

Turkey said it will host Russian and Ukrainian delegations with UN diplomats on Wednesday to discuss the resumption of stalled grain deliveries across the Black Sea. The four-way meeting with Turkish officials comes as food prices soar around the world due to Russia's war on Ukraine. Ukraine is one of the world's biggest exporters of wheat and other grain. But its shipments have been blocked by Russian warships and mines that Kyiv has laid across the Black Sea. **SEE ALSO P6**



P10

DJOKOVIC IN SEVENTH HEAVEN AFTER STARRING ROLE IN KYRGIOS SHOW



P13

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL DRIVES MAY AIR TRAFFIC RECOVERY



P20

EXPLORE THE WONDERFUL VALLEY IN JABAL HATT



MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$102.33 A BARREL

Oman oil price for September delivery on Tuesday reached \$102.33, comprising an increase by 29 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$102.04. The average price of Oman oil for July delivery has stabilised at \$107.22, thus \$4.82 per barrel higher than June delivery. Oil prices fell sharply on Tuesday, weighed down by a strong dollar, demand-sapping Covid-19 curbs in top crude importer China and fears of a global economic slowdown.

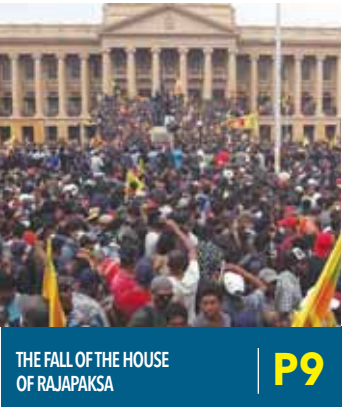
UNITED NATIONS

UN EXTENDS SYRIA AID BY SIX MONTHS

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution on Tuesday extending a system for cross-border aid to Syria by six months, the duration demanded by Russia while other members had sought a full year. The measure received support from 12 of the Security Council's 15 members, including Russia, China and the grouping's 10 non-permanent members. Western nations had called for a year-long extension, arguing that six months was insufficient to properly plan the delivery of aid to war-ravaged Syria. Britain, France and the US abstained from the vote, marking their disagreement with the shorter duration.



INSIDE



HM TO VISIT GERMANY TODAY

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will pay an official visit to the Federal Republic of Germany starting from Wednesday.

This was announced in a statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court reading as follows: "Within the framework of advanced relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany and, to boost areas of joint cooperation in a manner that serves aspirations of both countries, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will pay an official visit to Germany, starting from today (Wednesday).

"The visit will discuss a set of regional and international topics of mutual interest. May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty wherever he might be and grant him success for the good of Oman and its noble people!"

— ONA



Nasa unveils Webb's first full-colour images

GREENBELT: The James Webb Space Telescope began releasing a new wave of cosmic images on Tuesday, heralding a new era of astronomy.

"Every image is a new discovery," said Nasa administrator Bill Nelson. "Each will give humanity a view of the universe that we've never seen before."

On Monday, Webb revealed the clearest image to date of the early universe, going back 13 billion years.

One new image on Tuesday shown water vapour in the atmosphere of a faraway gas planet. The spectroscopy — an analysis of light that reveals detailed information — was of planet WASP-96 b, which was discovered in 2014.



Nearly 1,150 light-years from Earth, WASP-96 b is about half the mass of Jupiter and zips around its star in just 3.4 days.

"We've seen the effect of what happens when a planet and its atmosphere passes in front of the star, and the star light filters through the atmosphere, and you can break that down into wavelengths of light," said Nasa's Knicole Colon.

One stunning shot released by the White House on Monday was overflowing with thousands of galaxies and features some of the faintest objects observed.

— dpa

Tragedy-hit Eid holidays end

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttyp](#)

The holidays ended on Tuesday marred by numerous tragedies leaving both citizens and residents reeling in the wake of loss of their kith and kin in different incidents.

Most people returned to Muscat by Monday itself following closure of tourist spots at different locations in the Sultanate of Oman as a result of inclement weather conditions.

Although the government and private sector offices will reopen on Wednesday after the Eid al Adha break, there is not much traffic on the roads unlike previous occasions.

However, reports from the airport said there was an unusual rush of people who were returning after spending holidays in their native countries.

But for those who returned

Two bodies retrieved, search on for rest

SALALAH: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) on Tuesday said they have retrieved the bodies of two people who were swept away by the waves at Al Mughsail beach area.

"Bodies of the missing child and a person were found at the beach area in Dhofar Governorate by the rescue team of the CDAA.



Search for the rest three is under way, using all available means and aids in exceptional circumstances," the authority said in a statement.

Eight people of a family were swept away by strong waves at Al Mughsail beach area on Friday. People managed to rescue three safely but others could not be saved. CDAA along with the help of the Rafo had launched an intensive search operation to locate the missing persons.

from domestic tourism centres like Salalah, it was gloom on their faces.

Several people including children have lost their lives following incessant rains which lashed most parts of the country since last Thursday. Rescue teams are continuing to search for the missing.

"It was not just rain which hampered the holidays. We were shocked and frightened at the news of accidents which took place at very short intervals", said Menes Abubaker, who returned from Salalah.

Menes said it was panic which drove them back to Muscat as severe thunderstorms with rains hit Salalah and the surrounding areas which forced them to remain indoors at his friend's house.

TURN TO P2

WHO warns Covid-19 'nowhere near over'

GENEVA: Fresh surges of Covid infections show the pandemic is nowhere near over, the World Health Organization's chief lamented on Tuesday, warning that the virus is running free.

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was worried that case numbers were shooting up, putting more strain on health systems and workers.

The number of Covid cases reported to the WHO increased 30 per cent in the past two weeks,

driven by sub-variants of the Omicron strain and the lifting of control measures.

"New waves of the virus demonstrate again that Covid-19 is nowhere near over. As the virus pushes at us, we must push back," he insisted.

He told a news conference that as transmission increases, governments must also deploy tried-and-tested measures like mask-wearing and improving ventilation. — AFP



DELIGHTFUL SEASON OF DATES HARVEST

Omanis, both men and women, are busy around this time of the year, processing the fruits of their palms, which vary in different colours and flavours. They cooperate in collecting palm products and then share their roles to work with team spirit. The harvest of palm fruits goes through several stages, starting with the so-called Al Takleem, which is the pruning of the palm with a sickle after removing the dry fronds and the fibre around its bases, that are prone to diseases and insect attack. **DETAILS ON P3**



Keep children away from wadis as more rains forecast



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

As more wadi mishaps have taken place, the authorities have asked parents to be vigilant about their children venturing out to play in water spots. The warning comes after the tragic incidents in Al Mudhaibi in the Governorate of North Al Sharqiyah and Mughsail in Salalah.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority's teams been deployed in various governorates in order to secure the sites frequented by tourists because the places are affected by the weather, and to provide advice and guidance to protect the people from danger.

Telephone numbers of the centres and temporary points of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority along the road extending to Dhofar Governorate during the fall season of 2022 have also been published.

RAINS EXPECTED
Meanwhile, meteorologist Mohammed al Mishaiqi from Oman Met Office said cloud cover continues in many parts of the governorates and scattered rains are expected. Al Hajar Mountains will see continuation of local cloud

development.
"For now there is a thunder cell between Sur and Qurayat, which is expected to bring in rain. The movement is west to southwest," Mohammed said on Tuesday morning.
On Monday, along Al

**SULTANATE OF OMAN
CIVIL DEFENCE AND AMBULANCE
AUTHORITY**

**PHONE NUMBERS
OF CENTERS AND POINTS
CIVIL DEFENCE & AMBULANCE
AUTHORITY**

STATION & POINTS	CIVIL DEFENCE	AMBULANCE
Hamra Al Droa	93231178	92603702
Ghabe	92178816	92728718
Al Ghaftain	93290703	98126348
Qitbit	92135744	92694230
Seih Al Khairat	92698501	93296983
Al Saada		92134607
Taqah		98569709
Awqad		98009162
(Mahut) station	92637260	
Hitan Point (Al-Jaser)	92029705	

WWW.CDAA.SOV.OM

Hajar Mountains there were thunderstorms along it's adjoining areas and this also included Al Rustaq.

"There was heavy rain between Nakhal and Al Rustaq, as a result flash floods led to the flow of wadis," said Mohammed.

There has been a special request to parents to monitor their children to prevent them from swimming in wadis or play at any of the water spots.

Social media continued to show children diving into wadis and swim along the water force.

The authorities have highlighted the dangers and throughout the Eid holidays there have been mishaps.

The local cloud development is expected the bring more rain in the next two days.

On Tuesday, Dhofar continued with monsoon drizzle as well as chances for isolated rain; Al Wusta Governorate was also under the cloud cover and experienced isolated rain. Muscat Governorate also received light rain.

The Arabian Sea continues to be rough recording a wave height of 4 meters and rest of Oman's coasts are categorised as moderate with a wave height of 1.5 metres.



Clean-up drive after rains caused damage to a road in Dhofar Governorate.

Tragedy-hit Eid holidays end

FROM PAGE 1
"People were not following warnings to stay away from beaches which had high tides and wadis and waterfalls which were surging due to heavy rains", he said. While social media was agog with children diving into wadis and swimming along, the authorities highlighted the dangers and throughout the Eid holidays there have been mishaps.
For Abdulaziz, though it was his maiden trip to Salalah, it was all fear after witnessing the hostile

wadis which otherwise were picturesque before the inclement weather hit the country.
"We had to cut short our visit, which was otherwise planned for four days. Also we were not allowed to go to any spots due to the risks involved", he said.
Meanwhile, the ROP called on all citizens and residents in Dhofar to be further careful while driving vehicles for their own safety, not to cross wadis, listen to warnings, and not to approach dangerous places.

Haj Military Mission Returns



MUSCAT: The Haj military mission returned to the country on Tuesday evening from the Holy Land after performing the Haj. Upon its arrival at Seeb Air Base, the mission was received by Major General Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Commander of the National Defence College, and a number of senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security agencies. – ONA

Oman Air ramps up Omanisation programme

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 12

Oman Air, the national airline of the Sultanate of Oman, is enabling more opportunities for Omanis from varied academic backgrounds, providing them with access to more leadership and specialised positions.

Hilal bin Ali al Siyabi, Senior Vice-President — People, stated: "Oman Air is proud to have achieved an Omanisation rate of 94 per cent (excluding female cabin crew) at June 2022, which represents a high percentage considering our extensive international business footprint. The airline also employs bilingual employees from many nationalities to provide many of the specialised

services that travellers expect from a global airline. Presently, we employ 2,811 Omanis alongside highly skilled and experienced colleagues from 64 nations."
Al Siyabi added that the airline is committed to expanding horizons for young Omanis and boosting Oman Air's contribution to the Sultanate of Oman's GDP during the country's five-year plan (2021-2025) in line with Oman Vision 2040.
"This is owing to the success of many Omanisation strategies achieving the intended results. Our Flight Operations Department's strategy is the perfect example, as 415 of the 398 pilots are Omani, with the remaining 17 pilots having extensive cumulative experience and work as instructors



empowering future generations of pilots," he said.
Ongoing efforts to train and qualify the next generation of pilots have been intensifying at Oman Air. Approximately 93 Omani cadets are currently enrolled in

foundation and skills training at Sultan Qaboos University.
"We recognise that Omani youth play an important leadership role in implementing important policies, initiatives, and commercial programmes at the airline, all of which have been praised by our esteemed customers, in addition to major international assessment companies. This clearly demonstrates the importance Oman Air places on developing and empowering Omani skills and contributing to an environment of success," Al Siyabi stated.
Oman Air will soon launch its Future Leaders Commercial Graduate Programme exclusively for Omani graduates. The intensive 2-year programme will offer up to 12 selected candidates the

opportunity to gain internationally recognised qualifications while being exposed to all commercial functions at Oman Air. The programme is designed for the most talented Omani graduates, and expands on Oman Air's excellence-focused culture.
With job rotations that will expose students to six core commercial departments—Strategy & Planning, Revenue Management, Sales, Marketing, Product Development, and Service Delivery—graduates will receive practical experience from inside the airline's commercial department. The programme will help students reach their potential as commercial managers and provide them with the skill sets needed to enter the airline sector.



NEED TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT STRESSED AT TEHRAN MEETING

TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, participated in the environmental cooperation meeting on the topic 'For a better future', which was held on Tuesday in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Omani delegation was headed by Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, in the presence of representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

This meeting aimed to enhance regional cooperation and face environmental challenges that

affect the region, as the Sultanate of Oman, along with the participating countries, stressed the importance of cooperation and coordination in the region and the need to chart out bilateral and multilateral action plans and follow-up on the outcome of the meeting.

The participants also stressed the need for coordinated and timely measures to protect the natural environment of the region and the need for cooperation in the field of environment as a shared responsibility. Global warming, climate change, loss of biodiversity and environmental pollution, especially sand and dust storms, are among the challenges. The meeting also discussed the most pressing environmental concerns



in the region as well as the role of public and the youth and the NGOs in achieving a healthy environment.

Along with the participating countries, Oman stressed the need to combat desertification in countries that suffer from drought and desertification, and also urged

the UN bodies to deal with sand and dust storms.

The meeting discussed the need for an effective cooperation framework and the exchange of experiences among the countries of the region on their programmes and initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and to monitor the economic, social and environmental impacts of climate change.

The participating countries expressed their concern about chemical pollution and waste dumping as they pose a major threat to the livelihood of citizens, and stressed the need for a coordinated and integrated approach to managing air, water and soil pollution. — ONA



THE DELIGHTFUL SEASON OF DATES HARVEST

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Omanis, both men and women, are busy around this time of the year, processing the fruits of their palms, which vary in different colours and flavours. They cooperate in collecting palm products and then share their roles to work with team spirit.

The harvest of palm fruits goes through several stages, starting with the so-called Al Takleem, which is the pruning of the palm with a sickle after removing the dry fronds and the fibre around its bases, that are prone to diseases and insect attack.

Then comes the stage of Al Tahdeer that involves tying of lower leaves to the stem with a rope. This is done to protect the fruits as they gain weight.

Then comes Al Kharaf, which is the process of harvesting the fresh dates. It is carried out at regular intervals and it lasts more than four weeks. The major operation, Al Jadad, is the stage when the dates



are harvested cut with a sickle or shear. Families, comprising men, women and children, join together on this occasion and ease their work by singing popular songs.

After harvesting the dates, farmers take them to their houses, after which the fruits are cleaned, washed and spread on mats to dry under the sun.



The summer season in the country is the time when most of the economic activities take place as far as farmers are concerned.

The last stage of harvesting is Al Kenaz, which is stacking the dates after purifying and filtering them in palm, pottery or plastic containers. In the past, grandparents used to put palm leaves in a room where

there was only one door, which creates high pressure and heat that causes molasses to flow in basins.

In recent years, another way to preserve dates has emerged, which is to use the refrigerator, but the elderly prefer to save them in the traditional way. Omanis store dates for consumption in the winter season, when there is no wetness,

and an Omani house is not free of dates, which are a basic food item. They are served with Omani coffee to honour guests in public and private councils, various events and in the markets (internal and external markets).

