verstappen seemingly on course to retain his crown.

Hamilton, 37, won six drivers' championships in seven years between 2014 and 2020 having taken his first title with McLaren in 2008.

He signed a new two-year deal with Mercedes last year, tying him to the team until the end of next year.

With the prospect of an unrivalled eighth championship keeping him going, the British racer told Vanity Fair magazine he is "still on the mission" when asked about his future.

"I'll be lying if I said that I hadn't thought about extending," he said.

"I'm still on the mission, I'm still loving driving, I'm still being challenged by it. So I don't really feel like I have to give it up anytime soon."

Now one of the veteran drivers on the Formula One grid, Hamilton spoke ahead of the Hungarian Grand Prix last weekend about also wanting to fight for better diversity in the sport. Four-time champion Sebastian Vettel announced his retirement on the eve of the race but Hamilton stopped short of considering stepping back himself. — dpa



Kasatkina breaks into top 10 as Swiatek dominates WTA rankings

PARIS: Daria Kasatkina was rewarded for her victory in San Jose at the weekend with a return to the top 10 for the first time since 2019, when the WTA rankings were released on Monday.

The Russian, who climbed three places to ninth, beat Shelby Rogers in three sets on Sunday to

claim her fifth WTA title on the hard courts in California.

It is her highest-ever ranking and marks her first showing in the top 10 since January 14, 2019 after which she slipped to number 75 in October 2020, a period affected badly by the coronavirus.

Iga Swiatek retains the number one spot with almost twice as

many points as number two Anett Kontaveit. Paula Badosa leapfrogs Maria Sakkari into third.

American Danielle Collins fell eight places to 17th position while Liudmila Samsonova, who beat Kaia Kanepi in the women's final at the Washington Open at the weekend, climbed 18 places to number 42.

Following are the WTA top 20:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Iga Swiatek (POL) 8,396 pts | 11. Coco Gauff (USA) 2,746 |
| 2. Anett Kontaveit (EST) 4,476 | 12. Belinda Bencic (SUI) 2,35 (+1) |
| 3. Paula Badosa (ESP) 4,190 (+1) | 13. Leylah Fernandez (CAN) 2,34 (+1) |
| 4. Maria Sakkari (GRE) 4,190 (-1) | 14. Karolina Pliskova (CZE) 2,532 (+1) |
| 5. Ons Jabeur (TUN) 4,010 | 15. Simona Halep (ROM) 2,415 (+1) |
| 6. Aryna Sabalenka 3,366 | 16. Jelena Ostapenko (LAT) 2,302 (+1) |
| 7. Jessica Pegula (USA) 3,116 | 17. Danielle Collins (USA) 2,273 (-8) |
| 8. Garbine Muguruza (ESP) 2,886 | 18. Veronika Kudermetova 2,220 (+1) |
| 9. Daria Kasatkina 2,800 (+3) | 19. Barbora Krejickova (CZE) 2,163 (-1) |
| 10. Emma Raducanu (GBR) 2,772 | 20. Victoria Azarenka 2,076 |

— AFP

OLYMPIC CHAMPION MIHAMBO SEES MUNICH EUROS AS A CHANCE FOR ATHLETICS



MUNICH: Germany's long jump Olympic champion Malaika Mihambo believes the multi-sport European championships being held in Munich is a chance for athletics to gain attention from being in the shadow of football.

"It's simply important that sport apart from football is again visible in society," she said. "Germany as a sporting nation revolves above all around one type of sport."

"That's of course a shame because sport is more than just football."

"That's why it's nice and important that European championships in other sports take place in Germany. Children can experience something quite different and perhaps afterwards dip their toe in that water of these sports."

Munich will host nine sports, with 177 medal events, from August 11-21 with athletics under particular focus after Germany struggled at last month's world championships.

Mihambo did add a second world title to her Olympic gold from the Tokyo Games, however.

In addition to athletics, there are also continental championships in beach volleyball, canoeing, sport climbing, cycling, rowing, table tennis, triathlon and gymnastics.

"I hope there's a synergy effect, so that all the participating sports get more out of it than would be the case with individual competitions," Mihambo said.

"It is nice to see competitions in other sports in the Olympic park and other venues, not just athletics." — dpa



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Energy Development Oman receives positive inaugural ratings from S&P

Stable outlook: Long Term
Credit Rating with BB-, and
Stand-Alone Credit Profile at
bbb-

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

Energy Development Oman (EDO) has achieved a new milestone by being assigned a BB- long term issuer credit rating with stable outlook to the Omani company from S&P Global Ratings, which is the same as the Oman sovereign rating.

The international credit rating agency S&P's stand-alone credit profile assessment of EDO is bbb- which is an investment grade rating level.

Mazin bin Rashid al Lamki (pictured), EDO's Chief Executive Officer, commented: "This inaugural credit rating from S&P is a significant step ahead in EDO's development and certainly self-assuring as it relates to EDO's strategy going forward. In this report, S&P have recognised



Mazin al Lamki, CEO EDO



EDO which will benefit both the company's and sovereign's credit rating."

EDO is leading ambitious plans in the fields of energy and alternative energy which will play a key role in elevating the credit rating of Oman and help create an attractive investment destination to invest in the Sultanate of Oman.

Established in December 2020 by Royal Decree 2020/128, EDO is focusing on realising efficiencies and pursuing new growth opportunities in Oman's energy sector. EDO owns a 60 per cent interest in Block 6 concession and owns 60 per cent interest in Petroleum Development Oman

(PDO), Oman's most significant oil and gas operation, for oil, associated gas (AG) and AG condensate, and a 100 per cent interest in the Block 6 concession for non-associated gas (NAG) and NAG condensate.

EDO also owns 100 per cent interest in Hydrogen Development Oman (HDO) which is mandated to lead efforts in green hydrogen development in Oman including efforts to grow the sector in the country on behalf of the government.

In 2021, Energy Development Oman generated \$11.5 billion of revenue, as well as \$7.5 billion in the S&P Global Ratings-adjusted EBITDA.



Mahas Industrial City attracts feed packaging investment

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

Mahas Industrial City, which pertains to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates "Madayn", has signed a contract with Hassan Al Qaishi Trading Establishment to set up a factory for packaging of

feed products on an area of 6,000 square metres in the Wilayat of Khasab in Musandam Governorate.

