

India demolishes illegal ‘twin towers’

India demolished two residential high-rise buildings outside New Delhi on Sunday, in a dramatic spectacle carried live on television channels after days of excited media build-up. The destruction of the 100-metre-high “Twin Towers” in Noida, home to a concrete forest of similar structures, was also a rare example of India getting tough on corrupt developers and officials. **DETAILS ON P6**



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VINE SOARS TO SECOND VUELTA STAGE TRIUMPH



P13

PROPOSAL FOR INCENTIVES TO POWER 'GREEN' INDUSTRY



P20

FRIENDSHIP THROUGH FLOWERS



■ SALALAH

MANPOWER VITAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Sessions of Working Women's Second Arab Forum, organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization, kicked off in Salalah on Sunday under the theme of “Businesswomen's Future in Digital Economies”. The was opened under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and attended by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour. Shaikh Nasr al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, said “Oman has made progress in labour affairs through a set of strategies which has placed manpower at the centre of development.” **SEE P2**

■ ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN'S SOUTH BRACES FOR DELUGE

Pakistan's flooded southern Sindh province braced for a fresh deluge from swollen rivers in the north as the death toll from this year's monsoon topped 1,000. The mighty Indus River that courses through Pakistan's second-most populous region is fed by dozens of mountain tributaries to the north, but many have burst their banks following record rains and glacier melt. Officials warned torrents of water are expected to reach Sindh in the next few days, adding misery to millions already affected by the floods. **DETAILS ON P6**

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AUSTRALIA'S MINISTER OF EVERYTHING...

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Royal Orders to provide school supplies, nutrition

MUSCAT: Within the context of Royal attention of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to students in government schools from social insurance and low-income families, the Ministry of Finance has endorsed sums to provide school supplies and daily nutrition for students from the two above-mentioned segments.

The provisions will be extended right from the start of the school year in coordination with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan and guard him as a source of pride for this dear homeland. May He grant Oman further progress and prosperity under His Majesty's wise leadership. — **ONA**

2,307 cases of cancer registered in 2019: Report

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 28

Breast cancer is the most common form of cancer among women, while for men it is colorectal cancer, according to the Ministry of Health's National Oman Cancer Registry, which has released the cancer statistics of the Sultanate of Oman for 2019.

The cancer incidence rate was higher among Omani women at 1,158 (55.43 per cent) compared to 931 men (44.57 per cent). Around 124 cases of cancer were recorded among children less than 14 years of age.

The average age at diagnosis is 54 years, which increases among

men to reach 60 years compared to 50 years for women. The total number of diagnosed cases in 2019 were 2,307, which includes nationals and non-nationals. The number of Omanis diagnosed with cancer in 2019 was 2,089, while the number of cancer cases among non-Omanis was 200 and 18 cases of carcinoma in situ.

Cancer was also the third cause of death in hospitals. Diseases related to circulatory system like stroke and heart attack topped the list of deaths in hospitals followed by respiratory diseases. The report revealed the other common cancers among Omani men were that of prostate gland, stomach, lung, trachea/urinary



bladder, and leukaemia, while in females these were thyroid, colon, stomach and uterus.

The data also showed that the crude cancer rate among Omanis is 69.6 per 100,000 men and 87.9

per 100,000 women. According to the standard world population table ASR, the global average indicates 113.6 per 100,000 Omanis and 122.4 per 100,000 Omanis.

Breast cancer cases have reached 350, and 31 per cent were diagnosed in the third and fourth stages.

The National Cancer Registry in Oman began recording cancer cases first as a hospital-based registry in 1985 and then as a population-based registry in 1996. The registry collects and records data for cancer patients from various data sources throughout the Sultanate of Oman. **TURN TO P3**

New pipeline set to supply Oman crude

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO), a subsidiary of OQ Group, on Sunday signed a framework agreement for joint cooperation to develop, build and operate a new pipeline that will be connected to transfer, store and export Oman's crude oil from the Ras Markaz crude oil storage terminal in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The agreement enables expansion in the energy sector. **DETAILS ON P13**

‘Sight to behold’: Tourists flock to Florida for Moon rocket launch

MERRITT ISLAND: Seeing a rocket blast off to the Moon is “a once-in-a-lifetime thing to experience,” says Joanne Bostandji. The 45-year-old has travelled all the way from northern England to Florida with her husband and two children for a space-themed vacation, and they're prepared to make sure they don't miss a second of the action as Nasa's newest and most powerful rocket is scheduled to launch for the first time on Monday.

“The plan is to drive very

early in the morning and get a spot” on Cocoa Beach, she said, not far from the Kennedy Space Center.

“I know it's going be from a far distance, but I still think it's going be a sight to behold,” Bostandji said as the family waited to enter a park dedicated to space exploration.

Between 100,000 and 200,000 visitors are expected to attend the launch of the mission, called Artemis 1, which will propel an empty capsule to the Moon as part



of a test for future crewed flights.

The “historic nature” of Monday's flight, the first of several as the United States returns to the Moon, “certainly has increased public interest,” Meagan Happel of Florida's Space Coast Office of Tourism said.

Traffic jams are expected to start by 4 am, with the launch scheduled at 8:33 am.

And even more people might show up if the launch faces a weather delay, as the make-up date falls on a weekend. — **AFP**



Arab forum for working women kicks off in Dhofar

SALALAH: Sessions of Second Arab Forum for Working Women, organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), kicked off here today under the theme of “Businesswomen’s Future in Digital Economies”.

The two-day forum was opened under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, and attended by Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour and Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development.

Shaikh Nasr al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Labour said in a speech on the occasion that the Sultanate of Oman made good progress in labour affairs through a set of economic, educational and training strategies that placed human being at the centre of development. The visions helped



develop an educational and training system linked to the labour market needs. Solaf Hussain, Secretary-General of the Arab Working

Woman Affairs’ Committee, said that the forum seeks to address the challenges facing woman entrepreneurs in digital economy scenarios. The forum

discussed ways to draft special training programmes for working women, with emphasis on digital technology and the exchange of expertise on how to furnish the

right environment for woman entrepreneurs. In his turn, Faiz Ali Al Mutairi, ALO Secretary-General, said that the forum is being held at a

time when technology emerged as a prime mover of sustainable development. He added that coronavirus underscored the use of technology as an efficient instrument to address lockdowns worldwide. The pandemic, he explained, imposed a new reality for working women, enabling them to operate from home and optimise their energy.

The opening ceremony included a video about the role of the ALO in supporting working women, besides celebrating working women’s contribution to social and economic development.

In its first day, the forum included two sessions. The first outlined the institutional and legal frameworks of entrepreneurship, and the second discussed means of honing the skills of woman entrepreneurs through education and digital training. — ONA

OCCI vows to attract more investments

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The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) will continue to support the private sector and attract more investors domestically as well as from across the geographical borders, according to the OCCI.

Investors can be rest assured of extended support from the Chamber through effective and regular communication with the official stakeholders and business entities. It continues to provide all facilities to companies and institutions in the private sector, with the aim of providing the best business environment in Sultanate of Oman, according to the Chairman of OCCI.

“We have extended our great support to the private sector during the pandemic when they were out of business and will continue to support and attract new entrants,” said Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of the OCCI.

The Chamber has exempted the companies from paying the arrears of membership renewal fees during the pandemic. Besides providing financial support to the affected owners, the Chamber also paid attention to social responsibility by extending various packages to the sector.

“During the tropical situations, we have attended to the calls of both businessmen and businesswomen in the governorates of North Al Batinah Governorate, Saham and Al Khabourah, as well as South Al Sharqiyah Governorate,” he added.



Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman

“OCCI has dealt with economic challenges with the view of sustainability and to enable the private sector to play its role in a diversified economy based on product-based innovation, equal opportunity and investment.”

To extend multilayered support to the business communities in the country, the OCCI has established committees to study the economic and investment environment conditions in the country and to study the challenges that the sector is facing. “We have always been keen to continue our various initiatives and to communicate with business owners and investors in brotherly countries through various platforms, through joint business councils or via conferences,” he said, adding, investors can look forward to newer facilities and incentives to be provided to the local and foreign investors as we are reviewing legislation and laws related to the business environment.”

Rules for election campaign issued

FROM PAGE 1

It is prohibited to use the logos of private institutions and companies in election campaigns.

The decision also included that the election campaign be limited to the candidate’s personal picture, his full name and address, his qualifications proven by the competent authorities, and his vision to serve the state — if he so desires — within the legally established competencies.

The ministry clarified that it is not permissible to use the official state emblem or flag or the election logo or one of the logos of the units of the administrative apparatus of the state and other public legal persons or religious, historical or tribal symbols or the names or pictures of public figures in the means of election campaigning.

The decision affirms that the candidate is prohibited from carrying out any electoral propaganda which involves deceiving voters or using the method of defamation or defamation of other candidates, in addition to the prohibition of attacking the permitted electoral campaigns by any act, whether by cross-cutting, tearing or otherwise.

The decision clarifies the electoral campaigning means represented in billboards, whereby the candidate undertakes to install billboards according to the specifications and technical requirements set by the competent municipality, and to remove them at his own expense until the day prior to the day of voting, provided that their installation is limited to the candidate’s jurisdiction for no more than (15) paintings.

The size of the proposed advertisement should be commensurate with the size of the billboard, specifications and technical requirements, and the installation shall



be in specified locations, noting that it is prohibited to install billboards on pedestrian sidewalks or places forcing pedestrians to exit from them or at the top of bridges, light poles, roundabouts, their islands and their exits. The distance between the edge of each billboard and the beginning of the shoulder of the road shall be less than 3 metres.

The billboards must be installed at a distance of no less than 100 metres before intersections and roundabouts, and at a distance of no less than 250 metres before the main intersections, provided that they do not obstruct the view, and that the lighting is from top to bottom, and the candidate is also obliged to agree with the companies doing the advertising platforms. On public streets if he wishes to rent them, and the competent municipality must take into account the provision of equal opportunities for each candidate.

The decision noted the requirements for publishing advertising materials (publications), so that the candidate signs a pledge to remove all advertising materials (publications) at his own expense one day before the voting.

With regard to local press, the candidate bears the cost of the advertisement if he/she wishes to publish and takes the responsibility for its content. As for the means of communication, the decision

indicates that the candidate may practice election campaigning through text messages, social media, and Internet and private audio-visual media.

On meeting voters, the decision affirms that a candidate has the right to meet voters at the headquarters of Omani clubs and associations after the approval of the competent authority of the club or association and specifying the proposed days for meeting voters. He has the right to suggest a public place to meet voters, such as general councils. Electoral advertising framework bans use of external loudspeakers.

The decision includes procedures for submitting requests for election propaganda, so that the request is submitted to the Ministry of Interior through the elections website, and the request is attached to the approval of the competent municipality on the materials and phrases to be included in the advertisement, based on the specifications and technical requirements. The request is decided upon within 10 official working days from the date on which it was received. The request to meet with voters must be submitted 12 days before the date of the meeting.

It stated that the candidate must pay an amount of RO 100 as fee for propaganda for all election propaganda, via the elections website, and pay an amount of RO 150 through the elections website as an electoral campaign insurance, and the amount shall be refunded in the event of removal of the means of advertising, elections before the day set for voting.

The decision stressed that anyone who violates the provisions of this annex shall be punished with an administrative fine of no less than RO 1,000, and not more than RO 4,000. — ONA

SAF BEGINS RECRUITMENT OF OFFICERS



The Royal Army of Oman and the Royal Navy of Oman, in coordination with the Ministry of Labour, began screening and testing citizens for recruitment as officers. The Royal Air Force of Oman also recently received citizens looking for work in coordination with the Ministry of Labour. — ONA



Small enterprises impress khareef visitors with unique products

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 28

With the khareef season nearing an end in the Dhofar Governorate, the owners of small and medium enterprises registered the upper hand in contributing to the season's success. The season this year remained exceptional in terms of climatic conditions and overall business in the governorate.