During this season, which begins by the end of May and continues until September,

and sometimes continues until November, approximately 250 varieties of date palms can be harvested, the most famous of which is Al Fardh, in addition to Al Khalas, Al Nagal, Al Barni, and Al Khunaizi. Omani dates have been famous since ancient times, with its high quality and distinctive taste, which made it constitute a large portion of Omani exports to various parts of the world.

Among the most famous operations carried out by Omani farmers is the Al Tabseel process, which is a traditional process that relies on boiling palm products and then storing and marketing them through stages approved by the competent authorities in the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. Everyone works in this profession, young and old, women and men, making it is a wonderful example of cooperation.

All farmers assure that this year's yield is very good due to the frequent rainfall, which facilitated access to water in abundance.



PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT WHAT THEY
ARE GOING TO MISS OUT ON THE WORLD
HAPPENINGS IF THEIR MOBILE PHONE HAS
TO BE SWITCHED OFF FOR A WHILE

TIME TO CLEAR STORAGE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

My phone keeps reminding me that the storage is full and asks me do you want to manage it now or buy more space?

My e-mail does the same — it notifies me that I have reached 99 per cent storage and it is crucial that I buy space as it needs storage to work by sending and receiving mail.

Then, of course, the social media platforms behave strangely until it dawns on me — ‘Aha the storage.’

I am sure here too there are the studious ones who will regularly clean their storage and so naturally they do not have to be stuck and frozen when it is most crucial.

I remember during our childhood days my grandfather was annoyed when my brother and his friend who also happens to be the neighbour chose the landline to speak each other just to catch up. Run to the wall and speak face to face he had said. My brother was only too happy. And now here we are we text to the person in the next room but we can watch together a film on YouTube even if we are in two countries.

Do you have your wardrobe overflowing with clothes? Not to prove that one possesses so many clothes but rather to understand how we want to hold onto memories through clothes.

This is slightly different from hoarders I suppose. In the before mentioned category of people there is a strong element of sentiments. But the wardrobe is not ‘smart’ enough to remind me space is full — “Time to clear the unused clothes.”

Glad it is not smart enough to nag me.

Cleaning cannot be seasonal — spring cleaning sounds good

but now you know very well our consumerism is getting better of us and we produce more garbage than any other generation. Whatever previous generations used to buy would last a life time. They did not buy it otherwise. Today’s products are sold often with six months to one year warranty. The houses they built still stand today where as houses that are built in recent years need renovation within 40 years.

You buy a mobile phone and by the time one learns to operate it completely another model pops up leaking its new features and by the time it is launched most people are convinced they cannot exist without the new model of phone. And the makers too race with time bring out newer concepts.

People are worried about what they are going to miss out on the world happenings if their mobile phone has to be switched off for a while. I have had friends and acquaintances request me to change one of my phones that could easily be 9 to 10 year old. I can still talk on it, I argue back. One of the apps tells me to update the app and any attempt would tell me — ‘no storage.’ The end result cannot see some of the reactions on the App — they are the emoticons that are becoming more and more sophisticated.

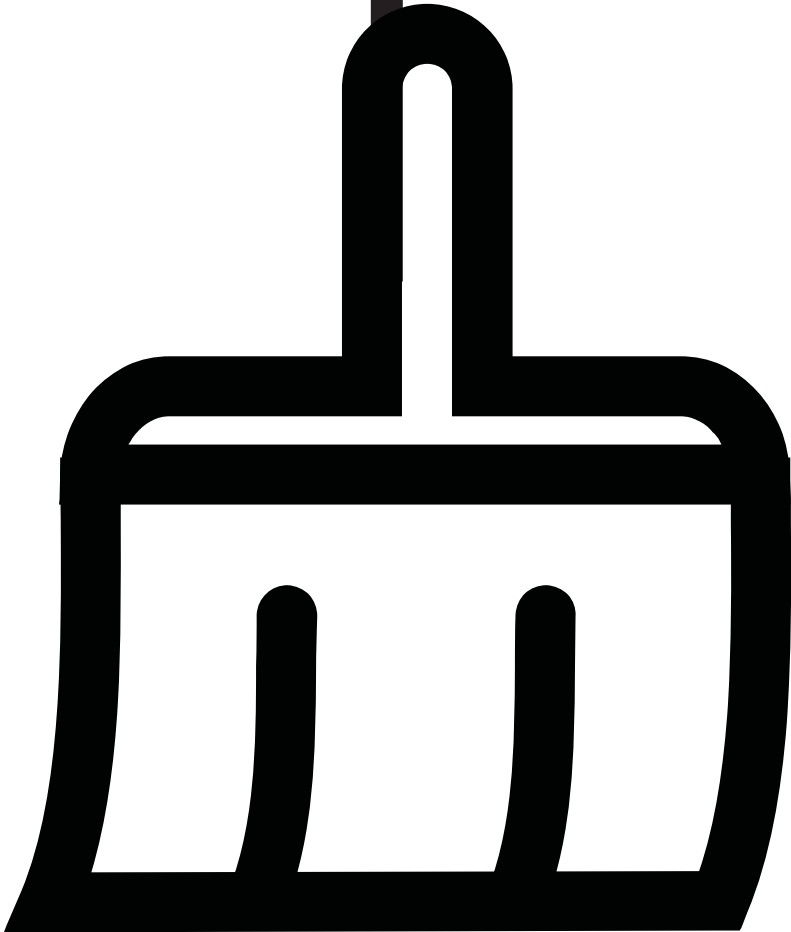
So what Stops us from letting go?

It gets interesting farther when my friend sitting across the table sipping coffee asked me, “Did you hear the latest about the brain and memory? It seems brain does not regenerate as we age it’s probably to do with overload.”

Need more space?

We have got to do the spring cleaning even for our brain. Why on earth do we have to carry painful memories?

In between the short term and long term memories there is so much we need.





In brief

■ ADDIS ABABA



ETHIOPIA TASKS UN TO HELP REBUILD TIGRAY INFRASTRUCTURE

The Ethiopian government said on Tuesday it was tasking a UN agency with helping to rebuild infrastructure in Tigray that was destroyed in the conflict between rebels and federal forces. The reconstruction is part of a project financed by the World Bank, which in April gave Ethiopia a \$300 million grant to help conflict-hit communities.

The “national recovery programme” aims to rebuild infrastructure, improve access to essential services and help victims of gender-based violence. It said the UN Office for Project Services would “reconstruct basic service-providing infrastructure” in Tigray.

■ ISTANBUL



TURKEY, RUSSIA, UKRAINE AND UN TO HOLD MEETING

Turkish Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said on Tuesday that military delegations from Turkey, Russia and Ukraine will meet with a United Nations delegation to discuss the safe export of Ukrainian grain.

The meeting will take place on July 13, Akar said.

“Military delegations from Turkey, Russia and Ukraine and a United Nations delegation will be conducting talks in Istanbul tomorrow regarding safe transfer of grain waiting in Ukrainian ports to international markets via sea route,” he said.

Ukraine, the world's largest grain supplier, has fuelled concerns about food security.

■ UNITED NATIONS



UN AID TO SYRIA FROM TURKEY EXTENDED UNTIL JANUARY

The United Nations Security Council voted on Tuesday to allow UN aid deliveries to continue until January 10 to some 4 million people in northwest Syria from Turkey, reaching a deal on its third attempt after the mandate for the operation expired.

The United States, Britain and France abstained from the vote because they wanted to extend the long-running humanitarian aid operation for one year. Russia vetoed that move in a vote on Friday and then failed in its own push for a six-month renewal. The mandate for the aid operation expired on Sunday.

— Agencies



This picture taken on Tuesday shows a view of the US flags flying along a highway on the route expected to be taken by US President Joe Biden during his upcoming visit, near the Israeli settlement of Har Homa in Arab East Jerusalem. — AFP

Palestinians say US economic push no substitute for peace

RAMALLAH: Ahead of Joe Biden's first visit to Jerusalem as US president, Washington's ambassador said his team will “pound tables” to press Israeli officials into making concessions to the Palestinians.

But ambassador Thomas Nides was talking about ensuring Palestinians have access to economic benefits such as 4G internet, not throwing American diplomatic muscle into reviving a peace process moribund since 2014.

Biden's first Middle East tour since entering the White House last year begins in Israel on Wednesday, and he is expected to meet Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas on Friday in Bethlehem, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

US-Palestinian ties have improved under Biden, after hitting an all-time low under his predecessor Donald Trump, a staunch backer of the Israelis.

Along with the prospect of faster internet, the visit may also see the US restore funding to hospitals in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, which have historically served Palestinians.

But some Palestinians said they are weary of US diplomacy which, they claim, emphasises economic benefits above core issues of the seven-decade conflict.

“It would be nice to have the 4G,” said Mohammed Mostafa, a former Palestinian Authority deputy prime minister and ex-chief executive of Paltel, the largest telecoms operator in the Palestinian territories.

“But it's obviously not a substitute for solving the bigger issues like Jerusalem, like sovereignty or like freedom,” he said.

“Israel thinks people will forget about the bigger picture,” he added.

The 4G pledge, which

ambassador Nides highlighted in an interview with the Times of Israel, would offer an immediate boost to Palestinian businesses, Mostafa said.

Palestinians are currently forced to either buy Israeli SIM cards or struggle with slower 3G connections.

“Israeli operators have a significant part of the Palestinian telecoms and broadband market,” Mostafa said. “This would be a chance to bring that back to Palestinian companies.”

But “the Israelis think ‘we're going to give you 4G so you'll keep quiet on the other things,’” Mostafa added. “We are interested, but we also want bigger things.”

Until July 1, Israel was led by prime minister Naftali Bennett, a right-winger who opposed the Palestinians' over-arching demand -- the establishment of their own state.

Bennett embraced an approach known as “shrinking the conflict,” seeking to defuse tensions by improving economic opportunities in the West Bank and the blockaded Gaza Strip, which is controlled by the Islamist group Hamas.

One such key policy was to increase permits for Palestinians, including from Gaza, to seek relatively lucrative work in Israel.

Asked about the expectations from Biden's visit, Hamas official Basem Naim said: “Nothing.”

Yair Lapid, Bennett's replacement as Israeli premier and a centrist, supports a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict. But he is only serving as a caretaker leader ahead of elections in November, and is therefore seen as having little space to launch bold peace initiatives.— AFP

Iran says US policy on nuclear deal ‘contradictory’

TEHRAN: Tehran hit out on Tuesday at what it called Washington's “contradictory” policies, after President Joe Biden vowed to pile pressure on Iran ahead of a visit to US allies in the Middle East.

Biden has been seeking to restore the Iran nuclear deal that was abandoned by his predecessor Donald Trump, but he has refused to lift sanctions on the Islamic republic until it returns to compliance with the accord.

In an opinion piece for the Washington Post ahead of his visit this week to Israel and Saudi Arabia, Biden pointed to the “rapid acceleration” of Iran's nuclear programme after Trump “reneged on a nuclear deal that was working”.

“My administration will continue to increase diplomatic and economic pressure until Iran is ready to return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, as I remain prepared to do,” Biden wrote on Saturday.

Iran on Tuesday blasted the Biden administration for what it said was an inconsistent approach on the nuclear issue. “Mr Joe Biden's emphasis on pursuing the policy of economic and diplomatic pressure against Iran is contradictory to US continued expression of desire to revive the 2015 agreement,” foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani said.

— AFP



My administration will continue to increase diplomatic and economic pressure until Iran is ready to return to compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, as I remain prepared to do

JOE BIDEN
US President

Baggage of despair: Iraqi Kurd plans new escape to Europe

SULAYMANIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi Kurd Haresh Talib says he struggles to get paid and his children's schooling is disrupted in his conflict-riddled country, so he wants to try to flee with his family to Europe -- again.

“There is no future here,” says the 36-year-old from the autonomous Kurdistan region in Iraq's north.

Talib, his hair gelled back and beard neatly trimmed, lives on the first floor of a pastel yellow house with his wife, two sons and a pet bird in a well-kept neighbourhood of Sulaimaniyah, Kurdistan's second-largest city.

Their living room television is showing a British cartoon hit, to the great amusement of Talib's eight-year-old son, Haudin.

Outside, his older brother Hajant dribbles a football.

“I love Real Madrid. I'm a fan of Benzema,” the 12-year-old says in English, referring to Real's French star Karim Benzema.

On the surface it might seem the picture of a contented middle-



Iraqi Kurd Haresh Talib works at his desk at a printing house in Iraq's northeastern city of Sulaymaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan region. — AFP

class family, but Talib says they will soon be packing their belongings and hitting the irregular migration trail.

They, and thousands of other Iraqi Kurds, have done it before.

He declines to reveal how he and his family will travel or by

what route, but says he wants to reach Britain where he has friends.

“But if that doesn't work I will go to Germany.”

In November, at least 27 migrants, most of them Iraqi Kurds, drowned when they tried to cross the English Channel from France to Britain in an inflatable boat.

Despite the risks, Talib says he wants to try again -- not so much for his own sake, but for his sons, whose schooling is frequently interrupted by teachers' strikes over unpaid salaries.

“In those countries there is work. You can guarantee that children will get an education,” he says.

Talib holds down two jobs to help his family get by. He's a printer and a civil servant.

“The government asks us to work but it hasn't paid us on time for years,” he complains.

While the rest of Iraq struggles to overcome decades of war, Kurdistan has fashioned an image of a stable region suitable for foreign investors.

But its more than five million inhabitants see a different reality.

— AFP



The remains of a fish, lies amongst cracked mud on the dried lake bed of Poyang Lake, China's largest freshwater lake, in Jiujiang, China. – Reuters

Heatwaves in China buckle roads and pop roof tiles

BEIJING: China's commercial capital of Shanghai and dozens of other Chinese cities baked in scorching temperatures as unusually hot weather buckled roads, popped roof tiles and drove people to seek the cool in raid shelters underground.

By 3 pm on Tuesday, 86 cities had issued red alerts, the highest in a three-tier warning system, warning of temperatures of over 40 degrees Celsius in the next 24 hours. Construction and other outdoor work are to be halted.

Shanghai, which is still fighting sporadic outbreaks of Covid-19, told its population of 25 million to prepare for hot weather this week after issuing its first red alert in five years on Sunday. Since record-keeping began in 1873, Shanghai has had just 15 days of temperatures exceeding 40 degrees.

Vendors reported surging sales of ice cream, melons and crayfish chilled in liquor, a popular summertime dish. At a

sprawling Shanghai wildlife park, eight tonnes of ice are used each day to keep lions, pandas and other animals cool.

In a photograph shared on social media, a Covid health worker in a full-body hazmat suit hugged a one-metre tall block of ice by a road.

"This year, the heat has arrived a little earlier than before," said Shanghai resident Zhu Daren, as her five-year-old son played at a water fountain.

"Although it is just July, I feel the warm weather has already reached the high point. Basically, you need to turn on the air-conditioning when you get home and put on some sunscreen when you go out."

China's summer of contrasts this year has brought havoc from heatwaves and heavy rainfall in turn. Authorities citing climate change have warned against disasters from mid-July, usually the hottest and wettest time of year. — Reuters

Lanka president seeks seaborne escape after airport standoff

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's president headed to a naval base on Tuesday with a view to fleeing his island by ship following a humiliating standoff at the airport, official sources said. Gotabaya Rajapaksa has promised to resign on Wednesday and clear the way for a "peaceful transition of power" following widespread protests against him over the country's worst economic crisis.