With three main lines for production and packaging of livestock and poultry feed, the project will adopt cutting-edge technology and machinery in the production and packaging processes.

Maha Energy in farmout pact with Mafraq Energy for Block 70

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 8

Swedish energy firm Maha Energy, through its wholly owned subsidiary Maha Energy (Oman) Ltd, has entered into an Agreement with Mafraq Energy LLC for Maha to reduce the participating Interest in the Block 70 Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement ("EPSA") in Oman from 100 per cent to 65 per cent.

Maha will continue to be the Operator of the Block. The agreement is subject to government approval in Oman.

Maha has decided to reduce its working interest in the onshore oil-bearing Block 70 in Oman by bringing in a strategic Omani partner.

The agreement requires Mafraq Energy LLC to reimburse Maha for their prorated share of all past costs including the signature bonus.

Mafraq Energy LLC will also be required to pay their share of all future expenditures on Block 70.

Jonas Lindvall, Maha's CEO said: "We are delighted to have Mafraq Energy LLC join us on Block 70. Mafraq Energy LLC brings extensive experience

THE AGREEMENT
REQUIRES
MAFRAQ
ENERGY LLC
TO REIMBURSE
MAHA FOR THEIR
PRORATED SHARE
OF ALL PAST
COSTS INCLUDING
THE SIGNATURE
BONUS. MAFRAQ
ENERGY WILL
ALSO BE
REQUIRED TO
PAY THEIR SHARE
OF ALL FUTURE
EXPENDITURES
ON BLOCK 70

of the Mafraq field and the surrounding areas in Oman. The fact that Mafraq Energy joins us is perhaps the best evidence yet of the future potential of the Mafraq field."

Talal al Subhi, Director of Mafraq Energy LLC said: "We are pleased and honoured to join



Maha Energy to commercialise Oman's national resources. The farm out arrangement is also completely aligned with the realisation of the Oman national 2040 vision's "Growing the Private Sector", and we are proud to be doing our part."

Immediate plans for the

Mafraq oil field include drilling six wells to obtain important reservoir information to assist in developing a full Field Development Plan. The Gulf Drilling rig 109 was recently contracted for this drilling. Anticipated mobilisation of the drilling rig is scheduled for

October this year.

Mafraq Energy LLC is a private Omani company whose founders come with an extensive track record in multiple business sectors. Mafraq sister companies are active in the upstream oil and gas service sector, the downstream distribution and service sector, as

well as manufacturing capabilities in the telecommunication service sectors.

Maha was successful in securing Block 70, which contains the Mafraq heavy oil discovery, in a 2019 – 2020 government bid round.

The Mafraq structure is a delineated heavy oil field that was extensively tested by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in 1988 and 1991.

The field tested 15,700 barrels of 13° API oil over a period of 24 days using a Progressive Cavity Pump (PCP) from a single well. The test well, MF-5, tested 100 per cent oil for less than a day after which water production stabilised at around 25 per cent.

It is unknown why PDO did not develop the field at the time, but it is likely that prevailing commodity prices (US\$ 18 – US\$ 20 per barrel) and access to other lower cost opportunities precluded Mafraq as a development option at the time.

According to the independent reserve auditor, Chapman Petroleum Engineering Ltd of Calgary, Canada, the Mafraq field may hold approximately 35 million barrels of recoverable oil (2C + 2P as at December 31, 2021).

OOMCO opens 7th service station in Mecca

MUSCAT: Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) opened its seventh service station in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Located in Mecca, the facility features an exciting range of on-the-go shopping, branded food and beverage offerings, in addition to essential automotive services.

The fuel marketing company also has six other service stations in the country, including its first mega station in Dammam, which opened in 2019, and Al Manar Station in Jeddah.

Popular for their warm and friendly customer service approach and wide range of amenities that add value to the daily lives of commuters, the service stations are part of OOMCO's commitment to go "beyond the pump".

Ali Muqaibal, General Manager – International Relations at Oman Oil Marketing Company, said, "We are delighted to open our seventh service station in KSA, which marks another milestone in our global expansion and shows our commitment to strengthening the friendly bilateral relations that exists



between our two countries. We strive to continue adding value to the Saudi market by contributing new employment opportunities and rewarding business ventures for local suppliers, while offering customers innovative products that provide them with the utmost

convenience and pleasure in their journey. Meanwhile, we continue to transform the industry by providing much more than only fuel."

The latest addition is part of OOMCO's ambitious strategic global expansion. Continuing to

expand its footprint in Oman's neighbouring countries, the company also currently operates nine sites in Tanzania.

In the coming months, it also plans to add another five service stations around Jeddah to its portfolio in the Kingdom, with

15 sites operational overall by the end of 2022, as per the company's 2022-2026 strategy.

Meanwhile, OOMCO continues to work on its customer-centricity with an aim to be among the top five fuel marketers in the GCC by 2027.

Bank Nizwa records positive growth in H1 2022

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading and the fastest-growing Islamic Bank in the Sultanate of Oman, recorded growth as reflected in its financial results for the first half of 2022.

Dedicated to bringing about a positive change in the economic landscape, Bank Nizwa continues its strategic roadmap of shaping the future of Islamic finance in the country by continuously recording outstanding performance in its financial results.

As a testament to its progress, Bank Nizwa has turned in a commendable financial performance by registering a six per cent growth in net profit. The bank's total assets also increased by 13 per cent over time, reaching RO 1,493 million in June 2022 from RO 1,322 million in June 2021.

The gross financing portfolio improved by 12 per cent to RO 1,207 million, while the total customer deposit portfolio rose by 16 per cent to RO 1,211 million. This increase in financing and deposit portfolio in retail and corporate businesses has supplied the bank with the impetus it needs to maintain its growth trajectory. This momentum will allow it to attain its long-term goals.

Commenting on the bank's extraordinary performance, Shaikh Khalid al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa said, "The start of 2022 was promising, supported by rising international crude oil prices and global recovery as a consequence of stronger economic activities.



Bank Muscat extends support to Salalah Eat Festival

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider has extended its strong support to the Salalah Eat Festival, which concludes on August 13. The event was recently inaugurated by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality at the Hawana Resort, Salalah. Over 50 MSMEs are participating in the 10-day event, which offers strong support to the MSME sector and is also intensifying interest in the Sultanate of Oman's tourism sector with its excellent potential for diversification of Oman's economy.