The SMEs came out with different products and new seasonal marketing strategies. They built a distinct marketing identity by providing an exceptional experience for the tourists. Apart from enjoying the distinct climate, the visitors had a range of recreational activities, including shopping, cultural events and tourism experiences of various kinds. Adventure and cultural tourism elements were available for all age groups of visitors.

Among the activities, 70 per cent were managed by small and medium enterprises.

A total of 4,443 entrepreneurs participated in this year's khareef season, including 153 in the tourism-related activities. They made a true representation of the trend and culture of entrepreneurship that has begun



to receive acceptance among the locals. Among the SMEs, those from the tourism sector attracted maximum attention.

SMEs have contributed to reviving the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman, which has been reflected in the increasing number of tourists.

The sector has seen growth

due to its effective role, along with other tourist facilities, in promoting the Sultanate of Oman as a regional and global tourist destination.

The SME operators called for support from the government agencies to enable institutions and entrepreneurs to invest and finance and prepare the SMEs to

avail the opportunities.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in cooperation with youth enterprise support institutions and bodies, has facilitated the establishment of SMEs of tourism nature to contribute to raising the capabilities of the local economy and creating suitable job opportunities for citizens.

A surge in expats from the Philippines, Egypt and Sri Lanka

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There has been an increase in the number of expatriates from countries such as the Philippines, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tanzania, and Sudan in the past six months.

This is in addition to the expatriates from three dominant communities – Bangladeshis, Indians, and Pakistanis.

Apart from 595,269 Bangladeshis, 510,105 Indians and 233,477 Pakistanis, at the end of July 2022, there are 47,744 Filipinos in the Sultanate of Oman, witnessing an increase from 45,388 at the end of 2021.

The population of Egyptians increased from 30,998 to 33,294, Sri Lankans from 19,128 to 22,821, Nepalis from 16,800 to 19,947, Tanzanians from 11,436 to 12,224 and Sudanese from 7,771 to 8,976.

Meanwhile, the number

of expatriate workers in the government sector has dropped 24.3 per cent to 29,843 in July 2022 from 37,996 at the end of last year.

At the same time, the number of expatriates in the private sector went up 15 per cent to 1,267,642 in July this year from 1,131,526 at the end of 2021.

During the same period, the population of expatriates in Muscat went up from 590,009 to 637,264, in Dhofar from 163,112 to 186,479, South Batinah from 93,983 to 110,038 and North Sharqiyah from 81,719 to 92,404.

According to analysts, the drop in the number of the expatriate population in the public sector can be attributed to the replacement policy of the government, while the demand for workers in the private sector is due to the economic growth triggered by the ease of Covid-19 restrictions and surge in oil prices.

SQU new academic year begins on Sept 11

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University received the 37th batch of students for the academic year 2022-2023, which begins on September 11. The new batch numbering 3,000 students is distributed among various colleges.

The number of undergraduate studies programmes reaches 61, and the primary education specialisation (first field, second field) was launched for the first time for this academic year.

The university organised an induction meeting for the students of the 37th batch in the hall of the University Cultural Center on Sunday, with the aim of introducing the services



provided by the various academic, social, psychological and health centres and units, in addition to introducing cultural and sports activities. The preparatory programme exams will be held on Monday, and will continue until

September 5.

Another meeting on September 6 will introduce students to the programmes, specialisations and services offered by the affiliated colleges.

Prof Dr Salem bin Hamoud

al Harthy, Vice President for Academic Affairs and Community Service, said: "The induction meeting for the 37th batch of students for the academic year 2022/2023 is an opportunity to know about the services that the university provides to students in all disciplines and fields."

In a statement to the Oman News Agency, he added that there are many services that can be availed by the students during their study, stressing that Sultan Qaboos University looks forward to making these students future leaders.

He said students must enroll in a foundation programme before taking courses. — ONA



FROM PAGE 1

The registry issues an annual report containing the most important data collected, in line with international standards, such as those of the World Health Organization and the International Agency for Research on Cancer.

The National Cancer

Registry has ties ups with local, international and regional associations and organisations concerned with cancer registration.

The importance of having a national cancer registry lies in the presence of a database that is used as a reference for research and educational purposes by researchers and decision-makers.

Invasive species threaten native and migratory birds

SALALAH: A study showed a dip in the population of native and migratory birds amid the spread of invasive species like mynah and jungle crow.

This study was carried out by the Environment Authority represented by the Environmental Conservation Office in Dhofar on the diversity of birds in the Khor Salalah Nature Reserve. It is one of the important reserves to protect the wetlands species in the Sultanate of Oman due to its location and the natural components it contains.

The study aims to know the types of birds, count their numbers and study their behaviour. The study identifies the changes that occur in the ecosystems of the reserves and contributes to updating the data in the national reports and communications that the Sultanate of Oman submits to the relevant international organisations, which improves the standings of the



Sultanate of Oman according to environmental indicators. It is one of the main commitments of the Oman Vision 2040 Strategy.

The creek and the semi-saline water lakes constitute an ideal nesting environment for native birds, as well as contain important

food stocks and resting stations for the migratory birds.

Ahmed bin Saeed Jashoul, an environmental systems specialist, explained that the study started in August and continues until the end of this year. It included morning and evening visits to specific tracks

inside and around the reserve to monitor and document the behaviour of birds.

Mynah, which come from India, China, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal and western Indonesia, belong to the starling family. These birds are 22-25cm long and wings extend



to 36.5cm when flying. These are medium-sized birds with a black head and yellow feet.

Mynahs affect the food chain in the areas of their existence and attack other birds' nests, killing the young ones. In 2000, the International Union for the

Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared the bird among '100 of the World's Most Invasive Species'.

These birds cause a lot of damage by destroying crops, eating bees and transmitting diseases, parasites and fleas to humans as well as animals. — ONA



TOURISM FESTIVAL TO LURE MORE VISITORS

SAMUEL KUTTY
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Tourism festival is set to become a prime mover in promoting the Sultanate of Oman as a family, leisure, business and sports and adventure destination.

In this regard, Oman Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has lined up a number of festivals at different governorates presenting the country's rich traditional charms to both foreign and local tourists.

Given the unique cultural heritage, abundance of natural beauty formed by spectacular mountains, wind-blown deserts, and a pristine coastline, tourism initiatives focusing on festivals and other cultural activities have got immense growth potential for sustained tourism development in the country.

From the breathtaking Khareef festival of Salalah to the current first of its kind mountain festival of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the ministry is on an ambitious plan of tourism development in all the governorates.

According to Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Tourism Festival is a link in a series of activities being implemented by the ministry this year.

"The series aims at enriching tourist destinations and highlighting domestic content, including key landmarks of tourism attraction in the Sultanate of Oman," said Al Ghassani.

Significantly, the Khareef Salalah activities are expected to double the number of tourists visiting the Dhofar Governorate, and sustain the tourism movement throughout the year,



not just the autumn months.

The tourism ministry is also making Oman a unique destination for weddings, conferences and exhibitions.

According to the Director-General of Tourism Promotion, the ministry targets global markets to help augment the flow of tourists into the Sultanate of Oman.

"The drive, which includes intensive programmes highlighting the country's landmarks and addressing specific segments of tourists, seeks to maximise economic returns of the tourism sector in cooperation with local partners like airlines, travel and tourism bureaus and companies operating in the

field," he said. "We are continuously working to highlight Oman's position as an ideal destination for leisure activities as well as for important events and world championships," the Director-General said.

Oman's natural beauty has been attracting an increasing number of tourists from the region and from around the world and we are confident that our tourist-friendly initiatives will go a long way in bolstering its growing global repute as a holiday destination of choice, he added.

During a recent meeting announcing campaigns in India to promote Oman as an attractive destination for wedding tourism,

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR TOURISM FESTIVAL IS A LINK IN A SERIES OF ACTIVITIES BEING IMPLEMENTED BY THE MINISTRY THIS YEAR. THE SERIES AIMS AT ENRICHING TOURIST DESTINATIONS AND HIGHLIGHTING DOMESTIC CONTENT, INCLUDING KEY LANDMARKS OF TOURISM ATTRACTION IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Asma bint Salim al Hajriyah, Deputy Director General for Tourism Promotion said, "India is one of the most important source markets for the Sultanate of Oman as per our marketing and promotional strategy".

At the same time, Oman has already started making arrangements to receive visitors arriving for Qatar Fifa World Cup. Fans staying in Oman will be able to enjoy a variety of adventurous tourism experiences, whether it is kite surfing, cycling, hiking in the mountains, going down to see caves and scuba diving to see the colourful coral reefs of the Daymaniyat Islands, or camping under the stars on the sands of Al Sharqiya desert.





Power cuts melt Gaza’s ice cream stocks as heatwave boosts demand



A Palestinian girl eats ice cream in Kathem ice cream shop, as heat and lengthy power cuts melt ice cream shops’ profits, in Gaza City. – Reuters

GAZA: Lengthy power cuts in the Gaza Strip have melted stocks of ice cream, forcing shops to stop selling it just when a heatwave has boosted demand.

With summer temperatures hitting 34 degrees Celsius (93 Fahrenheit), ice cream is a popular and relatively inexpensive treat in Gaza, home to 2.3 million people squeezed into a narrow coastal strip between Israel and Egypt.

But owners of several groceries said they had to stop selling it even as a particularly hot summer has increased demand.

“Half of the ice cream melted. What should we do with it? Losses, losses,” supermarket owner, Fouad Awadallah told the reporter.

Gaza would normally require around 500 megawatts of power per day during the summer months of June, July and August, local officials said. It receives 120 megawatts from Israel while the enclave’s single power plant supplies another 60 megawatts.

The shortfall means residents have only around 11 hours of electricity per day and even that is intermittent.

At the Kazem Ice Cream shop, one of the territory’s best known, owner Mohammad Abu Shaban, said he had to use expensive generators to keep the business going.

“I can’t switch off the generators even for a minute once the electricity goes,” he said.

Saly Abu el Haj, 25, travelled 13 kilometres from her Nusseirat refugee camp for a taste of Kazem’s ice cream in Gaza City centre because other shops had stopped selling it.

“If you want to buy something cheaper from a supermarket, you won’t find it as owners are afraid ice cream would be wasted once the electricity is off,” she said. — Reuters

Egypt dims lights to boost foreign reserves

CAIRO: An economic crisis spurred by the Ukraine war is casting darkness upon Egypt’s streets, as the government dims lights to free up energy for export and bolster hard currency reserves.

Russia’s attack on Ukraine had an immediate impact on Egypt, the world’s biggest wheat importer which has relied on the ex-Soviet states for over 80 per cent of its grain.

Egypt, which turned to the International Monetary Fund for a loan after the war erupted, is pumping more natural gas abroad to increase its foreign currency reserves — a move that has come in for criticism.

And while the government announced electricity rationing this month, signs of wastage elicit scorn.

“I see streetlights still working during daylight hours... and we’re suffering from high electricity bills,” said a disgruntled Cairo resident in his 30s who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The country’s vital tourism sector has also been hit by the Ukraine conflict, cutting the flow of holidaymakers to a country still hurting from the 2011 revolution and Covid-19 pandemic.

Economic growth slowed to 3.2 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2021-22 against 7.7 per cent last year, although annual expansion was 6.6 per cent.

Despite the better-than-expected annual figure, the government said growth had tapered off in the wake of “global political and economic developments”.

Egypt’s monetary policy has been caught between a rock and a hard place since Russia-Ukraine war in February.