The 73-year-old leader fled his official residence in Colombo just before tens of thousands of protesters overran it on Saturday. He then wanted to fly to Dubai, officials said. As president, Rajapaksa enjoys immunity from arrest, and he is believed to want to go abroad before stepping down to avoid the possibility of being detained.

But immigration staff at Bandaranaike International withdrew from VIP services on Monday and insisted that all passengers must go through public counters. The presidential party were reluctant to go through regular channels fearing public reactions, a security official said, and as a result, missed four flights that could have taken them to the UAE.

Attempts to arrange a military flight to a neighbouring country also failed as clearance to land was not immediately available, the official added.

The president and his wife spent the night at a military airbase next to the airport.

A top defence source said the president's closest military aides



A man waves Sri Lanka's national flag near presidential secretariat in Colombo after it was overrun by anti-government protesters. – AFP

The president's closest military aides were discussing possibility of taking him and his entourage overseas aboard a naval patrol craft

were discussing the possibility of taking him and his entourage overseas aboard a naval patrol craft.

"The best option now is to take

the sea exit," the defence official said. "He could go to the Maldives or India and get a flight to Dubai."

The group left the airbase on Tuesday afternoon in two Bell 412 helicopters, an airport source said, bound for the northeastern port of Trincomalee, site of the naval base where Rajapaksa initially took refuge after fleeing his palace on Saturday.

Another option was to fly from Hingurakgoda air base where the choppers stopped to refuel, an air force source said, adding it had a runway that could accommodate executive jets.

Rajapaksa's youngest brother

Basil, who resigned in April as finance minister, missed his own Emirates flight to Dubai early on Tuesday after a tense standoff with airport staff.

Basil — who holds US citizenship in addition to Sri Lankan nationality — tried to use a paid concierge service for business travellers, but airport and immigration staff said they had withdrawn from the fast track service. "There were some other passengers who protested against Basil boarding their flight," an airport official said. "It was a tense situation, so he hurriedly left the airport." — AFP

As New Zealand reopens, exodus worsens labour crunch

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's easing of its strict border curbs has triggered a rush of new departures among locals seeking fresh opportunities abroad, adding further pressure to the country's already tight employment market.

A net 10,674 people left the country over the 12 months to May, according to government data released on Tuesday, extending a drain that ran over the past year and is expected to last until new immigrants arrive in greater numbers in 2023.

That exodus comes as New Zealand struggles to fill jobs with the number of foreign workers still very low and the economy close to maximum employment.

The issue has become somewhat politically contentious

with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last week deflecting questions about health services in his country poaching New Zealand nurses to fill their own shortfall.

After months of lockdown in New Zealand's largest city Auckland, Mark Beale and his family were ready for a new adventure. When the offer to relocate to Australia's Gold Coast came at the start of the year, he did not hesitate.

The lockdown gave him time to reflect on what he wanted to do, said the 49-year-old export manager, who concluded if he didn't travel now he'd never get around it. "We were on the first plane into Queensland that didn't require mandatory quarantine,"



People walk on Lambton Quay street in Wellington, New Zealand. – Reuters file

said Beale.

New Zealand had some of the world's toughest border controls in the two years from

restrictions on leaving the country, the prospect of delays in returning discouraged people from heading abroad, creating a long line of residents waiting to depart, with many like Beale doing just that.

New Zealanders have traditionally gone offshore in their 20s and early 30s to work and travel, largely in Europe. Historically, Australia has also been a popular destination for kiwis looking for job opportunities or warmer weather.

Roughly 1 million New Zealanders, or more than 15 per cent of the country's population, live overseas, raising perennial concerns about a brain drain.

Jarrold Kerr, chief economist at Kiwibank expects annual net emigration to be around 20,000 by

the end of this year, adding to wage and inflation pressures as workers seek employment and other opportunities abroad. By contrast, New Zealand, where roughly one in four people were born overseas, attracted a net 72,588 in 2019, before the pandemic.

"Kiwis who would have otherwise left over the last two and a half years are leaving now and we expect that to continue," he said. "It's the Kiwi way." That would further frustrate the market, which was already very tight.

"Businesses are really struggling to find workers, and we're losing workers in their prime," Kerr said.

He expects things could improve next year with a pick-up in migrants from places like India, China and South Africa. — Reuters

TOKYO

Funeral held for former Japanese PM Abe

Hundreds of people gathered in front of the Zojoji Temple in Tokyo to pay their last respects to Shinzo Abe, as the former prime minister was laid to rest days after his assassination at the age of 67. The funeral service attended by close relatives was held inside the Buddhist shrine.

Japan's longest-serving prime minister, was shot and killed while making a campaign speech in Nara on Friday, shocking a country in which gun violence is exceedingly rare. His 41-year-



old assassin was immediately arrested. On Tuesday, the mourners waved and took photographs, some calling out: "Abe san!" as the cortege carrying Abe's widow Akie drove slowly past. — dpa

ISLAMABAD

Death toll from Pakistan flooding crosses 150

Pakistani authorities said more monsoon rains are expected this week as death toll from the previous flooding crossed 150. In total, 157 people have died in rain-related incidents. Parts of Karachi with around 20 million people remained flooded for a second day, forcing residents to stay indoors as rescuers scrambled to reach people blocked in their houses. At least 44 women and 47 children were among the dead due to floods triggered by heavy rains since June, the



National Disaster Management Authority said. A new spell of heavy rains would hit the worst-affected southern region of Sindh from Thursday, Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfraz said. — dpa

MOSCOW

Putin to meet Raisi, Erdogan in Iran on July 19

Russian President Vladimir Putin is to travel to Iran on July 19 to hold talks with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Kremlin announced. The three heads of state are to discuss the situation in the civil war in Syria, Kremlin spokesman said, according to the Interfax news agency. Putin is also to hold bilateral talks with Erdogan.

The United States previously said that it had evidence that Iran intended to provide assistance to



Russia in its attack on Ukraine in the form of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), or drones.

It is unclear, however, whether the weapons have already been delivered. — dpa



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In brief

■ GENEVA



COVID-19 PANDEMIC IS 'NOWHERE NEAR OVER': WHO

Fresh waves of Covid infections show the pandemic is “nowhere near over”, the World Health Organization’s chief warned, voicing concern the virus is “running freely”. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was worried that case numbers were continuing to rise, putting further pressure on stretched health systems and workers. “New waves of the virus demonstrate again that Covid-19 is nowhere near over,” he told a news conference, adding: “As the virus pushes at us, we must push back.” “The virus is running freely and countries are not effectively managing the disease burden based on their capacity, in terms of both hospitalisation for acute cases and the expanding number of people with post-Covid condition, often referred to as Long Covid,” he said. — AFP

■ PARIS



SENTENCES IN PARIS TERRORIST TRIAL WILL NOT BE APPEALED

The terrorists found guilty of the 2015 attacks on the Bataclan concert hall and other venues in the French capital have not lodged appeals against the lengthy sentences handed down by a Paris court. The main accused and sole survivor of the terrorist group, Salah Abdeslam, will serve the 30-year sentence imposed without the possibility of reduction at the end of June, the Paris court said on Tuesday. His 19 co-accused were sentenced to between two years and life in prison for being accessories and will also serve their terms. — dpa

■ MOSCOW



MOSCOW SEES RISE IN COVID CASES, RECOMMENDS MASKS

Coronavirus cases have risen steeply in Russia’s capital Moscow over the past week, the city’s health authorities said. Many of the infections are of the Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5. “Over the course of the past week, there has been a 57-per cent rise in new cases of Covid-19 compared to the previous week,” Moscow social services wrote on Telegram. “We recommend that you wear a mask in public places because the new Omicron subvariants BA.4 and BA.5 spread more rapidly from person to person.” For several weeks now, European countries have seen coronavirus infections rise again, largely due to the same Omicron subvariants. — AFP



Firefighters work at a site of a residential building damaged by a Russian military strike, as Russia’s attack on Ukraine continues in Mykolaiv. — Reuters

Ukraine ‘destroys’ Russian arms depot

KYIV: Ukraine said on Tuesday it had carried out a long-range rocket strike against Russian forces and military equipment in southern Ukraine, territory it says it is planning to retake in a counter-offensive using hundreds of thousands of troops.

According to Ukraine, the strike hit an ammunition dump in the town of Nova Kakhovka in the Kherson region and killed 52 Russians. It came after Washington supplied Ukraine with HIMARS mobile artillery systems which Kyiv says its forces are using with ever greater efficacy.

A Russian-installed official in Kherson gave a different version. He said at least seven people had

been killed and that civilians and civilian infrastructure had been hit.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield accounts.

The area Ukraine struck is one that Russia seized after launching on February 24 what Moscow called “a special military operation” and is of strategic importance with Black Sea access, a once thriving agricultural industry, and a location just north of Russian-annexed Crimea.

Ukrainian government officials have spoken of efforts to marshal up to 1 million troops and of their aim to recapture southern parts of the country under Russian control.

“Based on the results of our rocket and artillery units, the enemy lost (people), an Msta-B

Ukraine strikes Russia-controlled Kherson region, says it killed 52 Russians, destroys hardware

howitzer, a mortar, and seven armoured and other vehicles, as well as an ammunition depot in Nova Kakhovka,” Ukraine’s southern military command said in statement.

Unverified videos posted on social media showed smoke and sparks, followed by an immense fireball erupting into the night sky. Images released by Russian state media showed a wasteland

covered in rubble and the remains of buildings.

An official from the Russian-installed local administration said that Ukraine had used HIMARS missiles and that they had destroyed warehouses containing saltpetre, a chemical compound which can be used to make fertiliser or gunpowder, resulting in a large explosion.

The Ukrainian Defence Ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment about the kind of weapon used.

Vladimir Leontyev, head of the Russia-installed Kakhovka District military-civilian administration, was cited by Russia’s TASS news agency as saying that at least seven

people had been killed in the attack and around 60 wounded.

“There are still many people under the rubble. The injured are being taken to the hospital, but many people are blocked in their apartments and houses,” Leontyev was quoted by TASS as saying. He was also cited as saying that warehouses, shops, a pharmacy, gas stations and a church had been hit. Russia has accused Ukraine of shelling its own people in territory that it has lost control of. Ukraine says it evacuates as many people as possible from areas seized by Russian forces in what it and the West have cast as an attempted imperial-style land grab by Moscow. — Reuters

US drone strike kills IS Syria chief

WASHINGTON: A man US officials called the leader of the IS group in Syria was killed on Tuesday in a drone strike, the Pentagon said.

Maher al Agal was killed while riding a motorcycle near Jindires in northern Syria, and one of his top aides was “seriously injured,” Pentagon Central Command spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Dave Eastburn said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed Agal was killed in a drone strike. The volunteer Syrian Civil Defence Force, known as the “White Helmets,” said one person was killed and another injured in a strike that targeted a motorcycle outside Aleppo, but did not identify the victims. There was little information available about Agal, whom the Observatory called the IS governor for the Levant.

The US Central Command called him “one of the top five” leaders of IS overall.

“In addition to being a senior leader within the group, Al Agal was responsible for aggressively pursuing the development of IS networks outside of Iraq and Syria,” they said in a statement.

According to a spokesman for the US-allied Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces, both the men who were targeted had links to Ahrar al Sharqiya, an armed group operating in northern Syria. The group has integrated former leaders and members of IS and other fighter groups, and has conducted attacks against Kurdish targets inside Turkish-controlled areas of northern Syria.

Ahrar al Sharqiya was responsible for the 2019 assassination of prominent Kurdish female politician Hevrin Khalaf, which sparked international condemnation. The US Treasury placed the group on its sanctions blacklist in July 2021. — AFP

UK’s Sunak refuses to attack Johnson in leadership bid

LONDON: Former finance minister Rishi Sunak said on Tuesday his campaign to be Britain’s next prime minister would avoid any attempt to “demonise” Boris Johnson, despite having helped trigger his dramatic downfall.

Sunak, 42, and another minister quit last week in protest at Johnson’s scandal-hit administration, setting off a wave of government resignations that forced him to step down as Conservative leader.

Johnson is staying on in Downing Street as prime minister until an internal party contest finds his successor. The result is due on September 5.

But the main opposition Labour party said it would try to force a vote of no confidence in the government to try to get him out of office sooner.

Labour leader Keir Starmer said that by their actions last week, the Tories had “concluded that the prime minister is unfit for office”

“They can’t now let him cling on for weeks and weeks and weeks until September 5,” he argued. “It would be intolerable for the



Former Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak arrives at an event to launch his campaign to be the next Conservative leader and Prime Minister in London. — Reuters

country.”

The no-confidence motion is expected to be voted on by the House of Commons on Wednesday.

Sunak, who was appointed chancellor of the exchequer in early 2020 just as the Covid pandemic hit, is seen as one of the frontrunners for the Tory leadership.

But he refused to distance himself from Johnson’s administration, in which he played a key role supporting businesses and workers during the pandemic.

He called Johnson “one of the most remarkable people I’ve met”. “Whatever some commentators may say, he has a good heart,” he told cheering supporters, after one Johnson ally accused Sunak of being a treacherous “snake”.

“But did I disagree with him? Frequently. Is he flawed? Yes, and so are the rest of us. Was it no longer working? Yes, and that’s why I resigned.

“But let me be clear, I will have no part in a rewriting of history that seeks to demonise Boris, exaggerate his faults or deny his efforts.” — AFP

Investing time and energy in khareef scenario



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

We often say that ‘history repeats itself. However, what I really believe we really mean is that we, human beings, still repeat similar cycles of events and scenarios when we do not learn our lessons.

These days the cycle of events that humanity seems to be repeating, again in the 21st century, is the cycle of conflicts that aim at controlling as much as resources as possible by any means necessary.

While this cycle of events is our current reality it should not dictate our destiny. I believe that we have been blessed with the power to invest our time and energy into shaping our present and future.

Before committing to investing in shaping our present and our future we could deepen our understanding of three scenarios that bear resemblance to seasons,

and are unfolding before us: Summer scenario, winter and khareef.

The summer scenario

Temperatures rise like the sun in every summer season. This particular summer, with the status quo of Western global domination and rising temperatures are witnessing rising prices of food, fuel and cost of living in general, exacerbated by post Covid-19 pandemic socio-economic disruptions.

For example, dissatisfaction with the performance of bureaucracy is spreading from Sri Lanka, the European Union and will likely keep spreading to other regions and countries due to the pains of energy transition.

As the world focuses more on global Environmental, Social and Governance or ESG policies that

THE WEALTH GAP IN THE SUMMER SCENARIO CONTINUES TO BE THE MEAN SOURCE OF THREATS TO SAFETY, SECURITY AND GLOBAL STABILITY

traditional policies the lower to middle income parts of the society are likely to struggle to adjust to higher costs associated with this transition, as opposed to the upper income parts of the society who are more resourceful and capable of weathering or even benefits from ESG policies.

The winter scenario

Russia is known from general winter, the season that contributed to saving its brave people from the

invasions of armies of Emperor Napoleon and Nazi Germany.

This winter is helping Russia in a different way, it is deepening the EU’s dependence on Russian oil and gas. Russia today is presenting itself as the leader of the anti-western powers.

The challenge in this winter scenario is that we have witnessed the hegemony of the Soviet Union for 70 years of the 20th century. It has a legacy of a great superpower on its bright side, yet on the less bright side it has suppressed the cultures of Central Asia and reduced its people to second class citizens compared to ethnic Russians.