Abdullah bin Tamman al Mashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, expressed delight at the opportunity for the bank to participate in the event and said: "We are delighted to participate in the Salalah Eat Festival, which will help promote Salalah as a premium tourist



destination for visitors from both within Oman and from across the world. We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the organisers for giving us this opportunity to participate as the Official Banking Partner."

Bank Muscat is also facilitating the participation of a number of Najahi customers at the festival. The bank's stall at the event was a major hit with festival visitors for the various fun activities that were organised including a Fan

Zone Photo Booth, raffle draws, a Kids' Arena, face painting and a Game Booth. The bank also took the opportunity to showcase its recently-launched Limited Edition Visa Prepaid Card, and pointed out to customers that

they can now easily apply for up to three of these cards through Internet or Mobile banking.

To add further excitement to the festival, the bank is giving away a total of 10 iPads through daily raffle draws. All that customers have to do to participate in the draw is to apply for a Prepaid card through their Banking app and show the proof of application at the Bank Muscat kiosk to receive a raffle ticket, which automatically entitles them to a chance in the raffle draw.

Over the past many years, Bank Muscat has successfully supported a number of initiatives and events that strengthen tourism and other national development priorities. It must be noted that the bank has supported the Tour of Salalah, the Tour of Oman, Muscat Festival and the Salalah Festival, all of which have drawn thousands of visitors from across the world to the Sultanate of Oman.

Own the powerful Toyota Hilux with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Toyota Hilux enthusiasts looking forward to making the most of the powerful and dependable workhorse can now benefit with Service 1 Year/10,000 kms and 1 year insurance or cash gift in Lieu of Insurance from RO 200 up to RO 250. The campaign is valid until September 15, 2022. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms and conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.

Customers can choose from two versions of the Hilux that is available in Oman. The rugged Hilux with J-Deck and the sporty 4.0 Litre V6 Hilux Adventure with the A Deck. The 4.0 Litre V6 Toyota Hilux Adventure is a truly exciting mean machine that's been developed by Toyota to get your pulse racing.

Every Toyota Hilux Adventure comes with high-end features that start with the mighty 4.0 Litre V6 Engine packing a mighty punch with 235 HP & 38.3 Kg-m Torque. It has an Auto Disconnect Differential to keep the tempo going. Equal importance has been provided to the technical superiority and safety features of the Hilux 4x4. The noteworthy features include a 2.7 Litre Petrol Engine that is available in 5-speed Manual Transmission and 6 Speed Automatic Transmission, outputting 164 HP.

The Hilux is not only a tough vehicle but also an advanced pick-up with stylish cues hitherto found only on SUVs. The front of the Hilux gives a sense that the vehicle is wider than it is. This is achieved by the horizontal Bars that make up the Grille and Sleek Headlamps that wrap around the front of the Fenders. The Hilux



sports a thick, chunky Front Bumper sculpted like an SUV, Front Fog lamps, Alloy Wheels, apart from Side Stripes that adorn the vehicle.

The Toyota Hilux rises above expectations, to deliver some of the finest on-road and off-road experiences ever. The Hilux really

is two vehicles in one: a work truck through the week and a family vehicle on weekends, thanks to added comforts and safety features. Indeed the Hilux models are stunning in design and features. Their performance & safety parameters are amongst the best and the strong frame and

suspension impart toughness for any demanding task.

The Hilux's interior continues the concept of "Tough and Emotional", and reflects the same attention to detail as the exterior with SUV vehicle styling, accents and ornamentalations. The key features that keep you comfortable

are the Auto Air conditioner with rear vents, Multi-Information Display (MID), 8" Navigation and many more.

The Hilux comes equipped with a number of active and passive safety features like Anti-Lock Braking System (ABS), Electronic Brake-Force Distribution (EBD) and Brake Assist (BA), Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Hill Assist Control (HAC), Trailer Sway Control and SRS Airbags for the Driver and Front Passenger.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

The struggling manufacturing sector



KARL JACKSON
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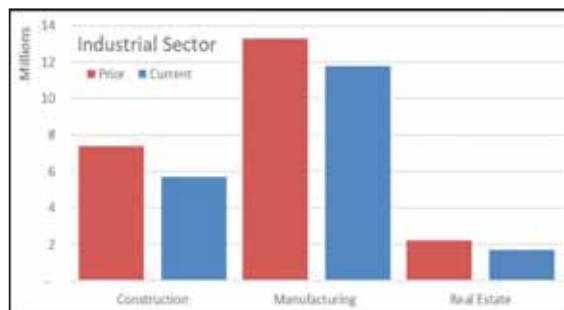
The writer is an Audit and Assurance Partner with Crowe Oman

After a positive first quarter, we were happily waving goodbye to two downbeat years of Covid, with a general improvement in Y-o-Y SAOG profitability.

While many companies have continued the trend into the second quarter, we see that our prediction of headwinds from the fallout from the outbreak of war between Russia and the Ukraine, which is putting huge pressure on the supply side, have materialised for manufacturing sector.

In the financial sector, we see the banks and leasing companies have shrugged off the high ECL impairment charges of 2021 and, with asset portfolios that have remained high due to the lack of repayments (due in a big part to the CBO mandated loan deferrals arrangements), have continued to post increased profits this year.

However, in many cases, restructuring (of problem loans)

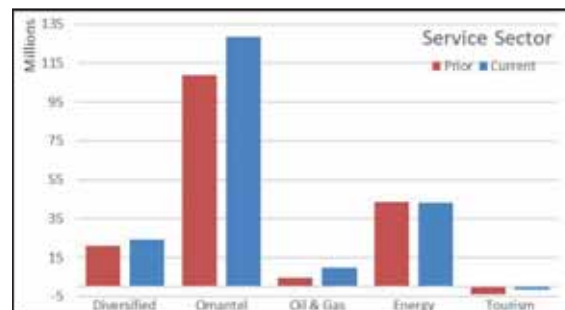


has been delayed, so the impact on ECL provisions will not be known until later in the year, since it is unlikely that all restructures will all be successful.

In the first quarter, the insurance companies benefitted from increased values of their investment portfolios.

This benefit was absent in the second quarter, so the struggle to return to pre-Covid levels of profitability, as premium pricing in a smaller market is challenging, has become apparent.