Inflation hit a three-year high of 14.6 per cent in July after Egypt devalued the pound, pushing up the price of imports and depleting forex reserves by \$7.8 billion since February to \$33.1 billion in July.

CAPITAL FLIGHT

Egypt is negotiating an IMF loan to help mitigate fallout from the Ukraine war on the country. But the talks have stretched out for six months, raising eyebrows among



A woman walks out of a currency exchange shop displaying a giant US dollar banknote in the Zamalek district of Cairo. – AFP

analysts.

“The fact that talks with the IMF have dragged is probably a sign that some officials are reluctant to follow through on the Fund’s demands and would prefer to rely on support from the Gulf economies,” London’s Capital Economics said.

“We need to speed up negotiations with the IMF,” said Hany Genena, an economist and lecturer at American University in Cairo.

“Since last week, there has been a severe shortage of dollars provided to importers by banks in various sectors.”

Cairo had previously secured a \$12-billion IMF loan in 2016 that required it to slash subsidies and devalue the pound.

In 2020, Egypt received two more loans, including \$5.4 billion tied to reforms and \$2.8 billion to tackle Covid.

Genena said Egypt needed to undertake more “drastic” reforms to restore its forex reserves, including a full float of the pound.

Last week, as the currency plunged to a near all-time low of 19.1 to the dollar, central bank governor Tarek Amer resigned.

It was unclear why Amer quit, but Egyptian media suggested it was because of

his reluctance to implement a full float.

James Swanston of Capital Economics said the currency needed to depreciate to 25 pounds to the dollar by the end of 2024 “to avoid external imbalances rebuilding”.

But \$14.6 billion worth of investments has flown out of the country in the first quarter of 2022, reflecting concerns over the Ukraine war.

Capital Economics said, however, that investment pledges worth \$22 billion from Gulf countries will “go some way to alleviating external financing concerns”.

GAS LIFELINE

Among Egypt’s slate of measures to preserve foreign currency was a decision to let the pound slip 17 per cent against the greenback in March.

The government said electricity rationing seeks to achieve “an additional surplus — at an average of 15 per cent of the natural gas pumped to power stations — that can be exported and bring in hard currency”.

Among the measures to conserve energy were “reducing lighting in streets and public squares.” — AFP

Angola bids solemn farewell to ex-president



President Joao Lourenco, dos Santos’s successor, stands to gain a second term in office. – AFP

LUANDA: Angolans and world leaders gathered on Sunday for the state funeral of former president Jose Eduardo dos Santos, whose nearly four-decade rule was marred by allegations of plunder and nepotism.

The memorial service was held at the historic palm tree lined Praca da Republica in the seaside capital Luanda on what would have been dos Santos’s 80th birthday.

It comes days after his party, the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) — which has ruled the country for nearly half a century — saw its worst results at the polls in the most hotly contested elections since independence.

Dos Santos — who died last month following a cardiac arrest — will be remembered as a “statesman and devoted pan-Africanist,” former Namibian president Sam Nujoma, 93, told the hundreds of mourners in attendance. — AFP



Sultan Qaboos University

TENDER NOTICE

The Investment & Revenue Department at Sultan Qaboos University Invites the companies to submit their quotations for this Tender as follows:

S/N	Type of Business	Site	Date of site visit	Class	Tender #
1	Provision of Photocopying Services	In various locations at Sultan Qaboos University Campus	5/9/2022 9:00 am	All classes	SQU.IRD. 12/22

- The priority will be for the Small and Medium Establishments (SME), which fulfils the quality requirements.
- Tenderers who wish to participate in this Tender may collect Tender Documents from The Section of Revenue And Expenditures at the Investment & Revenue Department, Sultan Qaboos University, during the working hours for an amount of QR.25 for each tender document (non-refundable). The last date for Collecting the Document is 14/9/2022.
- The Site Visit for the selected shop is necessary. It will be on the above mentioned date and the assembly point will be at the Investment & Revenue Department.
- The last date for submission of the quotations: 4/10/2022. The quotations should be submitted in a sealed envelope addressed to the Director of The Investment & Revenue Department, located on the first floor of the commercial building at Sultan Qaboos University and deposited in the Tender Box kept in the Department, before 10:00 a.m.
- The exterior of the envelope should be marked with the name and number of the Tender being presented and should bear no identification or mark of the Tenderer.
- The Tenderer should submit (enclose) with his tender a Bank Guarantee Document for sum of 1% of the total Duration of contract rental value quoted by the Tenderer and valid for 90 (ninety) days from the date specified for submission of Tender. Tenders submitted after the deadline or without a Bank Guarantee will be excluded.
- The Tenderer should prepare the Site in accordance with the health requirements of Muscat Municipality and the requirements of civil defense in cooperation with the concerned authorities.
- Sultan Qaboos University reserves the right to reject any quotation not fulfilling the requirements and does not bid itself to accept the highest rent or any other quotations.
- Graduation ceremony dates are subject to change.

The Investment & Revenue Department
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MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (28/2022)

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Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/047	2022/MM/QS-45	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Quriyat (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/048	2022/MM/QS-46	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Al Amarat (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/049	2022/MM/QS-47	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Bousher B (E-Tender)	Rial 40	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/050	2022/MM/QS-48	Maintenance of Landscaping and Cleaning Works at Bousher A (E-Tender)	Rial 57	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent & First
PRE/22/095	2022/MM/QS-49	Supply of Lighting Materials (Re-Tender) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/21/001	2022/MM/HQ-08	Construction of Drainage Structures and Remedial Measures at Sultan Qaboos Street, Phase 1C & 2A (E-Tender)	Rial 250	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/22/085	2022/MM/HQ-09	Development of one way road system in Al Khuwair (E-Tender)	Rial 230	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Excellent
PRE/20/046	2020/MM/QS-027 Re-Call-01	Supply & Install of Playground Equipment's for Public Park at Boushar (Re-Tender-1) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	06/09/2022	13/09/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/030	2022/MM/QS-28 Re-Call-01	Design and Construction of Steel Bridge for Walkway at Boushar (Jail) (Re-Tender-1) (E-Tender)	Rial 25	22/09/2022	09/10/2022	Specialist

Tender Conditions :-

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



Calm returns to Tripoli after fighting kills 32

TRIPOLI: The Libyan capital Tripoli was calm on Sunday after fighting between rival armed factions left 32 people dead, the Health Ministry said.

Clashes between backers of Libya's rival governments killed at least 32 people, the health ministry said in a new toll, after a battle that sparked fears of major new conflict.

Armed groups had exchanged fire that damaged several hospitals and set buildings on fire starting Friday evening, the worst fighting in the Libyan capital since a landmark 2020 ceasefire.

A cautious calm had set in by Saturday evening, a correspondent said.

The fighting came after months of mounting tensions between backers of Abdulhamid Dbeibah and Fathi Bashagha, whose rival administrations are vying for control of the North African country which has seen more than a decade of violence since a 2011 uprising.

Dbeibah's administration, installed in the capital as part of a United Nations-led peace process after the end of the last major battle in 2020, has so far prevented Bashagha from taking office there, arguing that the next administration should be the



Damaged vehicles are pictured in a street in the Libyan capital Tripoli following clashes between rival Libyan groups. — AFP

product of elections.

Bashagha was appointed by Libya's eastern-based parliament earlier this year and is backed by powerful eastern military chief Khalifa Haftar, whose 2019 attempt to seize the capital by force turned into a year-long civil war. Bashagha, a former interior minister, had initially ruled out

the use of violence to take power in Tripoli but had since hinted that he could resort to force.

Libya plunged into chaos following the 2011 overthrow and killing of ruler Muammar Gaddafi in a Western-backed uprising, with myriad armed groups and foreign powers moving to fill the power vacuum. Certain armed

groups seen as neutral in the latest crisis had moved to back Dbeibah this weekend to push back Bashagha's second attempt to enter the capital.

Both sides exchanged blame on Saturday while world powers appealed for calm.

The UN's Libya mission called for "an immediate cessation

of hostilities", citing "ongoing armed clashes including indiscriminate medium and heavy shelling in civilian-populated neighbourhoods".

On Saturday evening, Dbeibah posted a video of himself surrounded by bodyguards and greeting fighters supporting his administration.— AFP

Tokyo to push for African seat on UNSC: PM

TUNIS: Japan will use its place on the United Nations Security Council to push for an African seat on the top world body, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Sunday.

"Japan reiterates its determination to redress the historical injustice against Africa of not being represented through a permanent membership on the Security Council," Kishida told the Tokyo International Conference on African Development in Tunis.

"In order for the UN to work effectively for peace and stability there is an urgent need to strengthen the UN as a whole through Security Council reform," he said.

Kishida, speaking over live video from Tokyo after testing positive for Covid-19 days earlier, reiterated a pledge announced on Saturday to invest some \$30 billion in Africa over the next three years. — AFP



Residents watch the river Indus along the Sukkur Barrage in flood hit Sukkur of Sindh province. — AFP

Pakistan's south braces for deluge from swollen rivers

SUKKUR: Pakistan's flooded southern Sindh province braced on Sunday for a fresh deluge from swollen rivers in the north as the death toll from this year's monsoon topped 1,000.

The mighty Indus River that courses through Pakistan's second-most populous region is fed by dozens of mountain tributaries to the north, but many have burst their banks following record rains and glacier melt.

Officials warned torrents of water are expected to reach Sindh in the next few days, adding misery to millions already affected by the floods. "Right now, Indus is in high flood," said Aziz Soomro, the supervisor of Sukkur

Barrage — a massive colonial-era construction that regulates the river's flow and redirects water to a vast system of canals.

The annual monsoon is essential for irrigating crops and replenishing lakes and dams across the Indian subcontinent, but it also brings destruction.

Officials say this year's monsoon flooding has affected more than 33 million people — one in seven Pakistanis — destroying or badly damaging nearly a million homes. The country's National Disaster Management Authority said the death toll from the monsoon rains had reached 1,033, with 119 killed in the previous 24 hours. — AFP

India demolishes illegal 100-metre 'twin towers' outside New Delhi

NOIDA: India demolished two residential high-rise buildings outside New Delhi on Sunday, in a dramatic spectacle carried live on television channels after days of excited media build-up.

The destruction of the 100-metre-high "Twin Towers" in Noida, home to a concrete forest of similar structures, was also a rare example of India getting tough on corrupt developers and officials.

The 32 floors of "Apex" and the 29 of "Ceyane", containing between them nearly 1,000 apartments that were never inhabited in nine years of legal disputes, were brought down in seconds, creating an immense cloud of dust and debris.

The controlled implosions using 3,700 kilograms of explosives were India's biggest demolition to date, local media reported.

Thousands of people, as well as stray dogs, had to be evacuated before the blast, including from



A controlled implosion demolishes the 100-metre-high residential 'Twin Towers' in Noida on the outskirts of New Delhi. — AFP

The controlled implosions using 3,700 kilograms of explosives was India's biggest demolition to date

neighbouring high-rises, one of which was reportedly just nine metres away. There were no

immediate reports of injuries or damage to nearby buildings but a local official told reporters that

the operation had gone "largely as planned".

Indian media reported minute details of the demolition, including the number of holes drilled for the charges and the volume of debris created.— AFP

SEOUL

S Korea, Poland sign \$5.8 bn howitzer contract

Two South Korean companies have signed a \$5.76 billion contract with Poland to export tanks and howitzers, Seoul's arms procurement agency said after Warsaw agreed to ramp up arms imports amid tensions with Russia.