The khareef scenario

There is no refreshing breeze like the breeze of the monsoon season over the Governorate of

Dhofar. Every summer, is known as the Khareef (which literally means fall season in Arabic). We could influence our present where we insist on global social and economic justice, and conflict resolution based on our common identity and destiny as partners on this earth, and not on our narrow artificial identities.

I lean towards investing our time and energy in the Khareef scenario, not because I hail from Dhofar, but because I see no bright future investing in a continuing status quo of western exploitation, or from investing in a dark, gloomy and authoritarian winter. We are the most learned and connected generations in history hence the most capable in investing in a better conflict-free future.

Is this khareef scenario coming?

Pacific leaders struggle to keep focus on climate at key summit

US-China rivalry and an inter-island rift overshadowed the start of a landmark Pacific summit, hampering efforts to focus world attention on the islands’ dire climate crisis. This year’s Pacific Islands Forum is the region’s most important meeting in years, coming after a Covid-enforced hiatus and as low-lying tropical isles run out of time for climate action.

Fiji president and forum chair Voreqe Bainimarama opened Tuesday’s first meeting with a warning that the “runaway climate change crisis” threatened the security and sovereignty of many Pacific nations.

But instead of a singular focus on the threat of rising sea levels and ever-more-powerful storms, a shock decision by Beijing-allied leaders in Kiribati to quit the forum altogether, revealed on the eve of the summit, loomed over proceedings. Geopolitical jostling between the United States and China has been building since Solomon Islands controversial signed a security pact with Beijing in April.

United States Vice President Kamala Harris announced that she would make an unprecedented video appearance at the summit — usually restricted to Pacific nations, Australia and New Zealand.

Leaders gathered at Suva’s luxurious Grand Pacific Hotel will discuss a strategy to guide the Pacific through to 2050, keenly focused on the existential threat posed by climate change.

They will also debate announcing a climate emergency in the Pacific and whether to endorse a push, spearheaded by Vanuatu, to ask the International Court of Justice to weigh in on nations’ climate obligations. Vanuatuan prime minister Bob Loughman said on Tuesday that the people of the region “are calling on us, Pacific leaders, to take action to fight this emergency”.

But Kiribati’s exit from the forum has sparked concerns about a fracturing of the Pacific’s closely held unity, which gives the region of small island states heft in global climate negotiations.

Tuvaluan Foreign Minister Simon Kofe said he was “surprised and saddened” by Kiribati’s departure, but was optimistic the nation could be enticed to rejoin.

Last year, Kofe made headlines when he addressed the COP summit standing knee-deep in water to draw attention to the threat climate change poses to his low-lying nation, which may disappear below rising seas in the next 50 years.

Faced with such a threat, his priority at the summit is climate change — Tuvalu will be pushing for a focus on statehood and climate financing. Concerns about regional security — brought to the fore by the Solomons-China pact — “draw a bit of attention away from climate change”, Kofe said. — AFP

In a time of conflict, entrepreneurs in Ukraine make war their business



ERIKA SOLOMON

The writer is the NYT correspondent in Berlin

Yuriy Zakharchuk once dreamed up combat costumes for the stage, designing everything from medieval armour to space battle suits.

But after February 24, the day Russia attacked Ukraine, Zakharchuk decided to take his business from the realms of fiction into the real world of war brought to his home city of Kyiv.

His company’s transition to making body armour and helmets makes a kind of sense, he noted with a wry smile. “We have always provided protection for every need,” he said, “from the days of the Roman Empire to the fantasies of the future.”

More seriously, he added, his business, Steel Mastery, is experienced in developing gear that is light and suitable for long hours of wear. “We know how to make stuff comfortable,” he said.

Zakharchuk, whose company of 70 workers once provided costumes for thousands of customers in Europe and the United States, is not alone in the switch to militarisation. Across Ukraine, many companies are adapting to life at war by making it part of their business.

In the southern city of Odesa, a local fashion brand had all its divisions, even its lingerie seamstresses, sewing cloth vests to fit body armour plates.

In Lviv, some of the businesses that flocked to this safer western region of Ukraine are working on installing armour on existing vehicles, military uniforms, and, more secretly, ammunition.

“We have many businesses requalifying themselves to help the army,” said Volodymyr Korud, the vice president of Lviv’s chamber of commerce. “Some are even involved in weaponry, but that is something we cannot discuss,” he said, for fear they could become military targets.

Many enterprises are working on a charitable basis to support Ukraine’s armed forces. But increasingly, businesses are looking to establish for-profit models that they can sustain throughout the conflict — and perhaps even once it ends, with an eye on export.

Oksana Cherepanych, 36, said it was not only self-interest that fuelled her

decision to redirect her company from making hotel and restaurant uniforms into a manufacturer of Ukrainian regimental outfits.

“It’s also about saving jobs for our workforce,” she said.

“We need to motivate people to stay in our country by making sure they can find work here. That way, we support our country’s economy.”

Her plan has worked. Her company, Gregory Textile, based in Lviv, now

ACROSS UKRAINE, MANY COMPANIES ARE ADAPTING TO LIFE AT WAR BY MAKING IT PART OF THEIR BUSINESS AND YURIY ZAKHARCHUK IS ONE SUCH

has contracts to make uniforms for the Ukrainian military. She was able to save the jobs of the 40 seamstresses she had on staff, and even added 10 positions. She offered those jobs to women who fled fighting in Ukraine’s east.

And though the company is only making 60 per cent of what it earned before the war, she said it is still turning a profit.

Others, like Zakharchuk, are using this moment of reinvention for missions that border on the quixotic. He is producing ceramic-plated body armour vests — a feat that involved the smuggling of a Soviet-era kiln and enlisting the help of octogenarian scientists.

Body armour typically consists of a vest made with bullet-resistant fabric that holds a plate of armour in the front and back. The simplest approach is to make the plates out of metal, a skill that would have been easy to tack on to a company specialising in costume armour. Instead, he decided to found a new venture, YTO Group, to produce ceramic body armour.

Ceramic plates are far lighter, and preferred by many military forces for the increased mobility they allow. But they require sophisticated technology and equipment to produce — none of which Zakharchuk had.

“I don’t know a lot of things,” he said. “But if I need something, I will find it. That’s my special skill.” Nonetheless, the initiative may pay off.

His YTO Group has now produced test samples. If the company can scale up, Zakharchuk aims to sell the armour for about \$220 to \$250 apiece, roughly half what it costs elsewhere, he said.

— The New York Times



Yuriy Zakharchuk, whose company switched from making combat costumes for the stage to body armour and helmets at Steel Mastery’s workshop in Kyiv.

Why do people become so cavalier?



Samuel Kutty
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The writer is a journalist and author

While a holiday season is a time meant to be spent with family for enjoyment, it's also a time to be extra vigilant against potential safety hazards. But what happens very often is that thrill seekers, without adhering to the warnings from authorities, risk not only their own lives but endanger the lives of others.

The Sultanate of Oman is still in shock from the number of tragic incidents, that too involving children, which took place during the Eid al Adha holidays. Although the exact number of deaths is still not known officially, the ongoing spate of inclement weather has left another scar on another holiday season — mainly due to non-compliance of warnings.

Today, with the help of new radar technology, forecasters are able to better know very much in advance about the extreme weather conditions and alert the public against the potential threat and the need to take precautionary measures.

But even as we are inundated with messages through official channels or social media platforms about the seriousness of the situation, many people do not give any heed to them!

Why do people become so cavalier in the face of clear instructions?

A look back at a year or two when we were under the grasps of the dreaded Covid-19 pandemic, it takes us across several barefaced violations of the protocols issued by the authorities to fight the spread of the virus.

Many people blatantly ignored the appeals and directives to stay home and avoid group gatherings. Many were fined and prosecuted for violations which led to a colossal rise in coronavirus cases forcing the authorities to take extreme steps like lockdowns and entry bans.

SOME PEOPLE EVEN BEHAVE LIKE CHILDREN WHO DO THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT THEIR PARENTS TELL THEM TO DO! IF A CHILD IS TOLD NOT TO JUMP INTO A POND OR PLAY WITH A KNIFE, HE/SHE WOULD ATTEMPT TO DO IT, MAY BE OUT OF CURIOSITY, INVITING TROUBLE FOR THEM AND THEIR PARENTS

Whether in a situation like pandemic or in a condition like the current rough weather, non-compliance with the instructions is what heightens the gravity of the disasters — unwarranted loss of human lives!

What is frustrating and making matters worse is that despite proper warnings about the impending dangers, many people throw guidelines with the wind and allow themselves to fall prey to deaths!

Some people even behave like children who do the opposite of what their parents tell them to do! If a child is told not to jump into a pond or play with a knife, he/she would attempt to do it, may be out of curiosity, inviting trouble for them and their parents.

The Oman Meteorology and Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority plays an essential role in weather forecasts, early warnings on hazardous weather and outreach activities to enhance public awareness of weather hazards. So are the other authorities like the Royal Oman Police and other civil authorities.

Despite repeated warnings, revellers thronged beaches, that too, many jumping onto the seas, which had high tides. Many others risked their lives to cross valleys or attempted to take a dip in the gushing rain waters. The result is many were washed away or drowned leaving their dear ones to bewail forever.

The drowning of children points to the lack of care that was required to be taken by the parents or their kin in preventing the kids from reaching the overflowing wadis. This happened despite warnings, appeals to parents not to allow children to go near the wadis or water bodies.

If non-adherence to instructions is the reason behind the casualties, it is the climate change which is allowing sea level events associated with some tropical cyclones, leading to an increase in the intensity of catastrophes such as heavy rains, flooding and associated impacts.

The effects of climate change — rising sea levels, raging storms, searing heat, severe drought and perilous floods are already threatening our health, our communities, our economy, our security, and our children's future.

The number of weather, climate and water extremes are increasing and will become more frequent and severe in many parts of the world as a result of climate change.

According to a UN Climate Change report, tropical cyclones and droughts were the most prevalent hazards with respect to human losses, accounting for 38 per cent and 34 per cent of disaster related deaths from 1970 to 2019, respectively.

Climate change is a fight for life itself. It is having more and more of a negative impact on people. So it is important that the world acts together to prevent extreme weather conditions which claim human life and property at every interval.



SWIMMING WITH JELLYFISH

A freediver swims with jellyfish in the Mediterranean sea waters off the shore of Lebanon's northern coastal city of Tripoli on Tuesday. The invasive jellyfish species "Rhopilema Nomadica" has been entering the Mediterranean sea through the Suez Canal from the 1970s onwards. The increasing jellyfish population is due to rising seawater temperatures, and is becoming a threat to the Mediterranean ecosystem, scientists have warned. — AFP

The fall of the house of Rajapaksa



BRAHMA CHELLANEY

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

For much of nearly two decades, the four Rajapaksa brothers and their sons have run Sri Lanka like a family business — and a disorderly one, at that. With their grand construction projects and spendthrift ways, they saddled Sri Lanka with unsustainable debts, driving the country into its worst economic crisis since independence. Now, the dynasty has fallen.

Mahinda Rajapaksa was instrumental in establishing the Rajapaksa dynasty. After becoming president in 2005, he ruled with an iron fist for a decade, attacking civil liberties, expanding presidential powers (including abolishing term limits), and making bad deal after bad deal with China. Throughout this process, he kept his family close, with his younger brother Gotabaya holding the defence portfolio.

But in 2015, Mahinda narrowly lost the presidential election, and the Rajapaksas were briefly driven from power. During that time, parliament restored the presidential term limit, ruling out another Mahinda presidency. Yet the family quickly devised a plan to restore their dynasty: Gotabaya would renounce his US citizenship and run for president.

Gotabaya was well-positioned to win. After all, he had been defence secretary in 2009 when Mahinda ordered the final military offensive against the Tamil Tiger rebels, bringing a brutal 26-year civil war to a decisive end. With that, the Rajapaksa brothers emerged as heroes among Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority.

To be sure, the final offensive killed as many as 40,000 civilians and sparked international accusations of war crimes. The United Nations described it as a "grave assault on the entire regime of international law." According to Sarath Fonseka, the wartime military commander, Gotabaya ordered the summary execution of surrendering rebel leaders. In California, where he was previously domiciled, Gotabaya faces civil charges over alleged war crimes.

But the Rajapaksa brothers simply presented themselves as hardheaded custodians of Sinhalese interests. And, thanks largely to his ethno-nationalist credentials, Gotabaya won the 2019 election — at which point he immediately appointed Mahinda as his prime minister. Mahinda then appointed his two sons, his other two brothers, and a nephew as ministers or to other government positions.

The same year, 277 people were killed, and hundreds more wounded, in bombings carried out by extremists on Easter Sunday. The attack highlighted tensions that had been simmering since 2009: though the military

offensive marginalised the Tamils, the war's end sowed the seeds of religious conflict between the Buddhist-majority Sinhalese and Sri Lanka's Muslims, who constitute one-tenth of the country's population. The Easter Sunday terrorist bombings provided new ammunition for the Rajapaksas to whip up Sinhalese nationalism.

Beyond deepening ethnic and religious fault lines, Gotabaya followed his brother in establishing an imperial presidency, exemplified by the passage in 2020 of a constitutional amendment

THROUGH A COMBINATION OF AUTHORITARIANISM, NEPOTISM AND CRONYISM, THE RAJAPAKSA FAMILY WEIGHED DOWN SRI LANKA'S ECONOMY WITH MORE DEBT THAN IT COULD POSSIBLY BEAR. THE COUNTRY'S NEXT LEADERS WILL HAVE TO ADDRESS SHORTAGES OF BASIC NECESSITIES, REBUILD A WRECKED ECONOMY, AND REESTABLISH THE RULE OF LAW

expanding the president's power to dissolve the legislature. And he helped to push Sri Lanka further into the economic death spiral that his brother had helped create, not least through his dealings.

During Mahinda's rule, as the foreign power shielded the Rajapaksas from war-crime charges at the UN, it won major infrastructure contracts in Sri Lanka and became the country's leading lender. Debt piled up, incurred largely over the construction of

monuments to the Rajapaksa dynasty in the family's home district of Hambantota.

Examples include "the world's emptiest" airport, a cricket stadium with more seats than the district capital's population, and a \$1.4 billion seaport that remained largely idle until it was signed away to China in 2017 on a 99-year lease. The most extravagant project is the \$13-billion "Port City," which is being built on land reclaimed from the sea close to the centre of the capital, Colombo.

So, the foreign country gained leverage over the country located near some of the world's most important shipping lanes, and Sri Lanka became increasingly mired in debt, including "hidden debt" from loans whose public disclosure was prohibited by their terms. But hubris prevented the Rajapaksas from recognising the looming crisis. On the contrary, they enacted a sweeping tax cut in 2019 that wiped out a third of the country's tax revenues.

Then the pandemic hit, crushing the tourism and garment industries — Sri Lanka's two main foreign-exchange earners. More recently, the war in Ukraine, by triggering soaring international energy and food prices, helped to drain Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, creating fuel, food, medicine, and electricity shortages. It was the final straw for many Sri Lankans, who took to the streets in droves.

On May 9, Mahinda reluctantly resigned from his post as prime minister, in an effort to appease protesters. But protests continued to rage, culminating in the storming of the seaside presidential palace by demonstrators. Gotabaya fled minutes earlier before conveying his decision to resign.