The industrial sector, comprises



of construction and manufacturing companies and two real estate funds. The construction sector is the hardest to fathom, as three of the nine companies (Al Hassan Engineering, Aluminium Production and Raysut Cement) posted combined losses of RO 5.9 million, which continues to hold back the sector.

The manufacturing sector, continues to face external challenges, with many companies struggling as they are unable to pass on the higher cost of imported raw materials and shipping to customers, either within the Sultanate of Oman or in the

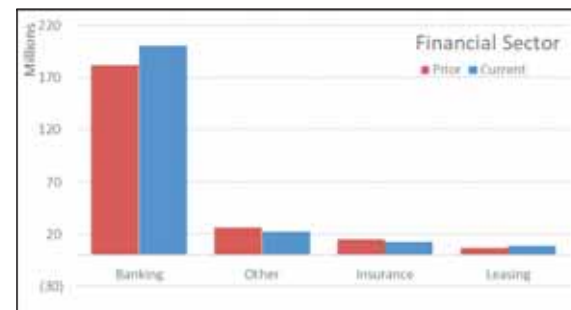
overseas markets they export to.

A situation that has been aggravated by the ongoing conflict between Russia and the Ukraine.

Finally, as we look at the service sector, the major story is the continued rebound of Omantel.

Within the oil and gas sector, the three petrol station owners continue to reap the benefits from the ending of lockdowns and drivers returning to the highways.

Although not a major sector for listed companies, the six hotels within the tourism sector are still waiting to see the return of mass tourism and



the future of business demand is still not clear as some online meetings are probably here to stay.

The sector quarter performance of energy sector is dominated by the turnaround of fortunes of five of the eleven power companies who posted combined profits of RO 25.2 million compared to RO 10.1 million of losses in the first quarter, which is due primarily to the seasonal nature of power usage, with higher usage in the hottest months.

(This article is based on financial data published by the Muscat Stock Exchange)

Lufthansa, pilots seek to avert strike with pay talks

FRANKFURT: German airline Lufthansa is to hold confidential talks with Vereinigung Cockpit (VC), the trade union representing its pilots, after striking a deal with ground staff last week, both sides said on Monday.

"We have set four dates over the weeks ahead to see how far we are apart," VC representative Andreas Pinheiro said in a podcast. VC was seeking a negotiated solution after balloting its members on strike action, he said.

Lufthansa confirmed the talks to be held with no communication to the outside world. Strike action is to be suspended for the duration of the talks.

Lufthansa and VC have already conducted six rounds of talks without success. Lufthansa has accepted a VC demand for 5.5 per cent higher pay for the rest of this year, but no agreement has been reached on an automatic inflation-indexed rise from 2023 or on changes to the rate structure.

Lufthansa chief executive Carsten Spohr has proposed reserving a certain number of aircraft as before for pilots of the core company.

The company had earlier announced the termination



A Lufthansa Airbus A340-300 is pictured after take off from the airport in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

of an agreement covering 325 planes up to the end of 2021, while shifting more traffic to its subsidiaries with lower operating costs. These include Eurowings Discover, a long-haul leisure carrier, and Lufthansa Cityline 2, which is currently being set up.

Lufthansa and the Verdi union reached a pay deal with ground staff last week covering some 20,000 employees.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Danish, Norwegian and Swedish pilots with the Scandinavian carrier SAS have voted in favour of a new collective wage agreement, ending the threat of fresh strikes.

The pilot union members cast ballots in their respective countries and approved the agreement with the airline's management, the unions announced on Saturday.

— dpa

Stocks rise, oil falls tracking recession risks

LONDON: Stock markets largely rose and oil prices retreated on Monday as investors mulled the prospect of recession in the United States and elsewhere and central banks seek to tame soaring inflation with aggressive interest rate hikes.

The dollar, which had surged on Friday on the prospect of further large increases in US borrowing costs, fell back on profit-taking at the start of the new week.

Speculation is growing that the US Federal Reserve will announce a third successive rate increase of three-quarters of a percentage point following a blockbuster US jobs report last week.

This week, all eyes will turn to the release of US July inflation data, which are expected to show a slight slowdown, but still not far from the four-decade highs seen in recent months.

The latest reading "seems very unlikely to offer compelling evidence of a slowdown needed for the Fed to pull away from its aggressive inflation-fighting mode", said SPI Asset Management analyst, Stephen Innes.

Oil prices retreated further on expectations of weaker demand amid a cost-of-living crisis.

A rise in US crude stockpiles was partly responsible for a 10-percent drop in prices last week.



A trader works on the trading floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in Manhattan, New York City. — Reuters

Both main oil contracts have lost all the gains seen in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which led the United States and Europe to ban imports of Russian crude, hammering already thin supplies.

The US jobs report last week "highlighted how strong the economy remains although traders are now increasingly nervous

about more aggressive tightening sending the economy into a deeper recession further down the road", said Oanda analyst Craig Erlam.

"The resumption of Iran nuclear talks today is one potential downside risk for the oil price, given the ability of the country to quickly ramp up production if a deal is struck."

Iran on Sunday demanded

that the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, "completely" resolve outstanding issues, as talks resume to revive a 2015 deal to rein in Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

Iranian sources have suggested that one of the key sticking points is a probe by the IAEA into traces of nuclear material found at undeclared Iranian sites. — Reuters

America's wage-price persistence must be stopped



JASON FURMAN

The writer is a former chair of President Barack Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, is Professor of the Practice of Economic Policy at Harvard University's John F Kennedy School of Government

Recent price- and wage-growth data make it increasingly clear that the US economy's underlying inflation rate is at least 4 per cent and more likely to be rising than falling.

Although the Federal Reserve has acted forcefully in recent months to contain inflation, unfortunately it will need to stick to its plan of rapid interest-rate hikes until there is clear evidence that underlying inflation is slowing dramatically. That is especially difficult when the economy is already slowing, but the alternative of deferring action while inflation becomes more entrenched would be much worse.

So far this year, the Personal Consumption Expenditures Price Index has risen at a 7.7 per cent annual rate, well above the Fed's 2 per cent target.

Some of that is fuelled by external events, notably Russia's attack on Ukraine, which has driven up gasoline and food prices. Now that gasoline prices have begun to decline from their peak, headline inflation should fall sharply.