The contract, signed in Poland is part of South Korea's biggest ever arms deal, clinched last month with Poland, which has been seeking to beef up its military in the face of Russia's invasion of neighbouring



Ukraine. Hyundai Rotem Co will ship K2 Black Panther tanks, and Hanwha Defence, the defence unit of Hanwha Corp, will send K9 self-propelled howitzers to Poland. — AFP

ISTANBUL

Turkey accuses Greece of 'hostile action' against jets

Turkey on Sunday alleged fellow Nato member Greece has used a Russian-made air defence system to harass Turkish jets on a reconnaissance mission, calling it a "hostile action".

The incident took place on August 23 when Greece's S-300 missile system deployed on the island of Crete put a lock on Turkish F-16 jets flying at 10,000 feet west of Rhodes, Turkish defence ministry sources said.

That was "incompatible with the spirit of (Nato) alliance" and



amounted to 'hostile acts' under the Nato rules of engagement.

"Despite this hostile action, (Turkish) jets completed their planned missions and returned to their base safely." — AFP

KUWAIT CITY

Kuwait govt calls for September 29 election

The Kuwaiti government on Sunday called a legislative election for September 29, the state news agency said, two months after parliament was dissolved.

Kuwait is the only Gulf state with a fully elected legislature. The current government was formed at the start of August after the previous cabinet resigned in April, just three months after being sworn in.

An official decree, reported by the KUNA news agency, said



nominations were now open for candidates to register ahead of the September vote. Crown Prince Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah dissolved the assembly in June. — AFP



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In brief

WASHINGTON



WHITE HOUSE PASTRY CHEF FOR 25 YEARS, DIES AT 78

Roland Mesnier, the French-born longtime pastry chef at the White House whose whimsical confections served five American presidents, has died at age 78, a historical association said. The culinary master — who joined the presidential mansion's staff in 1979 under Jimmy Carter and worked there until his 2004 retirement during George W Bush's presidency — died "following a short illness," the White House said. "I have such fond memories of Chef Mesnier," former first lady Hillary said in a Twitter post that included a photograph of her and Mesnier standing next to some of his gingerbread holiday pieces. — AFP

LONDON



UK SOLDIER DIED AFTER SHOT BY SHORT-SIGHTED COLLEAGUE

A British soldier fatally injured during a training exercise in Wales is likely to have been mistaken for a firing target by a short-sighted colleague who was not wearing lenses at the time, a report has concluded. Sergeant Gavin Hillier, 35, of the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards, died at the Castlemartin range in Pembrokeshire on March 4, 2021. His wife Karyn and sons Declan and Connor described themselves as "heartbroken" following his death. The shooter, referred to in an official and partly redacted report as Guardsman I, had been prescribed corrective lenses but was not wearing them at the time. — dpa

NIEUW-BEIJERLAND



SIX DEAD AS TRUCK HITS DUTCH VILLAGE BARBECUE

Dutch police said six people were killed and seven others hurt after a truck ran off the top of a dike road and ploughed into revellers at a neighbourhood barbecue. The accident happened around 6 pm on Saturday when the Spanish-registered lorry went off the road in the village of Nieuw-Beijerland, 30 kilometres south of Rotterdam. The victims were three women aged 28, 32 and 75, and three men aged 41, 50 and 62, all from the local area, police said. One of the injured was in a critical condition in hospital. Police had first confirmed at least two dead. — AFP

UKRAINE: MILLIONS OF TONNES OF GRAIN SHIPPED VIA THE DANUBE

KIEV: Ukraine authorities said more grain is being shipped across the Danube River than at any point since the start of the war six months ago.

On Saturday alone, 11 ships made their way to the river ports of Izmail, Reni and Ust-Dunaysk and loaded aboard a total of 45,000 tonnes of grain, the Ukrainian Infrastructure Ministry said on Sunday.

Since March, more than 4 million tonnes of grain have already been taken out of the country through Ukraine's Danube ports, according to the ministry.

After the Russian attack began, focus turned to Ukraine's major Black Sea ports, which were blocked for months and resulted in millions of tonnes of grain unable to leave the country.

On July 22, Ukraine and Russia, under UN mediation, signed an agreement with Turkey to allow exports from Ukraine from three Black Sea ports, relieving pressure on global food markets.

The Istanbul Coordination Center, which was established under the deal, said at the weekend that 1 million tonnes of grain and other foodstuffs had been exported through the Black Sea route so far.

A total of 103 ships had set sail either to or from Ukraine.

As noted by the Infrastructure Ministry, some grain has



An excavator demolishes ruined buildings in Mariupol amid the ongoing Russian military action in Ukraine. — AFP

been diverted out via more cumbersome routes involving cargo ships transiting the Danube River toward Romania, or by rail.

Meanwhile, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has reassured Ukraine of Germany's support in the war against Russia for years to come if necessary.

"Unfortunately, we have to assume that Ukraine will still need new heavy weapons from its friends next summer," Baerbock

told German newspaper Bild am Sonntag.

"Ukraine is also defending our freedom, our peace. And we support them financially and militarily - and for as long as it is necessary. Full stop," Baerbock said.

She also warned that the war "could go on for years," but added that Russian President Vladimir Putin had been delusional in thinking that Ukraine would fall

within a few weeks.

Baerbock also defended Ukraine's claim to the Crimean Peninsula, which was illegally annexed by Russia in 2014.

"Crimea also belongs to Ukraine. The world has never recognised the annexation of 2014, which was against international law."

Warning Germans against allowing war fatigue to set in six months since the conflict

Ukraine is also defending our freedom, our peace. And we support them financially and militarily - and for as long as it is necessary

ANNALENA BAERBOCK,

German Foreign Minister

began, Baerbock conceded that people were "now feeling the consequences of Putin's energy war in their own pockets."

"The social division of Europe is part of Putin's warfare. We must prevent this.

It will be a rocky road, but it is part of our political responsibility to cushion the social imbalances resulting from high energy prices."

Baerbock also categorically rejected demands made by some politicians in Germany for Berlin to approve the Nord Stream 2 Baltic Sea pipeline to allow for a greater volume of Russian gas deliveries to avert a gas crisis in Germany later this year. — dpa

UN condemns Ethiopia air raid on school as fighting escalates

ADDIS ABABA: The UN on Saturday condemned a deadly Ethiopian air strike on a kindergarten in war-torn Tigray as fighting between rebels and government forces intensified along the region's border.

The air raid on the city of Mekele came just days after fighting returned to Ethiopia's north, shattering a five-month truce and dimming hopes of peace talks to end the brutal war.

On Saturday, the government said federal forces had withdrawn from Kobo, a city just south of rebel-held Tigray, in a border region where combat erupted in recent days.

The Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has been fighting forces allied to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for 21 months, said it had captured a number of towns and cities in a counter-offensive.

The tit-for-tat claims could not be independently verified, as access to northern Ethiopia is severely restricted.

On Friday, as conflict on the ground escalated, an air strike on Mekele killed at least four people including two children, an official at the city's biggest hospital said.

Tigrai TV, a local network, put the death toll at seven, including three children.

The broadcaster aired graphic footage of mangled playground equipment and a compound brightly painted with cartoons in ruins at the apparent scene of



Local farmers walk next to a tank of alleged Eritrean army that is abandoned along the road in Dansa, southwest of Mekele in Tigray region, Ethiopia. — AFP

the strike. Addis Ababa said only military sites were targeted and accused the TPLF of "dumping fake body bags in civilian areas" to manufacture outrage.

But the UN children's agency Unicef said the strike "hit a kindergarten, killing several children, and injuring others".

"Unicef strongly condemns the air strike," said Unicef chief Catherine Russell.

"Yet again, an escalation of violence in northern Ethiopia has caused children to pay the heaviest price.

For almost two years, children and their families in the region have endured the agony of this conflict. It must end."

Vicky Ford, the UK's Africa minister, said on Twitter: "Reports of civilian casualties following airstrikes on #Tigray are

appalling." The EU commissioner for crisis management, Janez Lenarcic, called for international humanitarian law to be respected.

"Civilians are #NotATarget," he said on Twitter.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, himself from Tigray, described the air strike as "barbaric" and "horrifying".

In March, the UN said at least 304 civilians had been killed in the three months prior in airstrikes "apparently carried out by the Ethiopian Air Force".

The UN human rights office has documented aerial bombardments and drone strikes on refugee camps, a hotel and a market, and warned that disproportionate attacks against non-military targets could amount to war crimes. — AFP

Channel crossings to the United Kingdom exceed 25,000 this year

LONDON: More than 25,000 migrants have crossed the English Channel to the UK so far this year, government figures show.

Some 915 were detected on Saturday in 19 small boats, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said, taking the provisional total for the year to 25,146.

There have been 8,747 crossings detected in August so far, with 3,733 in the past week, analysis shows.

August 22 saw the highest daily total on record, with 1,295 people crossing in 27 boats.

It is more than four months since Home Secretary Priti Patel unveiled plans to send migrants to Rwanda to try to deter people from crossing the Channel.

Since then 19,878 have arrived in the UK after making the journey.

On April 14 Patel signed what she described as a "world-first" agreement with Rwanda under which the east African nation will receive migrants deemed by the UK to have arrived "illegally" and are

therefore inadmissible under new immigration rules.

However, the first deportation flight - due to take off on June 14 - was grounded amid legal challenges.

Several asylum seekers, the Public and Commercial Services union and charities Care4Calais, Detention Action and Asylum Aid are challenging the legality of the Home Office policy, with the next court hearings due in September and October.

The number of people reaching the UK in small boats from France after navigating busy shipping lanes has increased steadily in recent years.

Some 299 were detected in 2018, followed by 1,843 in 2019, 8,466 in 2020 and 28,526 last year, official figures show.

Despite the growing numbers, the small boat arrivals are a fraction of the number of people going to mainland Europe.

Data from the UN's refugee agency shows at least 120,441 people arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean by land and sea last year. — dpa



You only live once – Wrong. You only die once



Hyesha Barrett

The writer is a master life coach based in Oman

We are constantly at choice throughout our journey of life. However, unfortunately our negative mindset often interjects its’ persistent pessimism, which warps the way we look at choice. When you make life happen for you not to you, this mindset shift will rewire your thoughts to choose more empowering decisions.

Saying “I don’t have a choice” demeans your ability to take charge of your life. You can’t change the cards you are dealt with, but you can change the way you play them. No matter what we think, we are always at choice.

Nonetheless, we don’t often choose to take the undefined path, the unknown. We choose to take the path of least resistance. The one

which we know will guarantee the outcome we expect. Conversely, this is often a downfall as there is no growth. Without growth, we are not progressing. Without progression, there is regression.

“You only live once” is the old adage. In fact, we only die once. We live each and everyday. We even live multiple stories in one day. Our lives can change in a flash, literally from one second to the next.

It really comes down to your everyday choices. Our subconscious mind runs most of our actions, so how consciously do you choose to do something different, daring, challenging, and unknown? As opposed to how often do you choose to hang out in the same places, see the same

NEGATIVE THOUGHTS CAN OVERPOWER YOU TO THE POINT WHERE LIFE LOOKS LIKE IT IS JUST A SERIES OF CONSTRAINTS RENDERING YOU POWERLESS OVER THE CHALLENGES YOU ARE FACING

people, eat the same meals, and stick to your regular routine?

Long term, which one do you think will lead you to live a more fulfilling, fun, adventurous, successful and happier life?

If we choose to react in a helpless manner, the ground hog day effect can transpire and we will continually live a life in

the shadows of what could be. Then, no wonder we are upset, bitter, disjointed, overwhelmed, overweight and overrun with feelings of resentment, guilt and shame. We have chosen a limited lens of life.