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Photos of protesters lounging on the president's bed and cooking in his backyard have become a symbol of people's power.

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Novak Djokovic holds up the Wimbledon trophy and greets fans during a welcoming ceremony in front of the city hall in Belgrade. – Reuters

DJOKOVIC IN SEVENTH HEAVEN AFTER STARRING ROLE IN KYRGIOS SHOW

LONDON: The Nick Kyrgios show made must-see viewing for everyone at Wimbledon on Sunday except one man -- Novak Djokovic refused to get sucked in by the hullabaloo going on on the other side of the net as he zoned in on hoisting the Challenge Cup for a seventh time.

In a career spanning almost two decades, there is almost nothing the Serbian had not weathered during his previous 31 Grand Slam finals.

During that time he took on 11 different rivals, from Roger Federer in 2007 to Daniil Medvedev last year, but it is safe to say that in all those finals he had never witnessed anything like the theatrics that were going on in Kyrgios's corner.

In fact, in the 134 previous editions of the grasscourt championships, the prim and proper establishment of the All England Club had never seen anything like it on final's day either.

There was a cheeky underarm serve, there were plenty of tweeners and of course there was a continuous flow of verbal sparring with himself, his entourage and the umpire. At one point the Australian hot-head even yelled at the umpire to "kick out" a female fan from the stands as she "looks

Novak DJOKOVIC

Wimbledon 2022 champion

Men's singles

ATP RANKING

7

Titles

SINGLES

88

DOUBLES

1

Grand Slams

TITLES

21

CAREER EARNINGS

\$159 million

Sources: ATP/Wimbledon

Serbia

Age: 35

1.88 m

Right-handed

AFP

like she's had 700 drinks bro".

The distractions were aplenty but it was soon clear why Kyrgios described Djokovic as "a God". He remained serene throughout the three hour commotion to ensure he was the one celebrating a 21st Grand Slam title by once again nibbling on some Centre Court

grass.

Incredibly the 4-6 6-3 6-4 7-6(3) triumph was his 28th successive win at Wimbledon and also meant that Djokovic has not lost on Centre Court since being beaten by Andy Murray in the 2013 final.

Like superman in full flight, he swooped on to the threadbare

During that time he took on 11 different rivals, from Roger Federer in 2007 to Daniil Medvedev last year, but it is safe to say that in all those finals he had never witnessed anything like the theatrics that were going on in Kyrgios's corner

Wimbledon grass on his belly to continue his celebrations, the relief clear for all to see after a tumultuous six months when his pursuit of becoming the most successful champion in men's tennis was halted in Melbourne due to his refusal to get vaccinated against Covid-19.

MORE SIGNIFICANCE

"It's no coincidence that this place has such relevance in my life and career. It's a relief, as well, considering what I've been through this year. It adds more value and more significance and more emotions," explained Djokovic after taming Kyrgios for

the first time in three meetings.

Djokovic had started 2022 tied on 20 Grand Slam titles with fellow Big Three rivals Federer and Rafa Nadal. The Serbian had been heavily tipped as the one who would break that deadlock at the Australian Open considering he owns a men's record nine titles at the season's opening slam.

But his Australian odyssey ended in chaos, with the Serbian held in an immigration detention centre for five days before being deported from the country on the eve of the hardcourt major.

"Certainly this year has not been the same like last years. In the first several months of the year I was not feeling great generally. Mentally, emotionally, I was not at a good place," said the 35-year-old, who is now one title shy of Federer's men's record haul of eight at the grasscourt major.

"Once I left Australia... (it) caused turbulence inside of me. I just needed time to weather the storm.

"Wimbledon historically has always come at such important stages of my life and my career. In 2018 when I was starting the year with elbow surgery... this was the first slam that I won and (it) served as a springboard for (winning the

next two majors at) the U.S. Open and 2019 Australian Open. I'm always inspired to play my best tennis in London."

After Nadal captured the season's first two majors to take his haul to 22, Sunday's victory allowed Djokovic to close that gap with his great rival.

With mission completed at Wimbledon, the Serb has no idea how the rest of the year will pan out for him considering at the moment he cannot enter the U.S. without being vaccinated.

Hence the Serbian may not appear in another slam again until next May's French Open because as it stands, he will also be barred from competing in Australia in January - thus denting the Serb's hopes of topping the all-time list of men's Grand Slam champions.

"I'm not vaccinated and I'm not planning to get vaccinated so the only good news I can have is them removing the mandated green vaccine card or whatever you call it to enter United States or exemption.

"I'll wait hopefully for some good news from USA because I would really love to go there. If that doesn't happen, then I have to see what the schedule will look like."

— Reuters

SL Test loss offers lessons for India tour: Cummins

GALLE, Sri Lanka: Australia skipper Pat Cummins on Monday said the experience of playing Tests on two vastly different pitches in Sri Lanka would be vital to their preparations for touring India next year. The tourists went down to Sri Lanka by an innings and 39 runs on day four of the second Test in Galle after being bundled out for 151 in just over a session.

The performance comes 10 days after Australia hammered the hosts inside three days of the opener on a viciously turning track at the same venue.

Australia's 1-1 result in the island nation comes after their 1-0 Test triumph in Pakistan in March, and India is next on their sub-continental journey, with four five-day games scheduled in February-March 2023.

"Absolutely, last week and this week," Cummins said on taking lessons from Sri Lanka to India.

"I think half our batting lineup and half our bowling lineup hasn't played a lot over here in the sub-continent. So the experience on these two vastly different wickets, I think we got a lot of lessons out of it to take to India next year."

He added: "In Australia most likely you only play one spinner, so in the background you're trying to prepare a couple of other guys so they get the chance over in India."

Spin played a huge part in the two Tests, with Sri Lankan debutant Prabhat Jayasuriya returning a match haul of 12 wickets in the final game.



Australia's captain Pat Cummins (2L) celebrates with team-mates after taking wicket of Sri Lanka's Maheesh Theekshana. — AFP

Batsmen also had their say on a flatter Galle wicket in the second encounter as Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal hit an unbeaten 206 and former Australia captain Steve Smith made 145 not out.

Cummins said the team was going home better prepared to tackle challenges on away tours.

"We turned up knowing it's a tough place to win series and games over here," said Cummins.

"So to come away with a series draw, the same team that won last week. It might be a reality check that it's tough playing away from home. And (the loss) makes for more learning than after a win."

Nathan Lyon lived up to his billing as the lead spinner and starred with a match haul of nine wickets in the first Test.

Marnus Labuschagne, with his 149 series runs, second only to

I think half our batting lineup and half our bowling lineup hasn't played a lot over here in the sub-continent. So the experience on these two vastly different wickets, I think we got a lot of lessons out of it to take to India next year

PAT CUMMINS
Australia skipper

Smith's 151, and Cameron Green stood out on the Australian batting front on their first tour to Sri Lanka.

Cummins said taking tough calls like keeping out premier pace bowler Josh Hazlewood to get the right balance of the team was key on sub-continent pitches.

"You see that with the bowlers, someone like Joshy Hazlewood sitting on the bench. Glenn Maxwell was a conversation around his batting for this game," said Cummins.

"The challenge with playing in Asia is unless you give people a go, you don't know how someone like a Greeny can come out and show he's up to the task. Others might take a bit longer. So I think it's striking that balance." — AFP

Karunaratne praises Chandimal as Sri Lanka turn to Pakistan

GALLE, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka skipper Dimuth Karunaratne on Monday said Dinesh Chandimal's double century in their series-levelling Test win over Australia was a good sign ahead of a tougher challenge against Pakistan.

Chandimal hit an unbeaten 206 in Sri Lanka's thrashing of the tourists by an innings and 39 runs in the second Test in Galle to end the series level at 1-1.

Debutant spinner Prabhat Jayasuriya took a match haul of 12 wickets to bundle out Australia for 151 in the final session of day four.

But it was Chandimal who set up victory with a batting assault to reach his maiden double ton with a four and two sixes off Mitchell Starc as Sri Lanka posted 554 all out.

"I told Chandi to come up with a big knock. Last few years he was not very successful," Karunaratne said of his senior batsman, who has been in and out of the national side.

"When your senior player gives a knock like that, as captain it makes things easy for me. Angelo (Mathews) can fail, I can fail but I know that someone will fire for us. That's a good sign for series that's ahead."

Sri Lanka next host Pakistan, who are already in the island nation playing a practice game, for two Tests starting on Saturday in Galle. Sri Lanka's big win gives them confidence ahead of the opener but Chandimal said Pakistan would be a stronger force than the Aussies, with their ability to handle spinners better.

"Pakistan is a strong side, a brilliant team," said Karunaratne. "I think it will be more challenging than Australia. They play spin well."

Skipper Babar Azam has been in top form, scoring consistently including a 196 against Australia at home in March.

Opener Imam-ul-Haq has also been among the runs and Pakistan have bolstered their bowling attack by bringing veteran spinner Yasir Shah back into the team. — AFP



Sri Lanka's Dinesh Chandimal plays a shot during the fourth day of the second Test. — AFP

Best for the game of golf if I win The Open, says McIlroy

ST ANDREWS, Scotland: Rory McIlroy believes it would be best for the game of golf if he were to win The 150th Open but said on Tuesday he would not begrudge a player from the rebel LIV Invitational Series if they were to claim the Claret Jug.

The image of a golfer from the breakaway circuit hoisting the treasured trophy in the Sunday twilight at the Home of Golf would be a powerful one and a marketing coup for the LIV Series which has branded itself as the new era for golf.

Despite a steady exodus of high-profile members, including major winners Phil Mickelson, Dustin Johnson and Brooks Koepka to the controversial Saudi-back venture, the PGA and DP Tours have boasted their tournament fields remain the best the sport can offer.

That claim would suffer if a player from the LIV Series were to walk away with golf's most famous trophy.

"Selfishly, for me, yes, I think it would be better for the game," McIlroy told reporters. "But at the end of the day, everyone that's here has the same opportunity to go out there and try to win a Claret Jug, regardless of what Tour they play on or whatever that is."

"I'm not going to begrudge anyone if they win the Claret Jug and they play on a different Tour than I play."

McIlroy has been one of the PGA Tour's most vocal supporters and one of the golf's in form players coming into The Open



Northern Ireland's Rory McIlroy during a press conference. — Reuters

making the Northern Irishman the hot betting favourite and potentially the ideal champion.

The four-times major winner has not been shy about sharing his opinions about the LIV Series taking shots at some of those who have jumped to the big-money circuit and CEO Greg Norman, a twice Open champion who has been told by organisers the Royal & Ancient to stay away so as not to distract from the 150th anniversary celebrations.

With two wins this season and top 10 finishes at the three majors, including a runner-up result at the Masters, McIlroy is also seen as the man to beat at St. Andrews.

"I'm playing well. I'm in good form," he said. "My confidence in my game is as high as it's been in quite a while. "I can't go in here thinking that this might be my time. I just have to go out and play a really good tournament."

"To hear your name and winner of the gold medal, Champion Golfer of the Year, it's what dreams are made of."

— Reuters

ENGLAND SET EURO RECORD IN EIGHT-GOAL ROUT OF NORWAY

BRIGHTON, UK: England recorded the biggest win in European Championship history as Beth Mead's hat-trick inspired an 8-0 demolition of Norway that booked the hosts' quarter-final place on Monday.

Sarina Wiegman's side scored six in the first half on route to smashing their own women's Euro record margin of victory set when they beat Scotland 6-0 in 2017.

No team, either male or female, had ever scored eight at a European Championship until England's incredible goal-spree against the overwhelmed Norwegians in Brighton.

Georgia Stanway's 12th-minute penalty opened the floodgates and Lauren Hemp struck three minutes later.

Ellen White and Mead both netted twice in the first half to leave Norway reeling.

Underling their status as leading contenders to win the tournament on home soil, England showed no mercy after the interval.

Alessia Russo bagged the record-breaking seventh goal and Mead completed her hat-trick to cap an astonishing performance from the Lionesses.

England's win guaranteed they will finish top of Group A with one match still to play.

They face Northern Ireland in Southampton on Friday in a dead rubber before returning to Brighton a week on Wednesday to play the runners-up in Group B, which features Germany and Spain, in the quarterfinals.

A crowd of 28,847 lapped up the blistering display, chanting "football's coming home" as England's unbeaten run under Wiegman extended to a 16th match including 14 victories.

"It was a very special night. We didn't expect to make such a big win but we played really well. We really exploited their weaknesses and we're really happy, but at the same time it's just one game," Wiegman said.

"What's going on here? That was going through my mind. Norway didn't have the answers. We created chances, scored goals and it was very enjoyable to watch.

"We showed how good we are. When we go through we'll get tested at a higher level. We need to do better every game."

Mead added: "I'm really enjoying my football, I love being part of this team. Honestly, it's an incredible feeling to feel how I do right now.

"The girls need to enjoy this



England's Beth Mead in action with Norway's Julie Blakstad. – Reuters



England's striker Alessia Russo (R) celebrates scoring the team's seventh goal. – AFP

No team, either male or female, had ever scored eight at a European Championship until England's incredible goal-spree against the overwhelmed Norwegians in Brighton

one. These are the moments we need to enjoy."

LETHAL MEAD

Northern Ireland, who lost 2-0 against Austria earlier on Monday, have now been eliminated.

Third placed Norway, expected to be among the title contenders, and second placed Austria both have three points after two games.

They will meet on Friday in a shoot-out to decide the other quarterfinal qualifier from the group.

England had opened their campaign with last week's 1-0 win over Austria at Old Trafford.

But that tense tie was a far cry from the barrage of goals that rained down on Norway.

Stanway fired her spot-kick past Guro Pettersen after White was fouled by Maria Thorisdottir.

Three minutes later, England scored again when Mead's cross was flicked home by Hemp, with the goal given via a VAR check after the flag had initially gone up for offside.

White took advantage of sloppy play by Thorisdottir in the 29th minute, seizing possession, advancing into the box and slotting home. Mead was next to get in on the act with a quickfire double, heading in from Hemp's cross in the 34th minute, then shooting beyond Pettersen in the 38th.

Three minutes after that, White took her record haul of goals for the Lionesses to 52, converting at the far post as she met Fran Kirby's delivery. Russo made it seven in the 66th minute, heading in Lucy Bronze's cross, before the lethal Mead produced a simple finish to claim her fourth goal of the tournament and cap a remarkable evening.

— AFP

Former Benfica coach Rui Vitoria takes over Egypt team

CAIRO: Egypt has named Rui Vitoria, formerly of Portugal's Benfica, as the coach for its national team after Ehab Galal was sacked, according to a statement on Tuesday.

"The Egyptian Football Association has reached a final deal with Portuguese Rui Vitoria to lead the Egyptian national team for the next four years," the association wrote on Twitter.

Egyptian media reports said the Portuguese coach, who led Benfica to the Primeira Liga title in 2016 and 2017, would earn 2.4 million

euros annually under the contract.

Former coach Galal was dismissed on June 16 after the Pharaohs slipped to a shock 2-0 defeat by Ethiopia in the qualifiers for the upcoming African Cup of Nations.

His stint lasted a mere two months after taking over from Carlos Queiroz who led Egypt to the AFCON final which they lost to Senegal in February.

Egypt lost to Senegal again under Queiroz in African play-off for a place at this year's World Cup in Qatar.