Yet even if we exclude these volatile prices, "core inflation" is still running at an annualised rate of 4.8 per cent and has been increasing recently. Moreover, other measures that strip out volatile components of the price index — such as trimmed-mean, median, services, and cyclically sensitive inflation — have all increased, and some by even more than core inflation has.

It is hard to make excuses for this inflation, let alone excuses that would justify the belief that it will go away on its own anytime soon.

While Russia's war on Ukraine raised the price of oil and food, these have only a small direct pass-through effect on core inflation, which itself is partly offset by behavioural changes as consumers cut back to account for higher gasoline and food costs.

Moreover, Covid-19 is having a smaller effect on the economy than at any time since February 2020, and insofar as it was affecting inflation when it was rising, it was more likely lowering it than increasing it. Many commentators blamed supply-chain snarls for boosting goods-price inflation, but that measure has actually fallen and been replaced by a services inflation that is much more inertial. The weaning from pandemic-era fiscal-support policies was supposed to bring inflation down, but that process mostly ended

more than a year ago.

At this stage, inflation is increasingly embedded in price growth, which is fuelling wage-growth that is in turn fuelling price growth. This worrisome process — some call it a "wage-price spiral," but I prefer "wage-price persistence" — is underwritten by short-term inflation expectations, which have risen markedly.

The latest data show that private wages and salaries grew at a 5.7 per cent annual rate in the first half of this year, which is about 2.5 percentage points faster than the pace of growth prior to the pandemic. All told, adding 2.5 percentage points to the pre-Covid inflation rate implies an underlying inflation rate of 4.5 per cent.

Moreover, a range of alternative

measures of wage-growth is consistent with the same or even higher inflation, according to estimates by Alex Domash of the Harvard Kennedy School. Rapid nominal wage-growth is not surprising, given that labour markets remain at near record tightness, as evidenced by there being nearly two job openings for every unemployed person.

I wish that businesses would simply use some of their profits to cover the extra wage-costs, but I also know better than to confuse wishes with predictions. Since productivity appears to be relatively weak, businesses will most likely continue to pass along the costs of higher wages to consumers in the form of higher prices.

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Looking for job/ Engineering Coordinator (Female) graduated as an Architectural Engineer, Resident in Salalah, driver's license available. 97602926

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Indian Female, MCom, Good experience in VAT, payroll, Inventory, Book keeping until finalisation. Seeking suitable position and available for join immediately. Contact. 96974566

GENERAL manager with 16+ years experience in Oman, MBA — BE, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 94008034.

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HUSNA Ally Iddi has lost Tanzanian Passport No TAE356402. Finder please handover to ROP.

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SALES, marketing & business development executive/ manager, MBA marketing 13 years experience, 8 years in Oman, e-mail: mirzatabrez830@gmail.com, phone: +968 97043494.

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#Living_with_COVID19



A comfy and safe space for ladies

Sorella lounge is located on the fourth floor of Mazoon Square building, with a beautiful three-sided view of Mazoon Mosque, Mawaleh South and Mazoon Street in Seeb. Check out why the owner felt it was necessary to create a comfy and safe space for women... **P20**

London museum to return looted Benin Bronzes to Nigeria

LONDON'S HORNIMAN Museum on Sunday said that it would return dozens of artifacts looted by British soldiers in Nigeria, including 12 of the famed Benin Bronzes.

"Ownership of 72 objects, which were forcibly removed from Benin City during the British military incursion in February 1897, will be transferred to the Nigerian government," the museum said in a statement.

"The collection includes 12 brass plaques, known publicly as Benin bronzes. Other objects include a brass cockerel altar piece, ivory and brass ceremonial objects, brass bells, everyday items such as fans and baskets, and a key to the king's palace," it said.

Thousands of Nigeria's so-called Benin Bronzes — 16th to 18th century metal plaques and sculptures — were looted from the palace of the ancient



Benin Kingdom and ended up in museums across the US and Europe.

Nigeria has been negotiating their return and plans to build a museum in Benin City in southern Edo state, where it hopes to house the bronzes, some of the most highly regarded works of African art.

"The evidence is very clear that



these objects were acquired through force, and external consultation supported our view that it is both

moral and appropriate to return their ownership to Nigeria," the museum quoted Eve Salomon, Chair of the Trustees of the Horniman Museum and Gardens, as saying.

The head of Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments, Abba Tijani, welcomed the decision and said he was looking "forward to a productive discussion on loan agreements and collaborations."

Apart from Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany have also received requests from African countries to return lost treasures.

Experts estimate that 85 to 90 per cent of African cultural artifacts were taken from the continent.

On July 1, Germany signed an agreement to begin sending back hundreds of Benin Bronzes to Nigeria, the biggest effort yet by a European country to return looted artworks.

Germany has around 1,100 of the artifacts, split between some 20 museums. — **AFP**

READ

SKANDAR AND THE UNICORN THIEF

BY A F STEADMAN

Skandar dreams of becoming a unicorn rider and competing in the Chaos Cup.



SOMETHING EXOTIC

A worker sings while carrying prickly pears on his head as their production is on the rise due to low water consumption and ability to withstand extreme temperatures, according to farmers, at a farm in Al Qalyubia Governorate, Egypt. — **AFP**



ICE CREAM, ANYONE?

Londoners basking under Britain's hottest ever summer are getting the chance to find out, and sample a range of other flavours more readily associated with savoury winter dishes — including porridge, oats and HP sauce. "There's lots of weird flavours and... me and my sister were very excited to try lots of them," said nine-year-old Izzy Konviser, a customer at the Ice Cream Project temporary store in central London, told Reuters. — **Reuters**





A native tribe fights to save its land from climate change

IN THE HAMPTONS, New York's playground for the rich and famous, a Native American tribe is battling with the latest threat to what's left of its traditional land: climate change.

The Shinnecock, whose name means "people of the stony shore," have lived on Long Island for 13,000 years.

Their villages stretched along the island's eastern end before land grabs by European settlers and later US authorities reduced their territory to an 800-acre (1.25 square-mile) peninsula.

That low-lying land is now shrinking due to rising sea levels and coastal erosion, and making it increasingly vulnerable to more powerful storms.

"You're looking at a situation where an entire nation of people who have been here for essentially forever are faced with a devastating reality that we may have to relocate," Tela Troge, a Shinnecock attorney, told AFP.