Sometimes, you may not identify that you have a choice because the circumstances are daunting. Negative thoughts can overpower you to the point where life looks like it is just a series of constraints rendering you powerless over the challenges you are facing. It is so easy to fall prey to your negative thoughts which will naturally deplete any chance of choice shining through. So, flows the endless loop of believing you don’t have a choice.

Through acknowledging that everything you do is inherently your choice in the making, a shift will occur. Instead of blaming the external environment, become proactive in pushing for what you want. Rather than feeling victimised by your circumstances, you will gather strength from it.

Notice how things will start shaping themselves into what you want them to be, because you are actively working on them.

Choose which outcome you want and follow through with the choices that will lead you there. With awareness, practice and continuous effort, this will allow you to live a meaningful life with proactive excitement, creating the results you want.

Energy crisis pushes nuclear comeback worldwide

CATHERINE HOURS

As the costs of importing energy soars worldwide and climate crises wreak havoc, interest in nuclear power is on the rise with nations scrambling to find alternative sources.

Investment in nuclear power declined after Japan’s 2011 Fukushima disaster, the world’s worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986, as fears over its safety increased and governments ran scared.

But following Moscow’s attack on Ukraine in February, the subsequent squeeze on energy supplies and Europe’s push to wean itself off of Russian oil and gas, the tide is now turning back in favour of nuclear.

Governments face difficult decisions with rising gas and electricity bills and scarce resources threatening to cause widespread suffering this winter.

Some experts argue that nuclear power should not be considered an option, But others argue that, in the face of so many crises, it must remain part of the world’s energy mix.

One of the countries reconsidering nuclear energy is Japan, where the 2011 accident led to the suspension of many nuclear reactors over safety fears.

This week Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for a push to revive the country’s nuclear power industry, and build new atomic plants.

Other countries that were looking to move away from nuclear have discarded those plans — at least in the short-term.

Less than a month after Russia’s attack on Ukraine, Belgium delayed by a decade its plan to scrap nuclear energy in 2025.

While nuclear power, currently used in 32 countries, supplies 10 per cent of the world’s electricity production, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) raised its projections in September for the first time since the 2011 disaster.

The IAEA now expects installed capacity to double by 2050 under the most favourable scenario.

Even in Germany, Europe’s biggest economy, sticking with nuclear is no longer a taboo subject as the energy crisis rekindles debate on shutting down the country’s last three nuclear power plants by the end of 2022.

Berlin said last month it would await the outcome of a “stress test” of the national electric grid before deciding whether to stick with the phase-out.

Greenpeace Germany’s climate and energy expert, Gerald Neubauer, said turning to nuclear was “not a solution to the energy crisis”. — AFP

Fall vaccination campaign will bring new shots, worse access



Benjamin Mueller

The writer is a health and science reporter at NYT

Long past the point when pollsters said there were no more Americans willing to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, Coral Garner kept finding them.

An organiser of mobile clinics for the Minnesota Department of Health, she arranged to provide vaccines and booster shots to people who had resisted them, setting up in a retrofitted city bus outside a Nigerian church, a Hmong senior centre, a Somali mall and dozens of other sites.

But even as the United States now prepares for a critical campaign to deliver omicron-specific booster shots, Garner’s job no longer exists. In June, her contract position was cancelled because the state said funding had dried up.

At the very moment a better coronavirus vaccine is expected to finally become available, America’s vaccination programme is feeling the effects of a long period of retreat.

Local programmes to bring shots to the places where Americans gather and the institutions they trust have folded, a consequence in some cases of congressional resistance to more pandemic response spending.

The same local health department workers responsible for Covid-19 and flu shots this fall have also, without new staffing, been juggling a monkeypox outbreak and childhood immunisation deficits that have left some places susceptible to polio.

And some state health officials, citing weak demand for vaccines and increased survival rates of late, said in interviews that they had stopped aggressively pushing coronavirus shots.

With the virus killing far fewer people than it once did and many Americans reverting to their pre-pandemic ways, the country’s attitude to saving lives has evolved into a response that has put a greater onus on individuals to protect themselves. In keeping with that approach, many health officials believe the vaccine machinery is in place to meet what they expect, lamentably, to be tepid demand this fall.

But others are worried that the country is surrendering a decisive



Tess Holman holds her one year-old daughter, Margot Holman, as she receives the Covid vaccine at the Mall of America in Bloomington, Indianapolis.

THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION SAYS ABOUT 70,000 SITES WERE PREPARED TO VACCINATE PEOPLE THIS FALL. ALTHOUGH 60 PER CENT OF THOSE ARE PHARMACIES, THEY ALSO INCLUDE DOCTOR’S OFFICES, COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRES AND RURAL HEALTH CLINICS

opportunity to stoke that demand and restore the more robust vaccination efforts that lifted last year’s initial rollout.

“We are watching the dismantling of the hyperlocal infrastructure that actually brought needles to arms in the most vulnerable communities in the country,” said Stephen Thomas, director of the Center for Health Equity at the University of Maryland. “To this day, vaccine uptake in the United States is embarrassing.”

The Biden administration said about 70,000 sites were prepared to vaccinate people this fall. Although 60 per cent

of those are pharmacies, they also include doctor’s offices, community health centres and rural health clinics.

States can also seek money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency for certain vaccination-related expenses, such as setting up sites, buying equipment, and offering translation or transportation services.

Having shifted much of the rollout to private sites, though, states have been promised FEMA reimbursements on a relatively modest \$550 million in vaccination spending so far this year. Last year, that figure was \$8.5 billion.

And although providers are supposed to vaccinate everyone for free, with or without insurance, the federal government ran out of money this past spring to offer reimbursements for shots for uninsured people, making it more difficult for them to receive boosters.

Sonya Bernstein, a senior policy adviser for the White House Covid-19 response team, said federal spending to support vaccination efforts was being held back by a stalemate in Congress over the administration’s request for billions of dollars in additional pandemic aid.

Republicans have said that additional coronavirus spending could be covered with funding already approved by Congress, an assertion that some state health officials say is false.— *New York Times*

Hand goes left if brain speaks right!



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

How do you feel when you are accused of using the wrong hand?! You see your colleagues, friends or siblings doing the same thing that you are doing, but each is using a different hand! Perhaps you are like none of them or someone could be standing on your shoes too, so you get less frustrated! Either it is only you the left-handed or someone else is there, others might look at you abnormally differently! Though you are perfectly performing a similar task

that is usually done with the right hand. Left-handers fault is their brain is cross-wired; their right side controls the left side of the body and vice versa.

Conceivably, it is just people's stereotype that makes using a left hand in a world dominated by right-handers is somehow wrong! Throughout ages, left-handers have been facing various difficulties in different cultures.

Some have even experienced discrimination in their communities due to superstitions, while some have been badly treated to an extent to be punished to cure their left-handedness.

In some cultures, left-handers are referred to as someone who uses the wrong hand and associated with weakness, impurity or evil.

In fact, humans are one of the few creatures to show a preference between using the left and right hand.

IN FACT, HUMANS ARE ONE OF THE FEW CREATURES TO SHOW A PREFERENCE BETWEEN USING THE LEFT AND RIGHT HAND. MOST CREATURES, EVEN CHIMPANZEES, THE CLOSEST CREATURES IN THE ANIMAL KINGDOM SHOW A 50-50 SPLIT WHEN IT COMES TO WHICH HAND, FOOT OR PAW THEY USE THE MOST

Most creatures, even chimpanzees, the closest creatures in the animal kingdom show a 50-50 split when it comes to which hand, foot or paw they use the most.

However, left-handed animals include kangaroos, which tend to favour their left paw for things like eating. Also, studies have shown that 90 per cent of parrots use their left foot to pick things up. Luckily, such misconceptions and challenges of left-handers have changed. A few might only consider the left-handers in their midst as evil or using the wrong hand. Yet, left-handers have to tolerate some inconveniences of a right-handed world, at home,

work or public. If you are a left-hander, you realise the difficulty of writing on a desk that only works for a righthander. You endure the amount of time you spend adjusting and trying to find the perfect angle. In such scenario, writing form left to right is by itself a challenge for a left-hander.

Scissors, bottle openers, kitchen equipment and even basic household tools are mostly designed for right-handed people. Computer keyboards and mouses are also right-handers-friendly. Actually, experts pretend that at least 10 per cent of the world's population are left-handed, and that is a good number of people to be considered when manufacturing and designing tools and other stuff. Despite this, left-handers often struggle to perform basic daily tasks in a world designed for right-handers.

Scientists are not yet sure about why a person develops left-handedness. Rather it is attributed to a child will be left-handed if one parent is a lefty too. An Irish psychologist studied several hundred baby scans, when the baby in the womb was sucking its thumb. It showed that about 90 per cent of babies sucked their right thumb and at 12-years-old almost all of those right thumb suckers were right-handed. Whereas three-quarters of the left thumb suckers became left-handed. Thus, it seems that genetics play a key role in having a right or left-handed child.

Probably, right-handers might wonder what it is like to see the world from a "left-handed" point of view? Therefore, they could explore that world for a day and mark the International Left-handers Day, which shows the uniqueness and differences of the left handers. This day was first observed in 1976 by Dean R Campbell, founder of the Left-handers International Day. The day urges designers, corporates and governments to be more left-handed-friendly and adapt objects for left-handers. The left-handed are precious; they take places, which are inconvenient for others. Hats off to all left-handed, who have mastered using their left hand in a right-handed world.



CURIOUS TOURISTS!

Tourists take photo of a train on a railway line that passes through an old residential area in central Hanoi, Vietnam, on Sunday. — AFP

Australia's minister of everything...

GARETH EVANS

FORMER PRIME MINISTER SCOTT MORRISON'S MULTIPLE MINISTERIAL SELF-APPOINTMENTS CANNOT BE EXPLAINED AS ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN EXERCISE OF HUBRIS. WITH A NEW LABOR GOVERNMENT NOW IN CHARGE, IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT AUSTRALIA'S LONG YEARS OF DYSFUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT AND BIZARRE POLITICAL SURPRISES MAY FINALLY BE OVER

Australia continues to be a source of bemused fascination to students of Western parliamentary democracy. After a pantomime period not so long ago in which the country changed its leader five times in five years, it has now been revealed that our most recently defeated prime minister, Scott Morrison, contrived over the past two years effectively to appoint himself minister to no fewer than five other major government departments. Moreover, Morrison did so without — except in one case — the knowledge or agreement of the minister whose job he was duplicating, and without informing his cabinet colleagues, parliament, or the Australian public.

That is chutzpah on a scale that might astound even Boris Johnson, the United Kingdom's soon-to-be ex-prime minister. And the recent verdict on the constitutional propriety of Morrison's actions by Australia's solicitor-general is excruciatingly clear.

The country's top non-political lawyer concluded that, while the prime minister's self-appointments were not illegal, they "fundamentally undermined" the principles of responsible government: "Neither the people nor the Parliament can hold a minister accountable for the exercise (or, just as importantly, for the non-exercise) of particular statutory powers if they are not aware that the minister has those powers."

Morrison's defence of his conduct has been laughable, though one of his self-appointments, as second health minister, made at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic and with the consent of the incumbent, did have a sliver of justification. The emergency powers of the office were enormously wide-ranging, and arguably demanded an instantly available backup if the primary minister fell seriously ill.

But why keep that arrangement secret? And given that another, or acting, minister, could be appointed at the stroke of a pen — as Morrison's additional appointments themselves demonstrate — why not wait for that contingency to arise?

None of Morrison's other ministerial self-appointments — to the energy, home affairs, finance, and treasury portfolios — had even that shred of justification.