In this file photo taken on August 6, 2019 Nassr FC's coach Rui Vitoria gestures during a AFC Champions league play-off match. – AFP

RODRI SIGNS NEW CONTRACT WITH CITY

Manchester City's Spanish international midfielder Rodri has signed a new contract with the Premier League champions which will keep him tied to the club until 2027.

The three year extension follows City bringing in England midfielder Calvin Phillips into the centre of midfield to replace veteran Fernandinho who left the club.

The 26-year-old Rodri joined City in 2019 from Atletico Madrid

in a deal worth around 50 million pounds (\$59.15 million) and has won two Premier League titles.

"We have been very successful since I came here, which is something that makes me very proud. But to be honest, that success has made me even more hungry. Once you start winning big titles, you don't want to stop," he told the club's website.

"City, I feel, offers me the best chance of winning trophies and that's why I am so pleased to be staying here for longer," he added.

— AFP/Reuters



New research vindicates Oman's foray into global alternative foods industry



Croatia's Finance Minister Marko Primorac, European Commissioner vice president Valdis Dombrovskis, President of European Central Bank Christine Lagarde and European Commissioner for Economy Paolo Gentiloni pose with a model of a Euro coin after a signing ceremony on the adoption of the euro by Croatia in Brussels. – Reuters

EU gives Croatia green light to join euro in 2023

BRUSSELS: EU finance ministers on Tuesday gave Croatia the final green light to adopt the euro single currency on January 1, 2023.

"I would like to congratulate my counterpart, Zdravko Maric, and the whole of Croatia for becoming the 20th country to join the euro area," said Zbynek Stanjura, the finance minister of the Czech Republic, which holds the EU's rotating presidency.

Croatia's switch from the kuna to the euro in 2023 will come less than a decade after the former Yugoslav republic joined the EU and will set a new milestone in the bloc's further integration.

"This is a time for celebration... and an act of conviction," said Christine Lagarde, the head of the European Central Bank at a signing ceremony in Brussels.

"The whole of Croatia decided and was convinced of the value of joining the euro and the euro area," she added. In adopting the legal texts necessary for the historic move, the ministers officially set the euro at 7.53450 Croatian kuna.

The newest member joins the group at a difficult moment with the euro hovering close to parity with the US dollar, a symptom of a looming cost-of-living crisis in the eurozone economy.

"We're all facing very strong challenges these days, but obviously with coordinated policies and measures I think we can cope with these challenges," said Maric. To join the euro, Croatia met the strict conditions, including keeping inflation in the same range as its EU peers, as well as embracing sound public spending.

Croatia expressed willingness to adopt the single currency upon joining the EU in 2013, and the decision to allow Zagreb's entry comes as the euro has just celebrated its 20th anniversary.

On January 1, 2002, millions of Europeans in 12 countries gave up the lira, franc, deutsche mark and drachma for euro bills and coins.

They have since been joined by seven other countries: Slovenia in 2007, Cyprus and Malta in 2008, Slovakia in 2009, Estonia in 2011, Latvia in 2014 and finally Lithuania in 2015.

Bulgaria is the next country in line to join the euro, and has stated its willingness to adopt it as of January 1, 2024.

However, eurozone members are worried about the long-term stability of the Bulgarian economy and Sofia has yet to garner political support as Croatia. — AFP

Euro on the brink of breaching parity as stocks slide again

LONDON: The euro sank to within a whisker of parity with the dollar on Tuesday and stock markets fell as the prospect of further central bank tightening and worries about the health of economies worldwide unnerved investors.

The dollar's role as the safe-haven go-to currency for investors worried about the economic outlook has been burnished in recent weeks, with the US currency roaring to two-decade highs against multiple currencies.

The euro has been particularly vulnerable given the impact of an ongoing spike in natural gas prices on the regional economy and the war in neighbouring Ukraine, and with the European Central Bank behind rivals in raising interest rates.

The single currency had dropped to a low of \$1.00005 by 1030 GMT, its weakest since December 2002. It was last at \$1.0011, down 0.3 per cent on the day.

The dollar index gained 0.3 per cent to as high as 108.56, while sterling hit another two-year low and the yen was not far off its weakest in more than two decades.

"There doesn't seem to be a lot of support for euro at this point," said Sarah Hewin, senior economist at Standard Chartered. "It does not just relate to gas prices but to what seems to be a split within the ECB over how far they raise rates."

Business morale is also deteriorating in the euro zone with more worried about a recession. German investor sentiment fell sharply in July, according to a widely watched economic sentiment index published on Tuesday.

The focus for this week will be macro data including US consumer inflation on Wednesday, and comments from Federal Reserve officials as investors look for clues on the outcome of the Fed's upcoming policy meeting before the pre-meet blackout period.

A high inflation reading would add pressure for the Fed to step up its already aggressive pace of interest rate increases.

In equity markets, the Euro STOXX fell 0.3 per cent, while Germany's DAX was off 0.8 per cent and Britain's FTSE 100 was down



Woman holds US dollar banknotes in front of Euro banknotes in this illustration. – Reuters

Euro-dollar parity for first time since 2002



Source: Bloomberg, closing prices except for July 12, 2022



0.35 per cent.

US futures markets also pointed to a weaker open.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan fell 1.21 per cent to its lowest level in two years, while Japan's Nikkei lost 1.77 per cent.

Also high on investors' list of worries is the fact that a growing number of Chinese cities, including the commercial hub Shanghai, are adopting fresh

Covid-19 curbs from this week to rein in new infections after finding a highly transmissible Omicron subvariant.

The surging cost of energy in Europe is also a major fear as the biggest single pipeline carrying Russian natural gas to Germany entered annual maintenance, with flows expected to stop for 10 days.

Investors are concerned the shutdown might be extended because of the war in Ukraine,

restricting European gas supply further and tipping the struggling euro zone economy into recession.

The yield on benchmark 10-year Treasury notes was at 2.93 per cent, having dropped back below 3 per cent overnight as investors bought safe-haven Treasuries amid a sell-off on Wall Street.

Growth fears were also weighing on oil, despite concerns about tight supply.

— Reuters

Nigerian businesses turn to solar as diesel costs bite

LAGOS: Nigeria's solar companies are seeing a surge in demand for mini-grids and equipment as businesses in Africa's biggest oil producer look for alternative power sources after the cost of diesel soared locally due to rising global oil prices.

Supply constraints could, however, hamper their ability to capitalise on the trend, with some saying they have begun to turn away customers because they are unable to meet demand.

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy with a population of more than 200 million people, has installed electricity capacity of 12,500 megawatts but the national grid only provides 4,000 MW at peak, leaving businesses and citizens heavily reliant on diesel-powered generators.

The price of diesel, not

Solar power adoption estimated at below 2 per cent as rising diesel costs eating into company margins

subsidised like petrol, has nearly tripled to 800 naira a litre. Most of that increase came in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"There has been an increased growth in demand (for solar), I think really driven by the spike in diesel prices this year," Victor Ezenwoko, Daystar Power chief commercial officer said.

The Energy Commission of Nigeria says the country spends \$22 billion annually to fuel generators.

Solar power adoption is estimated at below 2 per cent and some businesses perceive it



A technician works on solar power panels at the Atlantic Shrimpers farm in Badagry, Lagos. – Reuters

as unsuitable for large-scale use, industry executives said.

A study earlier this year by Boston Consulting Group and All-On, a Shell-funded firm, said

Nigeria's installed photovoltaic solar panel per capita amounted to 1 watt compared to an average 8 watts in similar emerging markets like South Africa.

That is changing as energy costs eat into company margins, forcing businesses to actively consider solar, a clean form of energy, said Prince Ojeabulu, CEO at Rensource Energy.

In 2021, Rensource installed under a megawatt of solar panels but it is now constructing 6 MW plants.

"By the end of the year, going by the trend that we see so far, we should have 12 MW of solar installations operational across Nigeria, or even more," he said.

A Ministry of Power official said there was an increase this year of approved solar mini grids serving industrial users but did not give details.

But global supply chain disruptions caused by Covid-19 lockdowns in China this year and the war in Ukraine are tampering

the optimism for growth. Delivery times for some equipment has risen from three months to as long as nine months.

"We could install 60 MW this year if we had the equipment. We have even started turning down customers...we have become more choosy with whom we work (with)," said Daystar CEO and co-founder Jasper Graf von Hardenberg.

Local financing has been difficult to access too, executives said, but money is flowing in from overseas development financial institutions looking to invest in businesses focusing on green energy.

Demand has been so strong for Arnergy solar that it has done more connections in the first half of 2022 than the whole of last year, said Sinmi Akinsanmi, vice president for strategy and business operations. — AFP



Stagflation is main downside risk for global economy



LAN HA

The global economy is expected to see a sharp slowdown in 2022, while the risk of stagflation — a period of economic stagnation and high inflation — looms larger amid high and volatile commodity prices, significant geopolitical tensions and slower growth in China. While the US and the Eurozone economies are facing high stagflation risks, developing and emerging markets could be hit hard if the global economy enters a stagflation era. Euromonitor International's new Global Stagflation macroeconomic scenario maps out the possible outcome of global stagflation on major economies.

Rising uncertainty, higher energy prices and worsening supply conditions could trigger global stagflation

Euromonitor International's global stagflation scenario is based on the assumption that worse-than-expected global negative spillovers from the war in Ukraine through uncertainty, confidence and supply constraints lead to stagnant global economic growth combined with high inflation.

If cuts in Russian energy exports to advanced economies are stronger and more abrupt, and an energy decoupling from Russia is more difficult than expected, supply constraints will worsen,

leading to higher energy price increases. An intensification of the war and geopolitical conflicts would also cause global private sector confidence to decline significantly and financial risk premia increase substantially relative to the baseline forecast.

Under the global stagflation scenario, global real GDP growth would be 0.5-2.0 percentage points below the baseline forecast and fall to 0.7-2.5 per cent in 2022, followed by a figure of between -1.3 per cent and 1.0 per cent in 2023. Global inflation would rise to 7.2-9.4 per cent in 2022 and 5.7-8.3 per cent in 2023.

Given its impact on global real GDP growth, global stagflation is now identified as the main downside risk to the global economy, followed by a resurgence of the Covid-19 pandemic. This scenario is assigned a 22-32 per cent probability over a one-year horizon.

The Eurozone and US threatened by stagflation risk

The Eurozone is highly vulnerable to the negative spillovers from the war in Ukraine, due to its high dependence on Russian energy imports, relatively high exposure to exports to Russia and the greater uncertainty from the risks of the war escalating into a wider European conflict.

In 2021, Russia supplied around 40 per cent of Europe's oil and gas, according to the International Energy Agency. A more abrupt cut-off of Russian energy supplies would force energy rationing in the EU, leading to higher energy price increases and significantly undermining economic activity.

In the global stagflation scenario, significantly higher financial risk premia and lower



private sector confidence relative to the baseline scenario would reduce Eurozone real GDP growth towards 1.5 per cent in 2022 (1.0 percentage point lower than baseline forecast), followed by an economic contraction of around 0.9 per cent in 2023.

For the US, the risk of stagflation has also increased substantially. Although the US economy continues to be supported by a strong labour market and a large oil and gas sector, lingering supply constraints and negative spillovers from the war in Ukraine continue to send food and energy prices higher, dampening private sector confidence.

Growth in US consumer price inflation moderated slightly in April, but rose again in May 2022 to reach 8.6 per cent, the highest level

in 40 years. Alongside fading pent-up demand, consumer confidence is declining (US consumer sentiment index in May 2022 was lower than at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic).

As the US Federal Reserve has speeded up interest rate increases recently, borrowing costs are expected to increase, further constraining consumer spending and business investment.

If uncertainty about the global economic and geopolitical outlook rises and global energy and food supply cuts worsen due to more severe supply chain issues, inflation in the US could accelerate further in 2022-2023 and the economy could experience a contraction in 2023. In the global stagflation scenario, US real GDP growth forecasts could be lower by 1.0 and

2.4 percentage points relative to the baseline forecasts for 2022 and 2023 respectively.

Global stagflation would hit emerging and developing markets hard

Global stagflation could severely affect the growth outlook for emerging and developing countries which are dependent on external demand and supply. A sharp slowdown or recession in the US and the Eurozone would lead to lower demand for exports from China, undermining the country's economic activities and growth.

For commodity-exporting countries like Brazil and Argentina, the impact of weakening global demand and high inflation would more than offset any near-term gain from higher energy and commodities prices.

Tightening global financial conditions could have potentially harmful consequences on highly indebted developing and emerging markets across Latin America and Africa.

Under the global stagflation scenario, real GDP growth for emerging and developing markets is forecast to fall to 1.9 per cent in 2022 and 0.3 per cent in 2023, compared to 3.1 per cent and 4.0 per cent in the baseline forecasts respectively.

With economic uncertainty on the rise, looking at alternative economic scenarios would help businesses to examine risks and vulnerabilities of economies in order to support critical decision-making.

[Lan Ha is Head of Economics at Euromonitor International]

Gasping for gas: Tensions over Russian energy intensify



STÉPHANE MONIER

Europe is facing another gas crunch, and is primed for more pain with Russian supply disruptions ahead. The energy crisis, and Western efforts to cap Russian gas and oil revenues, are fanning rising recessionary fears, and countries are seeking alternative sources. Such fears have recently taken the edge off commodity prices. In a supply-constrained market, we see little room for them to fall further.

Russian gas supplies to Germany fell by more than 40 per cent in June compared with May. They are about to pause altogether. The Nord Stream 1 pipeline will undergo routine annual maintenance starting on July 11. Germany worries that supplies will not resume as scheduled ten days later.

Russian pipeline flows are needed to fill the continent's reserves over the summer months. As Moscow cuts the flow of gas piped to Europe, the continent is now receiving 53 per cent less gas from Russia than it averaged before the start of the war, estimates JP Morgan.

Supply disruptions could see

the continent enter winter — when heating demand peaks — with storage levels well below the 80 per cent it targets. European wholesale gas prices have more than doubled since the start of June. Rationing could be imposed. That may be enough to tip the continent into recession.

The Ukraine war is redrawing the world's energy networks. The G7 is discussing ways to cap Russian oil and gas prices. Europe wants to wean itself off Russian gas dependence and has slashed imports from 40 per cent of total supplies, to 24 per cent.

Finding alternative supplies short-term is difficult, and building out renewable capacity takes time. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the US has increased liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments to Europe, nearly tripling its share since 2021 to 15 per cent of total supplies in May.

But US capacity was hit last month by a fire at a plant in Texas. Other sources of LNG are in hot demand, and Europe's import terminals are already working at capacity.

As China's economy reopens, it will increasingly compete with Europe for shipments.

Gas shortages will not be felt evenly across the continent. Germany, Italy and Finland are among the most dependent on Russian imports; the Netherlands, Romania and Ireland are less affected. Germany has no domestic LNG



terminals. It plans to build two facilities and is also being forced to halt coal-fired power station closures.

Belgium has postponed a plan to phase out nuclear energy. Gas trade between countries has helped cushion past shocks. Now there are fears nationalism could triumph: the UK speaks of cutting off supplies to Europe in an emergency. Fertiliser, chemical, steel and aluminium makers are worried; authorities plan to prioritise supply to households, hospitals and schools in an emergency.