The Shinnecock Indian Nation is a self-governing, federally recognised tribe of approximately 1,600 members.

Roughly half live on its reservation, which juts out into Shinnecock Bay beside Southampton, where multi-million-dollar mansions sit behind electric gates.

Also next door is the hamlet of Shinnecock Hills and its famous eponymous golf club, land the tribe says was stolen from them in 1859.

Warming temperatures are causing seas to expand and rise, eating away at the reservation's coastline.

FLOODING

Ed Terry, who makes traditional Shinnecock jewellery out of shells found on the beach, remembers the sand going out much further when he was a boy.

"You can see the erosion. Where the land was is now water. It's like the sea is coming to us," the 78-year-old told AFP, as he sculpted a mussel shell to be worn as earrings.

Some parts of the shoreline have



already receded 150 feet (45 metres), according to studies cited by Shavonne Smith, the nation's environment director.

She says 57 homes may have to be relocated soon and bodies possibly disinterred from the tribe's coastal cemetery and moved elsewhere.

"If you're talking about taking a people that are so dependent on the water — for spiritual health, recreational and sustenance — and now moving them further inland, you're talking about a very huge, stressful,

emotional, dynamic shift in who we are," Smith told AFP.

The nation estimates its sea levels will rise by up to 4.4 feet (1.3 metres) by the end of the century. Coupled with more intense storms, this would mean frequent devastating floods.

Hurricane Sandy gave a foretaste in 2012, washing away bluffs on the shore, ripping off roofs and flooding basements and the burial grounds.

"There are studies that show by the year 2040 there's a 100 per cent chance the entire Shinnecock Nation

region will get inundated by a storm," said Scott Mandia, a climate change professor at Suffolk County Community College.

WE WILL SURVIVE

In an attempt to preserve their homeland and way of life, which includes fishing and farming, the nation is taking a nature-based approach towards tackling global warming.

It has built an oyster shell reef and placed boulders to try to hold back waves, as well as planted sea and beach grass in a bid to stop sand from shifting.

Tribe members are doing their bit too. Troge, 35, is director of Shinnecock Kelp Farmers — a group of six Indigenous women who harvest sugar kelp and sell it as a non-chemical fertiliser.

The seaweed helps clean up water pollution, fuelled by neighbouring development, by absorbing carbon and nitrates that cause toxic algae blooms, which damage marine life.

Wading into the bay waist-high, farmer Donna Collins-Smith says she is inspired by previous Shinnecock generations "and what they have preserved for us."

"We are maintaining that and bringing it back from a state of near dead," the 65-year-old said.

Mandia, co-author of a book about rising sea levels, laments that marginalised communities "who are least responsible for" climate change are those "who are going to feel the pain the most."

He applauds the tribe's efforts but says they are "just buying time" before their land becomes uninhabitable.

Terry, the septuagenarian jeweller, wonders where future Shinnecock will go, since tribal boundaries are fixed.

"We have no higher ground," he says.

Nevertheless, Terry adds, "We are a strong people. We will survive."

—AFP

DISCOVERY

Bird fossil collection bequeathed to Scottish museum



A COLLECTION OF MORE than 700 bird fossils dating back from 54 million to 56 million years ago has been donated to the National Museum of Scotland.

It is believed the items include many species new to science, one being a falcon-like bird and another a diver or loon.

The collection, hailed as being one of the most important in the world by experts, is from the beginning of the Eocene period and represents the early stages in the evolution of modern birds.

A notable characteristic

tion with the museum's principal curator of vertebrates, Dr Andrew Kitchener.

Speaking about the fossils, Kitchener said: "I was astonished at the amazing variety of specimens of all shapes and sizes."

"Many of the bones were minuscule, requiring great patience and skill to extract."

"The fact that the collection is now with us here at National Museums Scotland will be of interest to palaeontologists across the world."

Work is under way to fully document the impres-



of this period is that the global climate was several degrees warmer than it is today, meaning that the specimens may give scientists useful information about climate changes.

Palaeontologists have said there is no other collection like it in Britain.

The rare specimens were collected over the decades by amateur palaeontology enthusiast Michael Daniels, who died last year aged 90.

He had assembled the several hundred skeletons and part skeletons that he had discovered in nodules of the London Clay, which had eroded out of the cliffs at Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex.

Experts have said the items are unusual in terms of bird fossils in that they are preserved in 3D.

Bird bones are light and fragile and so their remains are more commonly flattened prior to fossilisation.

Daniels' daughter lived in Edinburgh, and it was on a family visit to the National Museum of Scotland more than 25 years ago that he shared news of his collec-

sive findings.

Experts believe the collection could yield at least 50 new species once research is completed.

Avian palaeontologist Dr Gerald Mayr of the Senckenberg Research Institute, Frankfurt, visited Daniels many times to view the fossils he had gathered over his lifetime.

"The importance of Michael Daniels' collection cannot be overstated," said Mayr, who has already published two papers describing new species in collection.

"There is nothing like it in the UK, certainly, and it is comparable to other bird-rich sites in the US, China and Germany."

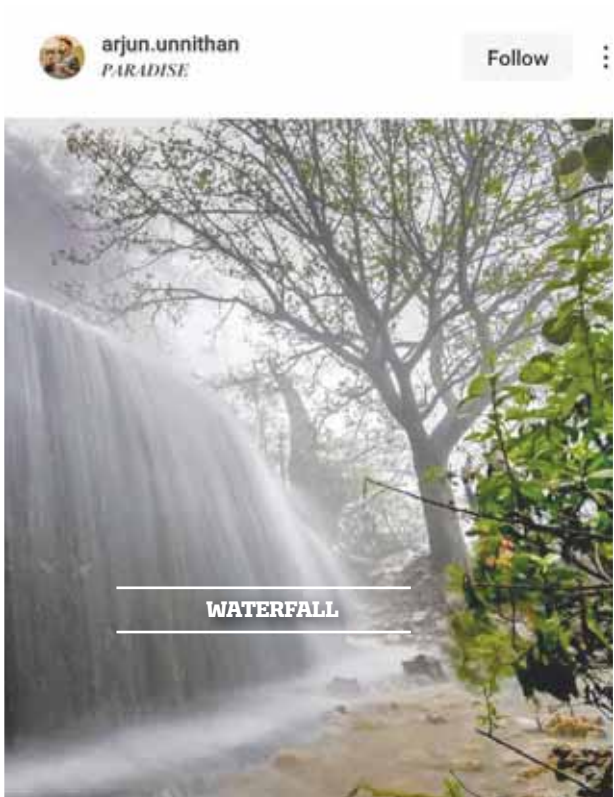
"The fact that so many specimens are preserved in three dimensions makes this one of the most important collections of its type in the world."