The only occasion when the prime minister actually used his additional powers had nothing to do with the pandemic. Anxious to avoid an electoral wipeout in some green-inclined areas, he overrode his co-energy minister to reject a controversial offshore gas exploration permit. The revelation of all these appointments has enraged the second-guessed former ministers, and for good reason. Morrison's actions cannot be explained as anything other than an

exercise of hubris by a prime minister who believed that he had won an unwinnable election on his own in 2019, had little confidence in even his most senior cabinet colleagues' competence and judgment, and was determined to retain personal control of all the key levers of power.

"I was steering the ship in the middle of the tempest," Morrison explained to a visibly underwhelmed press corps, whose members suggested, not unreasonably, that he might not have sailed very far without a crew to support him. He might just as well have fallen back on what I once described (in the context, it must be admitted, of an ill-advised ministerial adventure of my own) as the "streaker's defence": "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

Australia's new Labor government is now initiating an inquiry to explore how Morrison's megalomaniacal machinations proceeded with such secrecy, why more alarm bells did not ring with his personal and public-service advisers, and how to ensure that the basic conventions of responsible government are safeguarded in the future.

It will be difficult for any such inquiry to avoid exploring the contribution to the fiasco of the governor-general, David Hurley, Queen Elizabeth II's representative in Australia, whose decision it was under the constitution to appoint Morrison to the other ministerial roles.

Of course, the governor-general was obliged, as his defenders insist, to accept his prime minister's advice, given that Morrison clearly commanded majority support in parliament.

To reject it would have been to repeat, albeit with less extreme consequences, the grievous sin perpetrated by Hurley's predecessor, John Kerr, nearly a half-century ago.

Kerr not only refused then-Prime Minister Gough Whitlam's advice on how to resolve a parliamentary crisis, but dismissed Whitlam from office.

But Hurley — a decent man, but one who most Australians could neither

name nor recognize in a line-up — seems to have neglected to ask Morrison any pertinent questions.

Why did the prime minister need these powers? Did he have the consent of his colleagues? How were the relevant departments to be jointly administered? Were the appointments to be gazetted and otherwise made public? If not, why not? How did all this sit with the accountability conventions of responsible government?

Because Hurley did not ask these questions, many thinking Australians are now asking their own: What exactly is the point of having a head of state, in the form of the governor-general, who has no apparent sense of the fundamental constitutional principles he or she is pledged to protect? And if we are going to have a merely symbolic cipher in the role, why not at least have one who is genuinely homegrown, not merely the delegate of a distant monarch?

The movement for Australia to become a republic is gradually developing a new head of steam as Queen Elizabeth's long reign draws to its inevitable close, and the Morrison saga will do the cause no harm.

The political fallout from the controversy has already been considerable. Many members of Morrison's Liberal-National Coalition, still in disarray following their thumping electoral loss in May, have made no secret of their outrage at his behavior.

Morrison's continued presence in parliament as a backbencher will keep that sore festering.

The affair has further boosted the record approval ratings of new Labor Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his government.

There seems to be a general sense of relief that Australia at last appears to have adults back in charge, and that the long years of too-often dysfunctional government and bizarre political surprises may finally be over.

But given our record over the past decade or more, who can be confident?

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None of Morrison's other ministerial self-appointments had even that shred of justification.

sport

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Liverpool hit nine to equal record, Haaland hat-trick fires Man City

LONDON: Liverpool equalled the Premier League’s record win with a 9-0 demolition of Bournemouth, while Erling Haaland’s hat-trick inspired Manchester City’s comeback 4-2 victory against Crystal Palace on Saturday.

On a remarkable day in the top flight, leaders Arsenal maintained their perfect start with a dramatic 2-1 win against Fulham.

Meanwhile, 10-man Chelsea beat Leicester 2-1 and Manchester United’s revival continued with a 1-0 victory at Southampton.

Liverpool stole the spotlight as they recovered from Monday’s lacklustre 2-1 loss at Manchester United in astonishing style.

After three games without a win, the Reds rebounded by equalling Manchester United’s 9-0 wins against Ipswich in 1995 and Southampton in

2021, as well as Leicester’s thrashing of Southampton in 2019.

It took just three minutes for Luis Diaz to strike at Anfield as the Colombia winger headed home Roberto Firmino’s cross.

Three minutes later, Liverpool moved further ahead as Harvey Elliott bagged his first Premier League goal with a 20-yard curler.

Trent Alexander-Arnold rifled into the top corner from 25 yards in the 28th minute.

After providing three assists, Firmino scored himself with a close-range volley to put the result beyond doubt by the 31st minute.

Virgil van Dijk headed in Andrew Robertson’s corner on the stroke of half-time as Liverpool scored five in the first half of a Premier League game for the first time.

Chris Mepham’s own goal from

Alexander-Arnold’s 46th minute cross was followed by Firmino grabbing the seventh in the 62nd minute.

Fabio Carvalho’s first goal since his summer move from Fulham made it eight in the 80th minute.

Diaz notched the historic ninth with five minutes left as Liverpool equalled their biggest top-flight margin of victory, set against Palace in 1989.

“We wanted to show a reaction. Getting to be the best version of ourselves. We scored wonderful goals,” Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said.

“The game settled and we kept scoring. It was the perfect afternoon.”

Champions Manchester City staged another impressive rally as they came from 2-0 down to beat

Palace at the Etihad Stadium.

Palace went ahead in the fourth minute as Eberechi Eze’s free-kick deflected off John Stones into the net for an own goal.

City fell further behind in the 21st minute when Palace defender Joachim Andersen was left unmarked to head in Eze’s corner.

But City came from 3-1 down to draw at Newcastle last weekend and Bernardo Silva gave them hope with a 53rd-minute effort that deflected in off Jeffrey Schlupp. City equalised in the 62nd minute when Phil Foden’s cross reached Haaland and the former Borussia Dortmund striker headed his first home goal since joining in the close season.

In the 70th minute, Haaland prodded home and the Norwegian sealed his hat-trick in the 81st minute.— **AFP**

Stokes hails ‘benchmark’ win as England level South Africa series

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom: England captain Ben Stokes said his team had produced a “benchmark” win after overwhelming South Africa by an innings and 85 runs in the second Test at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Victory, with more than two days to spare, brought England level in this three-match series at 1-1 following South Africa almost as dominant innings and 12-run triumph at Lord’s last week.

England have won five of their six matches since Stokes succeeded Joe Root as skipper but this one was built on Test-match fundamentals rather than setting up a crowd-pleasing run-chase in the fourth innings.

Stokes’s men were on top from the start in Manchester, reducing South Africa to 77-5 before lunch on the first day after Proteas skipper Dean Elgar — almost obliged to bat first having included a second spinner, Simon Harmer, — won the toss.

The Proteas were eventually dismissed for a meagre 151 in their first innings.

England then made 415-9 declared featuring all-rounder Stokes’s 103 — his first Test century as England captain — and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes’s Test-best 113 not out.

A stubborn 43-over stand of 87 between Keegan Petersen and Rassie van der Dussen kept England at bay on Saturday until Stokes, in one of the match-turning bowling displays that have been a hallmark of his career, removed both batsmen after tea.

That paved the way for another collapse. South Africa slumped to 179 all out after succumbing to the new-ball thrust of James Anderson and Ollie Robinson as their last five wickets fell for just seven runs in 31 balls.

England have made much of their desire to play “positively” but in Manchester they also demonstrated plenty of cricket intelligence as well as attacking intent.

“Cricket is about how you bat, bowl and field and I think that the way we batted, bowled and fielded this whole game is the benchmark of the standards we’ve set,” Stokes told reporters.

“It didn’t feel like a wicket where you could stand there and hit through the line because of the variable bounce that it was offering.”

- ‘Theatre’—Bowling as a fourth seamer, which Stokes was at Old Trafford, can be something of a supporting role, but not in his eyes.

“When you are bowling with the older ball, when nothing is really happening, you have to create your own energies and own theatre around that,” he said. — **AFP**



India to bowl against Pakistan in Kohli’s 100th T20

DUBAI: India skipper Rohit Sharma won the toss and elected to field against Pakistan in a landmark 100th Twenty20 international for Virat Kohli on Sunday.

The high-octane clash of the Asia Cup tournament between the arch rivals has already attracted a huge crowd with almost equal fan presence at the Dubai International Stadium.

The focus remains on the 33-year-old Kohli, who will look to overcome his extended batting slump and become only the second player after New Zealand’s Ross Taylor to play a century of international matches in all three formats.

India have opted for Dinesh

Karthik as wicketkeeper in place of Rishabh Pant, while Avesh Khan makes the XI as the third seamer.

“Honestly, I don’t think the toss is that important, we are just here to play good cricket,” Rohit said.

“We’ve played here in the IPL (Indian Premier League), so hopefully the pitch will be good. It was a tough call we had to take between playing Dinesh and Rishabh.”

India lost their previous contest against Pakistan by 10 wickets in last year’s T20 World Cup at the same venue, but Rohit said they have learnt from their mistakes.

“This is an important game for us, but as cricketers we don’t want to think about the opposition,



we just want to correct whatever mistakes we are doing,” he said.

Head coach Rahul Dravid gave a pep talk in the team huddle after

he joined the squad on Sunday with a negative Covid report.

The batting great tested positive for the virus just before

the team’s departure to the United Arab Emirates for the six-nation tournament.

Pakistan have handed a T20 debut to 19-year-old fast bowler Naseem Shah in the absence of injured quicks Shaheen Shah Afridi and Mohammad Wasim.

“We would have also been bowling first, but this is not in our hands,” skipper Babar Azam said.

“We will look to make a big score and see. Three fast bowlers, two spinners and a debut for Naseem Shah. We are trying to give it our best.”

Pace bowler Hasan Ali joined the team on Sunday in place of Wasim but remains on the bench.

The Pakistan team took to

the field with black armbands to express solidarity and support for the people affected by floods back home.

TEAMS

INDIA: Rohit Sharma (capt), KL Rahul, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Dinesh Karthik (wk), Hardik Pandya, Ravindra Jadeja, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Avesh Khan, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh

PAKISTAN: Babar Azam (capt), Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Khushdil Shah, Asif Ali, Shadab Khan, Mohammad Nawaz, Naseem Shah, Haris Rauf, Shahnawaz Dahani

UMPIRES: Masudur Rahman (BAN), Ruchira Palliyaguruge (SRI)

TV UMPIRE: Raveendra Wimalasiri (SRI)

MATCH REFEREE: Jeff Crowe (NZL). —**AFP**

Serena Williams prepares for final curtain call at US Open

NEW YORK: After a glittering 27-year professional career in which she became one of the greatest players of all time, Serena Williams is preparing to bid farewell to tennis at the major where it all began.

The 40-year-old sporting icon ended the guessing game surrounding her future earlier this month by revealing that the “countdown” to her retirement had started, with her final Grand Slam appearance expected at the US Open in New York starting on Monday.

“There comes a time in life when we have to decide to move in a different direction,” Williams wrote. “That time is always hard when you love something so much.”

The announcement sets the stage for what will be an emotional farewell for Williams, who faces unheralded world number 80 Danka Kovinic in Monday’s first round at the Arthur Ashe Stadium.

Williams won the first of her 23 Grand Slam singles titles as a 17-year-old at the 1999 US Open, beating Martina Hingis in the final.

That breakthrough victory confirmed what had become apparent ever since her professional debut four years earlier: that Williams, alongside sister Venus, was a rising force in women’s tennis.

While 1999 marked her first singles Slam, by then Williams

had already won mixed doubles titles at Wimbledon and the US Open in 1998.

Her win in the 1999 singles final would light the touchpaper for the most dominant career of any female player in the Open era, her 23 Grand Slam titles second only to Margaret Court’s 24.

While a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title is likely to remain beyond her next week, Williams has nevertheless produced a collection of records that in all probability will never be broken.