Bad news on inflation, again. The gas supply squeeze

could increase inflationary pressures. Consumer prices in the eurozone rose by a record 8.1 per cent in May, compared with a year earlier, and are expected to have reached 8.6 per cent in June, according to the European Commission. It calculates that energy prices will account for almost 42 per cent of the increase.

High energy prices are already starting to temper demand, even in the US. We estimate that the prolonged war in Ukraine and related supply disruptions will shave 1 per cent off global growth this year, although eurozone growth could remain

a solid 2.5 per cent, following a post-pandemic rebound.

Should supply from Nord Stream 1 fail to restart, it would certainly inflict further grave economic damage. Here, it is worth noting, however, that Russia has few replacement buyers for its piped gas, albeit some capacity to increase Chinese flow, since its pipelines mostly point west.

Essential oil

Oil prices — a bellwether of global growth — have fallen 15 per cent since an 8 June peak, as markets increasingly price in the risk of a US and European recession in 2023. What will

happen in coming months? Supply looks constrained. Strategic reserve releases are helping short-term but should fade in the third quarter.

Although historically, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) has managed demand and a series of supply shocks well, today it has limited capacity to expand production. Many of its members are hard-pressed to meet current output targets. US shale is unlikely to make up the shortfall. The industry has still not returned to pre-Covid production levels and refining facilities are struggling.

Our analysis also suggests it would take a major US recession to offset the loss of Russian supply. As long as we remain in a mild US recession scenario (our base case for 2023), demand should not fall enough to seriously affect the oil market balance.

China's reopening will help boost demand.

EU travel has now returned to pre-pandemic levels and China's is taking off, although mobility indicators in the US and Europe have softened in recent weeks. As long as we avoid a severe recession, we expect oil to continue to trade above \$100 per barrel for the rest of 2022 before gradually falling in 2023.

(Stéphane Monier is Chief Investment Officer of Banque Lombard Odier & Cie SA)

Argentina to honour economic goals agreed with IMF

Argentina's new economy minister said the country would honour fiscal deficit goals and other commitments made under a deal struck with the IMF to refinance a debt of some \$44 billion.

Under the agreement negotiated by Silvina Batakis' predecessor Martin Guzman, who resigned suddenly nine days ago, Argentina committed to reducing its fiscal deficit from 3.0 per cent of GDP last year to 2.5 per cent in 2022, 1.9 per cent in 2023 and 0.9 per cent in 2024.

"The goals agreed with the IMF are maintained," Batakis said in Buenos Aires at her first press conference since taking office a week ago.

"It is an agreement we signed as a state and we must comply."

In 2018, under the government of conservative President Mauricio Macri, the International Monetary Fund granted its biggest-ever loan of \$57 billion to Argentina.

The country received \$44 billion of that amount and Macri's successor Alberto Fernandez refused to accept the rest.

As the country struggled to repay its debt, a refinancing agreement was reached this year after protracted negotiations.

Guzman resigned suddenly on July 2 amid a power struggle between Argentina's president and vice president, sparking fresh uncertainty in Latin America's third largest economy.

The peso fell sharply last Monday against the US dollar after Batakis' appointment.

On Monday, the 53-year-old said there was a need to "give order and balance to the public finances," and vowed that "we will not spend more than we have."

Among her proposals: to reduce energy subsidies, which in 2021 amounted to \$11 billion or 2.3 per cent of GDP, by applying a sliding scale to prices for gas and electricity based on income.

In 2020, the Argentine economy contracted 9.9 per cent before rebounding the following year by 10.3 per cent. For this year, the IMF predicts growth of 4.0 per cent.

At the time the refinancing agreement was reached, Argentina's inflation was projected to reach 52 per cent in 2022 — already one of the highest in the world.

Since then, the war in Ukraine has sent prices soaring worldwide, and Argentina marked year-on-year inflation of 60 per cent in May.

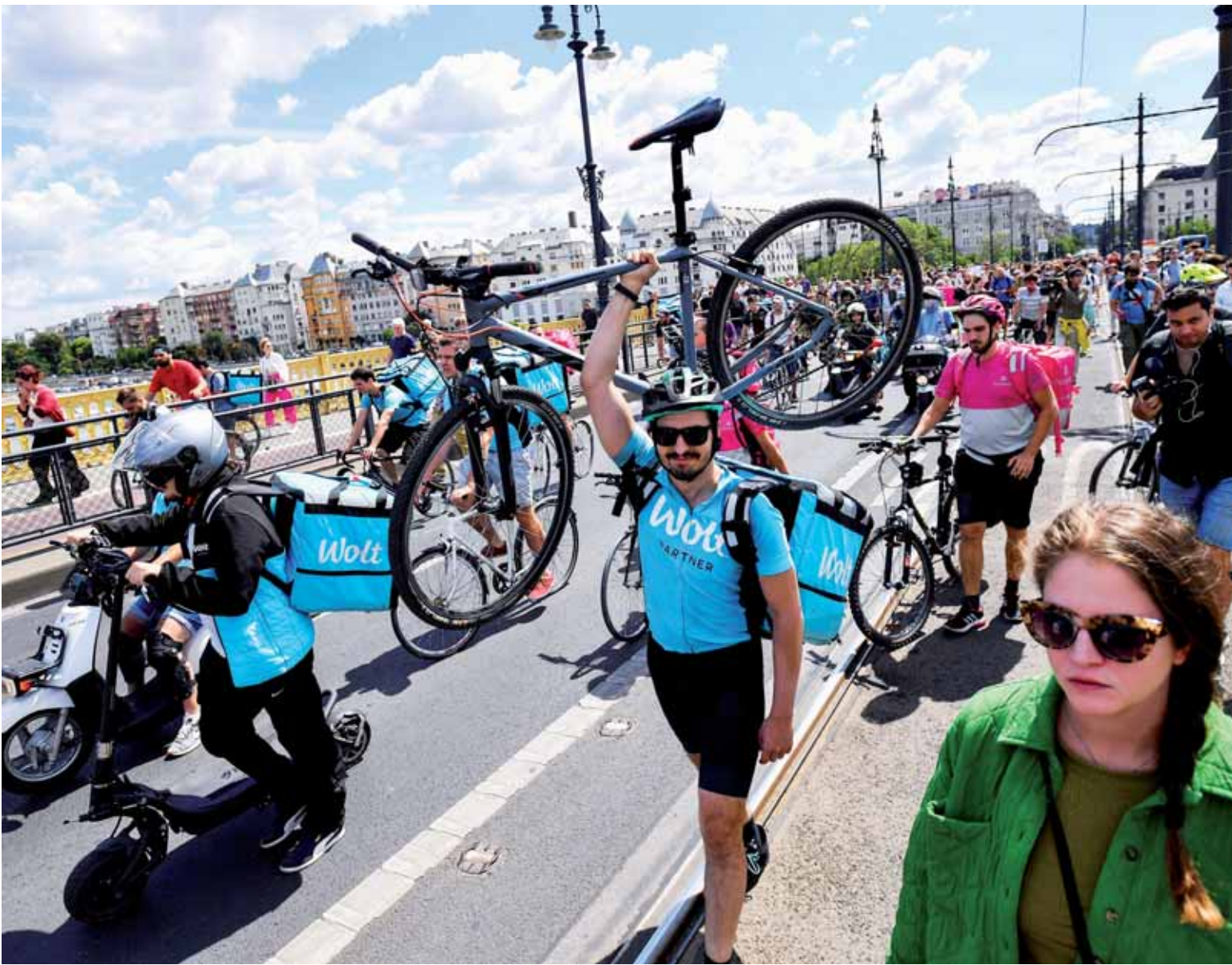
"The agreement was signed before the rise in global inflation," said Batakis, adding a new estimate for 2022 was being compiled.

"It is a methodological issue we are evaluating, not a shifting of the goal," she insisted.

A survey by Argentina's central bank of projections for 2022 inflation put the rate at some 76 per cent. — AFP

The goals agreed with the IMF are maintained. It is an agreement we signed as a state and we must comply

SILVINA BATAKIS



PROTEST AGAINST TAX

People take part in a protest against a move by the Hungarian government to tighten a favourable tax rate offered to small businesses in Budapest, Hungary. — Reuters

UK sanctions boss warns of pushback



ANDY JALIL
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THE COMING WAVE OF LITIGATION IS SET TO THRUST THE ROLE OF LONDON'S LEGAL PROFESSION INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AGAIN AFTER ATTRACTING CONTROVERSY FOR ITS HISTORIC TIES WITH RUSSIAN OLIGARCHS

London's legal firms are set to be put into the spotlight as sanctions director predicts a great deal of Russia litigation.

The man behind the UK's sanctions regime is expecting significant legal challenges as the government's crackdown on Russia's war with Ukraine continues. The director of the Office of Financial Sanctions Implementations (OFSI), Giles Thomson, said that litigation was already starting to filter through.

His team was "expecting to come up against further litigation in the future" as it takes on more enforcement cases, he added. "I think we very much see it as part of what we do," Thomson told MPs on the Treasury Committee. "We have had legal challenges based on what we have done to date already."

The coming wave of litigation is set to thrust the role of London's legal profession into the spotlight again after attracting controversy for its historic ties with Russian oligarchs. Some of London's law firms have seen their workload increase in the wake of the sanctions.

"At the beginning of the year sanctions was not at all part of the strategy, but if a big bill comes in the regulated space that's where we'll go," one financial regulation

partner, whose firm has already taken on an extra paralegal and associates in part because of the additional work, said last month.

But the capital's legal profession has also seen its reputation attacked for working with oligarchs in the region. Figures such as hedge fund founder Bill Browder and US representative Steve Cohen called on governments to hit the "enablers" of President Vladimir Putin's regime with punishments such as visa bans.

London law firm partners and other financial district insiders have slammed the attack as "dangerous" and "populist posturing". Thomson said court cases were more likely to surround sanctions on larger sums, resulting in even higher profile cases to come. However, he was confident OFSI — which is responsible for communication, implementing and enforcing the UK's sanctions regime — was up to the task of defending the lawsuits.

"We have a function within the team ready to deal with that litigation and we're ably supported by legal advisers within the Treasury and government," he said. "The government has a large amount of experience within the legal teams of dealing with this sort of thing," he added. Other bodies such as the Financial Conduct

Authority and HMRC are also weighing in with their expertise, he said.

Thomson said last month his office had to be "ruthless" in what it prioritised in the wake of a deluge of Russian sanctions that placed significant pressure on resources. The workload had dropped from the "utter craziness" at the start of the conflict, but was still "fairly relentless" he said. The number of Russian entities sanctioned in two months after the start of the war had reached more than 1,100, he said — nearly four times the number that was sanctioned over an entire year between April 2020 and March 2021.

Speaking to the MPs on June 22, Thomson described the response to Russia's aggression in Ukraine as "one of the most if not the most extraordinary package of sanctions ever implemented, both in its scale, volume, speed and complexity".

"There have been a huge volume of enquiries and we've not been able to answer all of those to the standard we would have wanted," he acknowledged. "It's been hard work, there's no denying that," he told the lawmakers, but said OFSI had already nearly doubled its team from 45 to 70 people since the start of the Russia crisis.

(The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK)

How Abe changed Japan



BILL EMMOTT
The writer is a former editor-in-chief of The Economist, is Co-Director of the Global Commission for Post-Pandemic Policy

Former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo's assassination at an election campaign event in Nara, Japan, is both shocking and puzzling. It is shocking because Japan has known almost no political violence for at least a half-century, and because gun ownership in the country is tightly controlled. It is puzzling because Abe, having stepped down as prime minister in 2020, had no formal government role; yet the killing was plainly a political act.

Abe's death is unlikely to have any impact on the July 10 elections for Japan's House of Councillors

(the upper and therefore junior legislative chamber), which the ruling Liberal Democratic Party was already expected to win comfortably. The tragic loss of the LDP's former leader and prime minister may add some sympathy votes by increasing turnout, but it has primarily astonished and bewildered a country that is completely unaccustomed to such violence.

Abe's legacy from his record-setting tenure as prime minister — which was divided between an unsuccessful year in 2006-07, followed by a triumphal return for seven years from 2012 to 2020 — is more notable for its effects

on Japanese foreign and security policy than on domestic affairs.

To be sure, Abe was a good salesman for his economic-policy agenda, which he successfully promoted under the banner of "Abenomics"; but, in the end, it was his foreign policy, not his economic programme, that was transformative.

Abe brought clarity, strength of purpose, and — by dint of his longevity in office — credibility to Japanese foreign policy. The fact that the term "Indo-Pacific" is now commonly used to describe security and diplomatic strategy in Asia is largely owing to Abe, who took a pre-existing Japanese effort

to build a stronger relationship with India and used it to reframe and extend his country's position both regionally and globally.

That stance was dictated by China's rise and its increasingly assertive rhetoric and actions in and around the South and East China Seas. Under Abe, Japan committed itself to defining a strategic and diplomatic arena that would be harder for China to dominate. Deepening ties with India was part of that strategy, as were Abe's efforts to strengthen Japan's military. He was a leading proponent of proposals to amend the country's constitution so that its military could play a bigger role

alongside that of its key ally, the United States.

Abe was undeniably a nationalist. He originally courted controversy with somewhat revisionist views about Japan's wartime history, especially regarding the hot-button issue of "comfort women" whom the Imperial Japanese Army forced into sexual slavery in occupied countries. Once in office, however, he largely played down his earlier views. Moreover, he built closer and deeper diplomatic relationships across Southeast Asia, improving ties even with the country's prickliest neighbour and former colony, South Korea.