The collection is now undergoing conservation and preservation work at the National Museums Collection Centre in Edinburgh, where it will be kept and made accessible to researchers. — dpa



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AROUND THE WORLD

TRENDS

Hot dogs - and cats - get wearable fans to beat Japan's scorching summer



A TOKYO CLOTHING maker has teamed up with veterinarians to create a wearable fan for pets, hoping to attract the anxious owners of dogs — or cats — that can't shed their fur coats in Japan's blistering summer weather. The device consists of a battery-operated, 80-gramme (3-ounce) fan that is attached to a mesh outfit and blows air around an animal's body. Rei Uzawa, president of maternity clothing maker Sweet Mommy, says she was motivated to create it after seeing her own pet chihuahua exhausted every time it was taken out for a walk in the scorching summer heat. "There was almost no rainy season this year, so the hot days came early, and in that sense, I think we developed a product that is right for the market," she said. A 5-year-old Scottish Fold cat named Sun wears a battery-powered fan outfit for pets, developed by Japanese maternity clothing maker "Sweet Mommy", during the company's promotional event in Tokyo, Japan July 28, 2022. After the rainy season in Tokyo ended in late June, the Japanese capital suffered the longest heatwave on record with temperatures up to 35 degrees Celsius (95 Fahrenheit) for nine days. "I usually use dry ice packs (to keep the dog cool). But I think it's easier to walk my dog if we have this fan," said Mami Kumamoto, 48, owner of a miniature poodle named Pudding and a terrier named Maco. The device debuted in early July and Sweet Mommy has received around 100 orders for the product, Uzawa said. It comes in five different sizes and is priced at 9,900 yen (\$74). — Reuters



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GASTRONOMY

Beyond hummus: Palestinians cook up new food trends



FROM THE ANCIENT alleys of Jerusalem's Old City to kitchens around the world, Palestinians are stirring new trends in cooking while abiding by traditions. The trend has whipped up a growing appetite for specialised books and food tours. "It's changing for the better, I think. Many Palestinians are keen on promoting their foods," said Nassar Odeh, as oven aromas wafted over a Jerusalem street. The Palestinian entrepreneur has spent the past few months watching gourmands drift in and out of his new eatery, Taboon, named after the traditional clay oven. Customers are tucking into dishes such as Armenian lahmajoon, a thin pizza with ground meat and spices which Odeh remembers being sold to hungry crowds in the Old City decades earlier. "Armenian dishes are part of the Palestinian culture," said Odeh, whose bar also serves beer and wines from the Israeli-occupied West Bank. "This is extremely important because this emphasises the Palestinian presence and the entrepreneurship," he said. "We need to be proud of our products."

NEW CONCEPT, NEW IDEAS

Opened last year in what was once the family's souvenir store, Taboon is part of a string of new Palestinian bars, cafes and restaurants.

Beyond those within the Old City walls, they have sprung up in other areas of annexed east Jerusalem such as the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, or further afield in Ramallah in the West Bank. They range from a fine dining experience to fusion menus, blending Palestinian ingredients with European dishes, according to Izzeldin Bukhari, who runs Jerusalem food tours and cooking classes. "It's a great start; we're really in the beginning," said Bukhari, who plans to offer consulting services to business owners wanting to revitalise their restaurants. "Everyone was doing kind of the same thing, but lately I see people stepping up and doing a new concept, new ideas," he said. Showcasing the breadth of Palestinian dishes and produce remains central for Dalia Dabdoub, who manages Taboon and owns bars in the West Bank cities of Bethlehem and Jericho. "We want to change the industry, in doing more food that people don't know," she said. A variety of aubergines renowned locally which come from Battir, a village in the Bethlehem area, will soon be hitting the Taboon menu, while some produce is imported from Gaza. "I always try to choose the tomatoes; when they come from Gaza they're really red and they're tastier," said Dabdoub.

Gazan green chillies, meanwhile, are particularly fierce. The advent of new eateries builds on the Old City's history of hole-in-the-wall spots, specialising in a single dish like falafel. Palestinian chef Sami Tamimi grew up with home cooking, such as school packed lunches of cauliflower fritters stuffed in pita, and went out for certain foods. "I remember carrying a plate and going to the hummus guy," said Tamimi, talking avidly about beloved dishes including stuffed vine leaves and courgettes. Such traditional foods and contemporary takes were compiled in the chef's 2020 cookbook: 'Falastin'. "Just 10 years ago, if you went to a publisher and said I want to publish a book about Palestinian food, they would say 'Who's going to buy it?'" said Tamimi, who moved to London more than two decades ago. **A WONDERFUL THING** A growing interest in Palestinian food abroad is tied to a shift away from presenting Mediterranean or Middle Eastern cuisine as one set of recipes. "Nowadays you see more focus on the country, or the place and their food... I think it's a wonderful thing," said Tamimi, who has a series of cookbooks and runs restaurants with Israeli business partner Yotam Ottolenghi. — AFP

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



Dr Khalid Mohammed al Balushi
khalidalbalushi@hotmail.com

Destined to be a Soldier

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

THE FIRST STEP: I AM A MILITARY MAN

I don't quite know why I didn't dream of any place to work in other than the military. It happened as if it were predestined that I go down a route that would lead me to be a soldier, a military man. I was simply attracted by the charm of those imposing bodies with special uniforms. Time pointed to the 1960s, and we had just begun to make our way into life with all our dreams and ambitions. I dreamt of joining the army, pursuing the footsteps of those young men, my next of kin, who had already had the honour of serving their country through the military. I remember, amongst many others, Mohammed Al Kalbani, Hamad Al Kalbani and Said Al Kalbani.

I should mention, with all honesty and sincerity, that they evoked my envy, ignited my desire to join the army. I wished I had been like them, done like them. With their remarkable fitness, their imposing power, their harmonised bodies, they were my role model. I would look at them with so much admiration and awe when they came to our small town during special occasions such as Eid(s) or shooting competitions.