Record collection

With seven Australian Open singles titles, seven Wimbledon titles and six US Open titles, Williams is the only player, male or female to win three different Grand Slams six times or more.

In total, she has won 39 Grand Slam titles — with 14 women’s doubles crowns and two mixed doubles titles to go alongside her 23 singles victories.

Her longevity is also unmatched. She was first ranked world number one in 2002, and last held the position in 2017 — an interval of just under 15 years.

Williams also holds the record for the longest gap between her first and last Grand Slam wins: 17 years and 139 days between her 1999 US Open win and the 2017 Australian Open in Melbourne, when she was pregnant with daughter Olympia.

— AFP



SAMSONOVA BEATS SASNOVICH TO WIN WTA CLEVELAND TITLE

WASHINGTON: Liudmila Samsonova stretched her WTA win streak to 10 matches on Saturday by defeating Aliaksandra Sasnovich to capture the Tennis in the Land title ahead of next week’s US Open.

World number 45 Samsonova downed 36th-ranked Sasnovich 6-1, 6-3 in 72 minutes to make the Cleveland crown her third in as many WTA finals appearances.

“I was feeling so good here,”

said Samsonova after extending her career-best win streak.

Samsonova, who didn’t drop a set in her championship run, also captured last year’s German Open title and three weeks ago took the Washington Open trophy.

“She’s a great player already,” Sasnovich said of Samsonova. “For me, top 10. I tried to do my best but Liuda was better.”

Sasnovich, a 28-year-old from Belarus, and Samsonova,

a 23-year-old Russian, cannot represent their homelands due to tour rules imposed after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

“We were both without the flag,” Samsonova told the crowd. “I think it’s important to spend a minute to say we are both good people and you are amazing people so thank you.”

Sasnovich fell to 0-4 in career WTA finals, having also lost in 2015 at Seoul, 2018 at Brisbane

and last January in an Australian Open tuneup event at Melbourne.

The event was final preparation event for the year’s final Grand Slam tournament, which begins on Monday in New York.

Samsonova begins the US Open against 194th-ranked Sara Bejlek of the Czech Republic with Canada’s 14th-seeded Leylah Fernandez, last year’s US Open runner-up, a possible second-round foe. — AFP



In this file photo taken on September 05, 2004 Number 3 seed Serena Williams of the United States returns a shot to number 15 seed Patty Schnyder of Switzerland during their match at the 2004 US Open in Flushing Meadows, New York. — AFP

Vine soars to second Vuelta stage triumph



Team Alpecin-Deceuninck’s Australian rider Jay Vine celebrates crossing the finish line in first place during the 8th stage of the 2022 La Vuelta cycling tour of Spain, a 153.4 km race from Pola de Laviana to Collau Fancuaya – Yernes y Tameza. — AFP

COLLAU FANCUAYA , Spain: Australian Jay Vine won a mountainous stage eight of the Vuelta a Espana on Saturday, as Belgian Remco Evenepoel held on to the overall race lead.

Alpecin rider Vine crossed the line on the final Asturian summit of the stage alone two days after climbing to his first professional win on Pico Jano.

Evenepoel of Quick Step led the pace amongst the big guns on the last 10km climb at 8.5 per cent incline and was 1min 20sec adrift with Enric Mas of Movistar and Primož Roglič of Jumbo the only riders able to hold on to the 22-year-old red jersey holder’s pace.

Evenepoel now leads Mas by 28sec in the general classification with Roglič in third at 1min 01sec.

Two Ineos Grenadiers lurk just behind them to round out the top five with Carlos Rodriguez at 1min 47sec and Tao Geoghegan Hart at 1mn 54.

The race set off under low grey skies

through the Nalon Valley and 10 riders escaped on the first climb in the Picos de Europa National Park.

King of the mountains jersey Victor Langellotti (Burgos-BH) pulled out with a broken collarbone along the way and only 169 of the original 184 riders remain. The green points jersey changed hands as the Dane Mads Pedersen took enough sprint points in his stint in the escape to edge ahead of Irishman Sam Bennett of Bora.

Vine also racked up enough mountain points to take the polka dot jersey along with his second stage win.

Sunday’s stage takes in a coastal run before a finale which is perhaps more fearsome with a short 4km effort but at 12 per cent.

Monday is a rest day but is followed by a long individual time-trial where Evenepoel, on paper at least, should punish his rivals again before the Vuelta swoops into the south. — AFP



Awesome Al Harthy seals second pole position

BARCELONA: Oman’s number one racing driver Ahmad al Harthy scorched to his second pole position of the European Le Mans Series campaign at the Circuit de Barcelona- Catalunya on Saturday, August 27, to put Oman Racing at the front of the LMGTE grid for today’s fourth race of the 2022 season.

Following a very challenging weekend at Monza in Italy at the beginning of July, where the squad was impacted by a very negative Balance of Performance grading, normal service has been resumed in Spain with Al Harthy seriously impressing in the short and sharp 10-minute qualifying period.

“What a beautiful session that was!”, said an overjoyed Al Harthy, “I’m really, really happy with our performance and I must say a big thank you to the team who have been working extremely hard since we arrived here in Barcelona. It’s a very tricky circuit to maximise our one lap performance, but they gave me everything to make it possible.”

The event started pretty much perfectly for the Omani and team-mates Sam De Haan and Marco Sorensen on Friday, August 26, with the fastest LMGTE time



in opening free practice and Al Harthy then went on to conclude the subsequent session for the ‘Bronze’ graded drivers fourth quickest.

In second free practice on Saturday morning the team was eighth, with plenty of good work having been done by the TF Sport squad – which looks after the Oman Racing entry – with the set-up of the No.69 Aston Martin Vantage GTE ahead of the afternoon’s grid determining

session.

Although some clouds gathered above the circuit, the temperatures remained very warm during qualifying and Al Harthy’s performance was, likewise, red hot. Posting a time of 1m46.407 seconds on his first flying lap to take provisional pole, he then improved to 1m45.720 seconds on lap two and secured pole with his third lap of the session – 1m45.692 seconds.

“I’m extremely delighted with where we are now compared to what we had at Monza, everything is much better here so far”, said the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sohar International Bank, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS supported racer, “We know it’s going to be a very, very tough and long race, the tyre degradation here is the highest from all the circuits we visit in the ELMS so looking after them is key.

“Starting from pole is the first part of the job, now we really hope to have a good race and to be able to challenge. Of course, a big thank you as always to our amazing partners and to everyone at Oman Racing and TF Sport for the hard work so far this weekend.”

Sterling’s double does job for Chelsea

ANDY JALIL.
LONDON, AUGUST, 28.

Considering they were down to 10 men for all but 28 minutes of their match against Leicester, Chelsea’s performance was quite commendable in their 2-1 win. There was an early red card for Conor Gallagher for two fouls within a space of six minutes by the mid-fielder. In their previous match too, Chelsea had a player sent off.

Chelsea manager, Thomas Tuchel said: “To give such a huge disadvantage (to his team) we have to stop doing this. We cannot behave like this if we are on yellow cards and we have to learn very, very fast. This cannot be repeated. Conor is responsible for what he did and he knows this was a huge mistake.”

He added: “It is not purely his fault alone because it is a set-piece for us, we are sloppy with how we take set-pieces at the moment. We lack belief and we lack precision. But it’s a very, very bad decision from Conor. I’m happy we showed the mentality that was needed to have the chance to win it. We were lucky in the end not to concede the equaliser but the mentality was very good.”

Chelsea had much the better of the first half’s play and should have taken the lead early but Ruben Loftus-Cheek’s shot went wide and Reece James had a shot hit the post. Chelsea were disallowed a penalty in the 11th minute by a VAR check which found Kai Havertz off-side.

Within two minutes of the start of the second half Chelsea finally took the lead. Left back Marc Cucurella moved into the City box to pass to the £50m signing Raheem Sterling from Manchester City, whose skilful shot looped over the goalkeeper after a slight deflection. Three minutes later Stirling was unlucky with his shot hitting the post after he had received a pass again from Cucurella.

Stirling doubled the lead in the 63rd minute when he picked up a cross from James in the six-yard box and firmly guided the ball home. But Chelsea’s two-goal lead didn’t last long as in the 66th minute Harvey Barnes scored at the near post from a pass by Jamie Vardy. Earlier, in



“To give such a huge disadvantage (to his team) we have to stop doing this. We cannot behave like this if we are on yellow cards and we have to learn very, very fast.

THOMAS TUCHEL
Chelsea manager

the first half, a Leicester goal was ruled out for a foul by Barnes on goalkeeper Edouard Mendy.

Vardy, in the 79th minute, missed a one-on-one chance with Mendy when the goalkeeper charged out to block. Leicester kept pressing hard towards the end and a shot by Yardy went just wide and then Ayoze Perez hit the bar. Ten-men Chelsea managed to hold on to their lead under relentless pressure at the closing stages.

Leicester manager, Brendan Rodgers said Barnes should not have had the goal disallowed. He said: “It was very frustrating not to have taken at least a point. We are disappointed with the goal that was disallowed. But we went to sleep at the start of the second half. We were too passive and let them play through. It was too easy.”

Scheffler clings to one-stroke lead at Tour Championship

WASHINGTON: Top-ranked Scottie Scheffler, the reigning Masters champion, clung to a one-stroke lead when Saturday’s third round of the US PGA’s Tour Championship was suspended until Sunday due to lightning.

Tokyo Olympic champion Xander Schauffele was only one shot adrift when the last 14 players on the course were halted, setting up a tense last-day drama in the PGA’s season-ending showdown at East Lake in Atlanta.

Scheffler paced the 29-player field at 19-under par through 12 holes with playing partner and fellow American Schauffele on 18-under.

“With a 72-hole event I think it’s still pretty early in the tournament,” Scheffler said. “We’re all just kind of jockeying

for position and I was just out there trying to hit some quality shots.”

South Korean Im Sung-jae was third on 16-under with four holes remaining, while four-time major winner Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland was fourth on 15-under and 5-under on the day through 16 holes.

Scheffler began the tournament with a four-stroke edge on Schauffele thanks to staggered-start scoring system based on season point totals, but Schauffele had trimmed that edge to two strokes after 36 holes.

After lightning caused a 58-minute delay in tee times before leaders teed off, Schauffele made a charge.

He sank a birdie putt from just outside 12 feet at the par-3

second hole and another from just past four feet at the third to match Scheffler for the lead at 19-under.

Schauffele paid the price for missing fairways with bogeys at the fourth and fifth holes, only to birdie the sixth and seventh — the latter on a 33-foot putt — to again equal Scheffler.

After seven pars, Scheffler holed a 12-foot birdie putt at the eighth to pull one stroke ahead and both leaders made bogeys at the par-3 11th after landing in bunkers, leaving Scheffler ahead when play was stopped.

“I wasn’t playing my best, but I was kind of hanging in there,” Scheffler said. “I was looking forward to giving myself some opportunities at the end, but then the horn went off.”

Play was set to resume on Sunday morning with leaders teeing off in the final round in the early afternoon.

The staggered scoring system means whoever fires the week’s low 72-hole total will not necessarily win the \$18 million top prize on offer from the FedEx Cup playoffs.

Scheffler, who hadn’t taken a PGA title when the year began, won four in two months capped by his first major title at Augusta National in April. He could complete an amazing season by capturing the playoff crown.

American Justin Thomas, this year’s PGA Championship winner, has a two-foot birdie putt at the 18th hole to match McIlroy on 15-under when play resumes.

— APF





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Oman — a pioneer in regional Islamic finance

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman is a pioneer in the field of local and regional Islamic finance, this according to a report of Redmoney — a Malaysian institution specialising in Islamic financial services.