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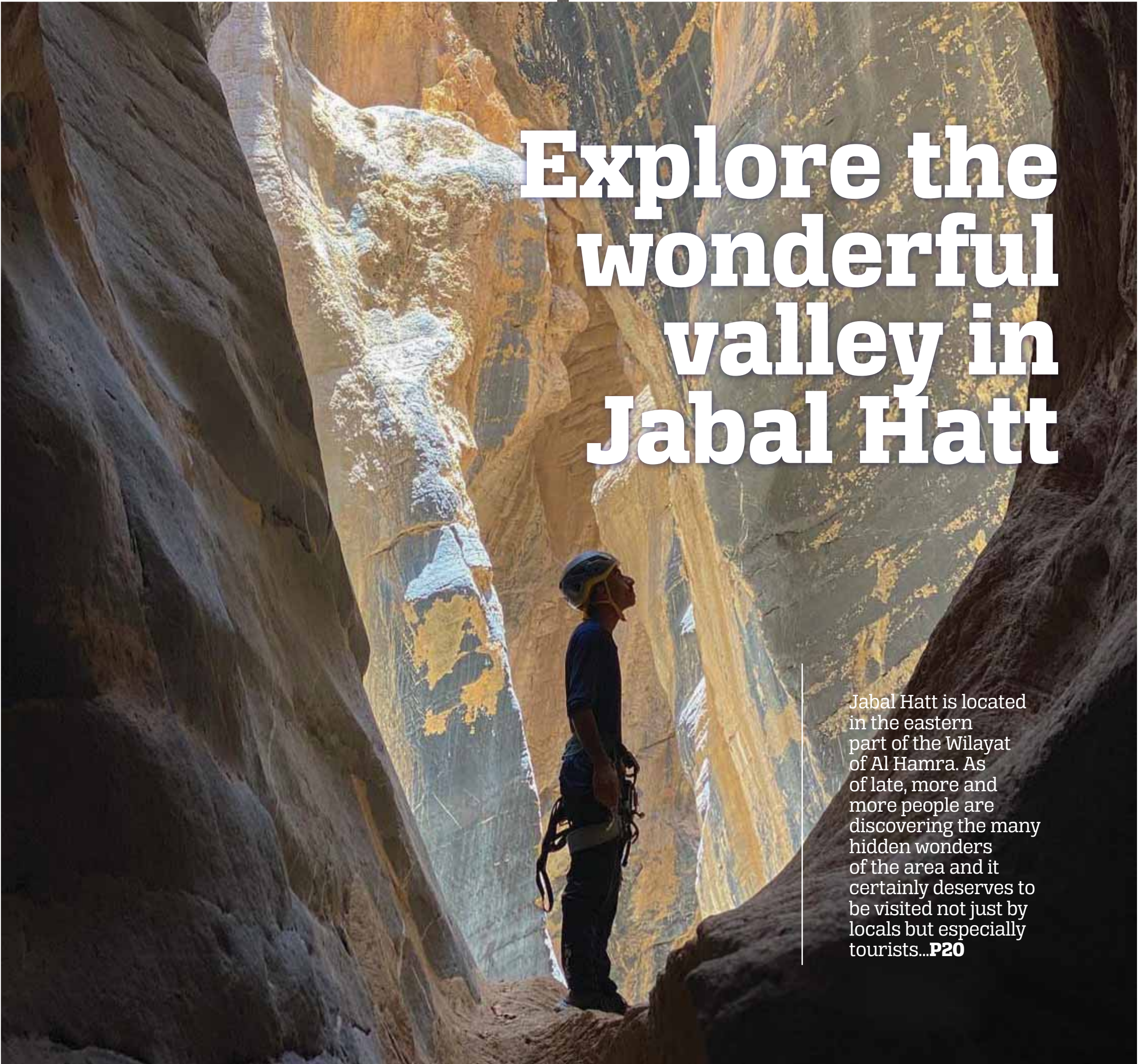
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Explore the wonderful valley in Jabal Hatt

Jabal Hatt is located in the eastern part of the Wilayat of Al Hamra. As of late, more and more people are discovering the many hidden wonders of the area and it certainly deserves to be visited not just by locals but especially tourists...**P20**

Two Art Havens in the Hudson Valley Offer Nature Indoors and Out

Back in 1967, Arte Povera artists in Italy, the radicals of their time, hung out at the Piper Club, a discotheque of, by and for the avant-garde in Turin. During one nocturnal happening, young women danced in tunics made of polyurethane birch logs and ponchos studded with foam rocks to look like riverbeds. Like nature sprites, the dancers gamboled over "nature carpets," rugs crafted of foam by Turinese artist Piero Gilardi. Guests sipped their Camparis

reclining on simulated cabbage patches. In the radical cheek of a disco decked out as a forest glade, Gilardi delivered a serious message, embodying the ecological lesson of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" written a few years before: Chemicals were poisoning the earth. Nature starts in the home. Live with it, respect it, protect it. Now, about 55 years later, in the show "Gilardi: Tappeto-Natura" at the Magazzino Italian Art museum in Cold Spring, New York, two long-legged mannequins dressed in the same tunics surveil more than a half-century of Gilardi's nature carpets, as if looking at a farmers market of produce during a summer of watermelon. Magazzino carries over the same environmental message to another institution just down the road in Garrison, Manitoaga/ The Russel Wright Design Center, an architectural version of Gilardi's nature carpets. Magazzino introduced the Milanese design firm Formafantasma to what is basically a modernist treehouse, where its two principals, Andrea Trimarchi and Simone Farresin, refreshed the timber structure with a subtle placement of its own organic product designs throughout the organic building. In hindsight, given today's environmental crisis, Gilardi's nature carpets and Russel Wright's timber structure, both dating from the 1960s, stand as historically



prescient examples of art with an environmental message — although Gilardi and Wright sounded the same alarm through differing artistic expression: iconoclastic, contemporary sass versus Walden Pond. At Magazzino, Gilardi carved a rough-hewn Technicolour landscape of fruits

and vegetables from the most synthetic industrial materials, polyurethane painted with synthetic pigment. On thick contoured foam beds, he glued sea urchins, pumpkins, corn cobs, grapes, even the occasional armadillo passing through. The "furniture" allowed families to live with the

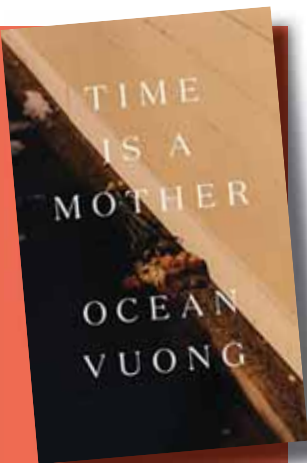
idea of the outdoors in their living rooms, reconnecting life in the city to an increasingly fragile and defensive nature. He was introducing nature into the overindustrialised world that was killing it. Gilardi, now 79 and living in Turin, was intellectually peripatetic, dropping in and out of the art world, pursuing ideas from ecology to digital technology to community-based art. But over a 60-year career, the backbone of his production remained nature carpets, a genre to which he returned in almost every decade, always with an ecological message delivered with puckish delight: vividly coloured, slightly cartoonish, sometimes over-the-top pieces that eschewed the controlling hand of a master. He was a Geppetto, an anti-Michelangelo carving a cheap material incapable of the refinement of a masterwork. He seemed to mock the object as he made it. In 1966, Gilardi already dreamed of reuniting all the carpets in a single space, an idea that curator Elena Re honoured at Magazzino. The nature carpets form a small field, each tile in this artificial but cornucopian paradise charming in its own microcosmic way, some alive with fluorescent greens, some topped with sea gulls planing over patches of ocean. One carpet is attached to the wall on a spindle, as if to say that the carpets are not precious, but sold off the rack by the yard. — **NYT**

READ

TIME IS A MOTHER

BY OCEAN VUONG

Ocean Vuong searches for life among the aftershocks of his mother's death, embodying the paradox of sitting within grief while being determined to survive beyond it.



DINO AUCTION

An art handler looks at a Gorgosaurus Skeleton measuring 10 feet tall (3.04 metres) as it is unveiled at Sotheby's in New York, on July 5, 2022. The Specimen is the highlight of Sotheby's geek week sale series and is estimated at \$5 to 8 million. — **AFP**



AFRICAN SAFARI

A cheetah runs behind a decoy in its enclosure in the African Safari zoo in Plaisance du Touch, near Toulouse southwestern France, during training in the cheetah race to fight against the sedentary lifestyle of big cats. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

AUCTION

Gorgosaurus tipped to fetch \$8m at New York auction



A **SKELETON** of a Gorgosaurus dinosaur is going up for auction for the first time and is expected to fetch between \$5 million and \$8 million, 42,000 newtons compared to 35,000.



Sotheby's said on Tuesday. The auction house will put the specimen, which is 10 feet tall (three metres) and 22 feet long, under the hammer in New York on July 28. Sotheby's described the skeleton as "one of the most valuable dinosaurs to ever appear on the market." The Gorgosaurus roamed the earth approximately 77 million years ago. A typical adult weighed about two tonnes, slightly smaller than its more famous relative, the Tyrannosaurus rex. Paleontologists say it was fiercer and faster than the T-Rex, with a stronger bite of around

2018. The sale will mark the first time that Sotheby's has auctioned a full dinosaur skeleton since it sold Sue the T-Rex in 1997 for \$8.36 million. "All of the other specimens of Gorgosaurus that have been found are in museums," Cassandra Hutton, Sotheby's head of Science and popular culture, told AFP. "This is the only one that you can actually buy so it's an exciting moment, both for private collectors and institutions," she added. Unlike other countries, the United States does not restrict the sale or export of fossils, meaning the skeleton could end up overseas. — **AFP**

DINING



A Lentil Soup With Its Heart in Armenia

For her birthday, my friend Audrey wanted one thing: a lentil soup from Yerevan Market and Cafe, an Armenian spot in the Adams Morgan neighbourhood of Washington, DC. Ethereal yet somehow earthy, it was unlike any lentil soup we'd ever had — orange and slightly tangy. We were left curious about its flavour. It turned out the secret ingredient was apricots, the national fruit of Armenia. Though apricots originated in China, their tie to Armenia is strong. They're botanically known as Prunus armeniaca (or "Armenian plum"). The wood of the tree is used to make the duduk, an ancient Armenian wind instrument still played today. When Armenia gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, its new flag was striped in red, blue and an orange hue that recalls what else but the apricot. "Armenians are very much in love with apricots," said Marina Sarukhanyan, the owner of Silk Apron Catering in Gaithersburg, Maryland, which counts Yerevan among its customers. According to Armenian folklore, apricots were among the fruit that Noah brought on the ark to cultivate

after the floodwaters receded. These most coveted trees are in the Ararat Valley, beneath Mount Ararat — the mountaintop on which the ark supposedly landed. Armenians collect apricots quickly during their short season, to be put to use in pies, breads and punch. Often, the fruit is cut and dried in the sun for fruit leathers, frequently called fruit lavashes, one of the oldest-known snacks. Mostly they're eaten fresh. But possibly the most exquisite, yet simple Armenian dish in which apricots feature is simmered and savory. It was that very soup we tasted: tsirani vosp apur, which is among the modern Armenian dishes Sarukhanyan prepares for her clients, alongside lahmajoun and jingalov hats with 14 different herbs and greens. Traditionally eaten in and around Yerevan, the Armenian capital where Sarukhanyan was born, the soup is prepared with fresh apricots in the summer and dried apricots throughout the year and can be eaten hot or cold. "This contemporary soup is as common today as vegetable soup in other countries," said Sarukhanyan, who came to the United States in

2006. "But Armenians from outside Armenia may not even know this dish." Lentils (red, orange or yellow), tomatoes and sometimes carrots are simmered in vegetable broth, though you could also use chicken broth. Lemon juice lends a punch of acidity. Then, it's drizzled with pomegranate syrup and finished with a few bright red pomegranate seeds, if you have them. But the defining feature of this distinctive soup is, of course, the apricots. "We have the best in the world," Sarukhanyan said.

Tsirani Vosp Apur (Armenian Apricot and Lentil Soup)
By Joan Nathan

This soup is best made with fresh apricots, available at farmers markets and grocery stores for a few precious weeks in the summer. But when fresh are not in season, Marina Sarukhanyan of Silk Apron Catering, who makes it year-round for her customers, suggests using bright-orange unsulfured apricots, not the dark ones. She usually gets hers from Iranian food stores, but you may be able to find them in Middle Eastern, Armenian or Russian shops as well. Make sure to drizzle the soup with tart pomegranate syrup, which contrasts with the apricots in a lovely way. — Joan Nathan

Yield: 4 servings (about 7 1/2 cups)
Total time: 55 minutes, plus 40 minutes' optional soaking

INGREDIENTS:
1 1/2 cups roughly chopped fresh apricots (about 7 ounces, from 2 large or 4 small apricots), or 1 cup sugar-free, unsulfured dried apricots
2 tablespoons avocado or vegetable oil

1 small onion, finely chopped
Kosher salt
1 medium tomato or 1/2 cup cherry tomatoes, chopped
5 to 6 cups vegetable broth
2 cups red, orange or yellow split lentils, rinsed
2 medium carrots, roughly chopped
Freshly ground black pepper
1/2 lemon, juiced, plus more if desired
Pomegranate syrup, for drizzling

METHOD:
1. If using dried apricots, at least 40 minutes before cooking, cut them into quarters, soak in warm water to cover, then drain and set aside. (This can be done up to a day ahead. Cover and refrigerate, then bring to room temperature before using.)
2. Warm the oil in a medium saucepan set over medium-high heat. Add the onion, season with 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook, stirring often, until the onion begins to turn golden at the edges, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato and cook for 5 minutes more, stirring frequently.
3. Pour 5 cups of the vegetable broth into the pot, scraping any stuck-on bits from the bottom, and bring to a boil. Add the lentils, cover, and reduce the heat to maintain a strong simmer. Cook, stirring once or twice, until the lentils are soft, 15 to 20 minutes.
4. Stir in 1 more cup of broth if the soup is too thick, then add the carrots, apricots and 1/2 teaspoon salt, and season with pepper to taste. Increase the heat to bring to a boil again, then reduce the heat and simmer, partly covered and stirring once or twice, for 10 minutes, or until the carrots are as cooked as you'd like.
5. Turn off the heat and stir in the lemon juice, then taste. If it's not sour enough, add a little more, and adjust for salt and pepper.
6. Ladle into bowls and serve warm, with pomegranate syrup drizzled over the top. — **NYT**

art & life

Local Scene

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WEDNESDAY | JULY 13 | 2022

Explore the wonderful valley in Jabal Hatt

By Arwa al Hashimi
Photos by Riyadh al Hinaï

Despite Al Dakhiliyah's harsh and solid rocky environment, it is known to have many wonderful tourist places that include mountains, valleys, springs and many other sites that fit perfectly for relaxation, sightseeing as well as adventure.

This is also due to the mild weather in these places that differs from other areas. That is why such destinations are highly recommended for vacation or even short adventures.

Hatt mountain is located in the eastern part of the Wilayat of Al Hamra, and it is one of the mountain villages located about 36 km from the centre of Al Hamra. It has a very cold weather, which reaches freezing in the winter and moderate in the summer, as it is classified as one of the areas where the camps of Omani youth and foreign tourists are set in both seasons of the year.

As of late, more and more people are discovering the many hidden wonders of the area. Wadi Hatt, for example, has started to become a destination for hardcore adventure lovers because it is a perfect escape character-

ised by refreshing water and panoramic views and wonderful natural lightning. Many adventurers visit it to enjoy different activities like hiking, swimming and mountain descent.

Despite the beauty of the area, not a lot of tourists venture into the place as to reach the village, one would have to conquer steep obstacles. The road, which remained unpaved today, is

Jabal Hatt is of great economic importance as it serves as a conduit between the Wilayat of Al Hamra and the Governorate of South Al Batinah through the mountain road, which extends to the Wilayat of Al Rustaq

also challenging and riddled with dangers that extreme caution and driving expertise are needed to reach the destination safely.

Once one reaches several points of the mountains however, a beautiful panoramic view would mesmerise visitors from the top. The villages in this mountains survive on tilling the soil with agriculture being one of their main source of living. This has lead to the moun-

tain villages to be green whole year round and even from afar, one can tell that the gardens are planted with dates and other trees and crops like onions, garlicks, and other leafy greens used for salads.

When you reach the top of the village in Hatt mountain, you will definitely enjoy seeing some of the landmarks and heights of the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, and you can see the villages and areas of the neighbouring wilayats of Al Hamra and Bahla, as this view is a fertile environment for professional photographers to photograph the mountainous terrain of nature, rich in heights and steep slopes of varying colours and types, especially during the sunset, which adds bright colours to take captivating images.

This site is of great economic importance as it serves as a conduit between the Wilayat of Al Hamra and the Governorate of South Al Batinah through the mountain road, which extends to the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. It has many tourism sites as far as the eye can see. Those sites deserve to be given a great deal of attention to attract more visitors. There we find lush mountain trees such as sidr, acacia, al-'atm and sabbar trees.