At the end of Augustus 1964, a team of the Sultan's armed forces arrived at Miskan in Bedford military vans, looking for people for military service. We knew they would come; therefore, we were, with all eagerness and zeal, waiting for them, waiting for those who would take us closer to our dreams and ambitions, lead us to the great honour that they had already achieved. Young men aspiring to an experience altogether different from what a rural town could offer, we would leave our homes, direct our eyes to those paths that would bring the Bedford vans to us, hopefully, sooner than we expected.

When they came closer to our village, we felt our dream was closer to reality. Our zeal was such that it almost took us to the vans before they reached us. Despite the dust coming from the huge tires, we all ran towards them, each hoping to be the lucky one.

I remember the head of the team was Denson, a British national, assisted by Maj Mahmood bin Ibrahim al Raisi and another soldier by the name of Rashid bin Abdullah al Mamari.

So intense was my joy for being one amongst the seven selected to work in the army that I feel as if it happened yesterday. At that moment, I couldn't believe that my long-awaited dream was about to come true.

My parents weren't satisfied with my decision, perhaps because they expected me to be with them and because of their fear of an unknown future. This was the first time that I would go to Muscat for a period they weren't used to. Nonetheless, they didn't prevent me pursuing my dream.

On the day we left Miskan to start a new life, everyone was ready in a way hard to describe: our souls so intimately attached to the place on the one hand, a whole new life awaiting us, on the other. Between Muscat and Miskan there was a distance that at first conjured up a mixture of strange feelings: leaving our family, neighbours, tribesmen, the soil we lived on and lived with since we opened our eyes; at the other end of the spectrum, there was Muscat promising a life altogether different from what we were accustomed to.

We said "goodbye" to our hometown with tears held back in our eyes, as it was unmanly, by custom, to express our sadness. We had to show calmness and composure. Those with no experience at sea were supplied with some perfumes and mahalab* to avoid sea sickness on the journey.

*A plant, apparently believed to have healing power, (the translator).

art & life

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | AUGUST 9 | 2022



A comfy and safe space for ladies

By Baraah al Mujaini

Women in Oman need their space. This is of cultural importance and society recognises that women should be allowed a safe space where they can express themselves comfortably.

A medical doctor graduate of Sultan Qaboos University, Siham al Sinani is not just a mother of three but also an entrepreneur who saw the need for a business lounge where women can interact and empower each other.

On June 25, 2022, she officially launched Sorella which she hopes is a proper innovation that would lead to a positive response to the community which it serves.

Sorella lounge is located on the fourth floor of Mazoon Square building, with a beautiful three-sided view of Mazoon Mosque, Mawaleh South and Mazoon Street in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, Muscat Governorate.

"As a business lounge, Sorella emphasises providing a suitable venue for women to perform their jobs, study, meet, or just come to catch up with friends in the most convenient environment possible. It is meant to support women to network with others and enhance their opportunities, with the emphasis of collaborations, conversations, and connections", Siham said.

The lounge is ideal for all women of different backgrounds and ages. Its cosy environment can accommodate up to 90 ladies at a time. It has comfy seating areas and specialised corners for studying and working. The lounge also has three private meeting rooms equipped with all the materials and tools needed including interactive screens for meetings. It also has a dedicated photo studio for those in need of professional profiles needed at work. The lounge also serves tasty coffee, drinks, and snacks by Omani baristas.

"Sorella Lounge is a fantastic opportunity for women of different age groups, jobs, backgrounds, and educational levels to meet with other women from different fields, to build and grow their businesses and/or careers and be supported by like-minded women in a safe environment without many formalities as the lounge is for women only including the staff who are all women", Siham said.

Although Siham had completed her Master's degree abroad and



had no concerns about working and interacting with men, she came up with this idea as she found that Omani women, who are governed by a conservative culture would rather prefer working and studying, and relaxing around women.

"Omani women tend to be more relaxed and productive around other women without the constraints of the certain ethics and etiquette we need to hold around the opposite gender", Siham com-

mented.

So far, the concept of the lounge has received numerous positive feedback, since there are no such spaces that are only for ladies.

"The concept gives me the chance of giving back to society some of the many good deeds I have received as a woman in my life and career", Siham expressed.

The lounge targets all working, businesswomen and students to enjoy the encouraging environment

and effectively work on their projects and/or strengthen their studies.

Siham did not have any fears before launching her new idea, yet she had concerns about how to deliver the concept of the lounge accurately without any misunderstanding or mis-conceptualising. As many think it is a café, Siham emphasised that it is not a café, it is a business lounge that serves coffee, other drinks, and snacks.

"I had concerns that the idea could be understood differently and perhaps taking me out of the track as a business lounge to be a coffee shop or a gathering venue for parties", Siham said.

Consequently, Siham always tries to spread the concept of the lounge via her platforms on social media in addition to the customers when they visit the lounge. The concept is becoming gradually clearer day by day through continuous communication with the target audience.

The most critical obstacle Siham had to deal with is her humble experience in the world of business, therefore, she tried to contact experienced persons in this domain to help her deliver the concept and launch the first ladies' lounge in Oman. Siham found that the most significant elements for any business are support, perseverance, and ambition.

Moreover, Siham had delayed the lounge launching because of the period she had taken to look for Omani ladies baristas, "With persistence and perseverance I was lucky to find Omani baristas who loved the concept and are currently working with and supporting us with their delicious coffee and drinks", Siham added.

For Siham next step is to open the lounge in its all capacity and launch a new branch in another region here in Oman to reach all women.

Siham provides all ladies with a message that clearly illustrates the idea of the lounge, "My message here is to all women in Oman from different backgrounds, nationalities, age groups, and educational levels: Sorella ladies' business lounge is for you. I would love to see women visit us, utilise, and enjoy the services that are available in it. We are here to support your development and growth". She also urged women to stand for their ideas and belief in themselves to ultimately see their dreams coming true.

"You can do what you are dreaming of doing and reaching your potential by receiving support but also by giving forward and supporting others. The supporting means are available. You need to open your eyes, heart, and mind to where and how you can find them" Siham added. Siham, with her novel idea, and the messages she wants to deliver through her lounge is a well-representative model for all women, particularly Omani women.