According to its website, the Islamic finance services in the Sultanate of Oman cover all sectors and products, and it continues to thrive. With a strict regulatory infrastructure in place, industry players are reassured of support from the Omani government, and the market remains open for expansion and improvement.

The total assets of Islamic banks and windows increased by 9.6 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis to RO 6.2 billion.

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New crude oil pipeline to export Oman Blend via Ras Markaz Terminal

KEY PACT: Ministry of Energy and Minerals and OTTCO sign a framework agreement to develop a new crude oil pipeline for Oman Export Blend to be exported from Ras Markaz Terminal in Duqm

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 28

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) and Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO), a subsidiary of OQ Group, signed on Sunday, August 28, 2022 a framework agreement for their joint cooperation to develop, build and operate a new pipeline that will be connected with its infrastructure to transfer, store and export Oman Export Blend Crude Oil from the Ras Markaz crude oil storage terminal owned and operated by OTTCO in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The agreement was signed at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals by Eng Salim bin Nasser

al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals; Talal bin Hamed al Aufi, OQ Group CEO; and Hilal bin Ali al Kharousi, CEO Commercial and Downstream at OQ and Chairman of the OTTCO Board of Directors, in the presence of Ard Van Hoof, CEO of OTTCO and other senior officials from the Ministry.

The agreement enables the Ministry and OQ Group to expand the energy sector by meeting the expected growth in SEZAD and the energy industry in the Sultanate of Oman, further supports Oman Blend as a benchmark and for the Ras Markaz Terminal to become a regional hub in alignment

with OQ and OTTCO's growth strategy.

The terminal will provide crude oil handling, storage, import and export services for refineries and petrochemicals downstream projects in SEZAD and to serve market needs of customers and other stakeholders.

OTTCO, as the project

developer will now commence with conducting of detailed studies and to move forward with execution and implementation of this important project, including facilities which may be required for customers, producers and traders of Oman Export Blend Crude Oil.

In addition, OTTCO, as experienced operator, also provides all services related to the operations and maintenance of the facilities and assets.

Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTCO) in an existing company in the OQ group of companies, established and an independent service provider for developing and operating commercially liquid bulk terminals in the Sultanate of Oman with its landmark project being the Crude Oil Terminal at Ras Markaz which has been selected for its strategic location and suitability in receiving giant oil tankers, as well as its proximity to the world maritime routes.

The company is currently completing the first phase of the terminal and expected to commission its trial operation later in the year.

Proposal for incentives to power Oman's green energy industry

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 28

Tax waivers and other incentives are being studied by Oman's authorities to help attract investments and localised manufacturing opportunities across the value chain of a new green energy industry envisioned to take root in the Sultanate of Oman.

An overview of some of these potential incentive mechanisms was shared by a high-level delegation representing the Sultanate of Oman at a key forum held in London, UK, recently.

Green energy projects with an aggregated renewable energy capacity of around 30 gigawatts (GW) are currently in the pipeline for implementation in Oman over the coming years.

Incentives are key to sustaining this pipeline of opportunities, as well as in-country value creation across the upstream, midstream and downstream segments of this future industry, 'Smart incentives' centring

around electricity tariffs should take into account any of the following criteria: Omanisation, local content, and use of locally available raw materials and semi-finished goods, say officials.

Such smart incentives will also support the expansion of the base of industrial activities in the country, improve energy efficiency and productivity, and accelerate the adoption of best technology available and productivity. Longer-term, industries will be able to reduce energy use per unit of production as well

as make gains in market competitiveness, it is pointed out.

Incentives for green energy production related activities could potentially include tax exemption for green hydrogen output and end products. Additionally, investors should be entitled to receive a refund on import duty paid on goods used to produce green hydrogen.

Another potential incentive can be in the form of low interest loans for industries constructing large-scale renewable energy solar

or wind schemes, as well as facilities to produce green hydrogen.

Furthermore, a waiver of power wheeling charges – fees payable by investors for use of the transmission grid to 'wheel' electricity from the renewable energy generator to the green hydrogen production site – may be considered as well.

Significantly, all of these proposed incentive mechanisms may be offered up until the green hydrogen production becomes viable in 2030, officials have noted.

ABRAJ UNVEILS NEW BRAND IDENTITY

MUSCAT: Abraj Energy Services (Abraj), a leading Omani oil and gas field services company and a fully owned subsidiary of OQ, unveiled its new corporate brand identity, symbolising a commitment to becoming one of the region's market leaders in high-quality drilling and well services.

Abraj is a core entity in Oman's oil and gas services sector, providing a wide range of services including drilling and work over rigs as well as fracturing, cementing and coiled tubing services.

The company features an advanced fleet of drilling rigs deploying innovative and best-in-class technology.

Abraj employs over 2,000 highly qualified professionals with a 93 per cent Omanisation rate.

While celebrating the company's history, the new bold and contemporary identity reflects Abraj's focus on modernisation and innovation of its service offerings. The refreshed identity will be featured across Abraj's physical and digital assets.

Commenting on the launch, Ayad

al Balushi, Chairman of Abraj, said: "Our transformation into a global brand reinforces a commitment to continue leading the charge in the drilling and oilfield services sector, serving our clients, shareholders and the Sultanate of Oman to the highest standard.

It is amongst our foremost priorities to contribute to the Sultanate's sustainable economic development, which we look to foster through enhancing in-country value and exploring ways to make drilling practices greener and more efficient.

Abraj's new brand identity is a visual manifestation of the company's bright, ambitious future, yet pays homage to the successes we have achieved thus far."

The unveiling of the new brand takes place ahead of Abraj's participation in the upcoming Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) roadshow, to be held on September 5-6 in Muscat. Abraj is currently reviewing the possibility of gaining a listing on the MSX, the timing and size of the potential transaction are under consideration and subject to necessary regulatory approvals.

CMA official
elected to
AMERC,
IOSCO boards



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 28

Mohammed bin Said al Abri, Vice President, Capital Market Sector of the Capital Market Authority has been elected deputy Chairman of the Africa Middle East Regional Committee and member of the board of directors of the International Organization of Securities Commission (IOSCO) for the 2022-2024 session scheduled to start in October 2022 during the organisation's meeting in Marrakesh.

AMERC is one of four committees constituted by IOSCO to focus on regional issues related to the regulation of securities in the Africa and Middle East Region and comprises 42 members representing securities commissions in the region and endeavours to work on the priorities of the members in matters related to developing the regulatory environment in line with best international practices and standards. Nezha Hayat, Chairperson of the Moroccan Capital Market Authority will chair the Committee during the period 2022-2024.

CMA is keen to participate in the international committees in line with its strategic plan 2021-2025 that emphasises on the presence of the Sultanate of Oman in international work teams and committees, and participation in the events of the international organisations.

CMA received support from the member countries thanks to the appreciation for its participation in the activities of the committee in particular and the IOSCO in general.

Core inflation is unofficially dead



PETER GARNRY
Head of Equity Strategy
at Saxo Bank

Central banks have been very late to the inflation game as they have underestimated the effects of the stimulus during the pandemic.

Supply chains and generally the supply side of the economy were expected to normalise much faster than what has been the case and our main thesis now is that if central banks focus too much on core inflation a big mistake might be the outcome.

Food and energy will be at the centre of our crisis years with climate change and the green transformation being inflationary in the years to come. Investors should increasingly invest in the tangible world to offset these inflationary risks.

The energy crisis will drive everything

Around 30 central banks around the world have adopted inflation targeting using the headline inflation indices which in the US is the US Personal Consumption Expenditures Index and was officially announced in January 2012.

The official targeting is the headline inflation indices, but many central banks and economists are often putting more weight on the core inflation indices. These indices remove energy and food from the price index.

This practice is likely what made central banks react slowly to the current inflation impulse; remember, at Jackson Hole one



(Image for illustration only)

year ago Jerome Powell said: "We have much ground to cover to reach maximum employment, and time will tell whether we have reached 2% inflation on a sustainable basis". At that point, US CPI and core CPI stood at 5.4% y/y and 4.3% y/y respectively.

Core inflation indices remove the energy and food items because they are seen as volatile and mainly not driven by the trend change in overall prices, and the key assumption is also that they have temporary factors behind them that will reverse later on (see quote below from Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco).

This argument was the same for our disrupted supply chains although, it has taken much longer than expected.

"However, although the prices of those goods may frequently increase or decrease at rapid rates, the price disturbances may not be related to a trend change in the economy's overall price level. Instead, changes in food and energy prices often are more likely related to temporary factors that may reverse themselves later."

Food and energy will add to inflation going forward

Our team has written a lot about the physical world and lately we introduced indices of tangibles- vs intangibles-driven industry groups. We have shown many times how the world is underinvested in the global energy and mining industry, and why this

will haunt the world for years.

Food and energy are also intertwined and connected which we have seen today with Yara International reducing its ammonia production in Europe to just 35% of potential production due to elevated natural gas prices. Lower ammonia production will lead to less fertiliser for farmers and thus lower food production, which again can lead to higher food prices.

It should be clear by now, that ignoring food and energy could be a grave mistake by central banks. Climate change will make global food production more volatile and push up prices, and the green transformation will for years keep energy prices elevated.

Our main thesis is that the coming decade will in many ways be a replay of the 1970s as politicians will intervene in the economy to mitigate the pain from higher prices, but these decisions will only keep the nominal economy growing fast and thus keep inflation and the readjustments going for longer.

The Fed's core inflation measure is currently at 0.4% m/m measured over six months suggesting a core inflation rate annualised at around 5% which means that short-term interest rates must be set much higher to tame inflation. The headline inflation is currently twice as high as the core inflation.

Nominal wages will underpin inflation for a lot longer

In this ECB paper from August 2002, the authors conclude that central banks should give substantial weight to the growth in nominal wages when monitoring inflation. If we look at nominal wage growth in the US, the chart below shows the three-staged acceleration we have observed in the US economy since 2009.

The first phase during 2009-2015 saw only 2% annualised wage growth as the economy was suffering from low demand in the subsequent years after the Great Financial Crisis.

The second phase was the period from 2015 to early 2020 where years of loose monetary policy and slowly healing economies lifted US nominal wage growth to 2.9% annualised.

The third phase is the period from early 2020 until today and is driven by the extraordinary monetary and fiscal stimulus that was put in place after the global Covid pandemic broke out. The combined stimulus was on par with the post-WWII years and was unleashed into a global economy that in hindsight was much closer to a hard physical supply limit than understood at the time.

Subsequently, demand has been running much stronger than trend growth, and as a result, nominal wages have accelerated to a 5.2% annualised growth rate. Indeed, it seems we have a serious problem on our hands where inflation become unanchored from 2%.

TSO offers
secure tally
services on
the Cloud to
customers



MUSCAT: TSO (www.TallySolutionsOman.com), by Infinity Thoughts, Master Tally Education Partner and Gold Tally Partner is now offering Secure Tally services on the Cloud to its customers in the Sultanate of Oman and across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The latest version of Tally is called 'TallyPrime'.

"Tally on Cloud" is a very unique initiative by TSO, that allows Tally users and company owners to secure the data and access it from anywhere. In addition, for a company with multiple branches/locations, Tally on Cloud helps in having the entire system centrally located on the Cloud Server, without having the hassle of maintaining multiple licenses of Tally, multiple databases and synchronisation of data.

With 'Tally on Cloud,' users can benefit from the exact same Tally interface but in a secure and managed way, from anywhere and at any time. Tally is the most popular accounting and inventory software in the Sultanate of Oman, with thousands of users across the entire region hailing its ease of use and richness in features.

The software is also popular with retail businesses and for point of sales as a result of its user-friendliness and simplicity.

Tally is VAT compliant for Oman. Based on the Oman VAT regulations by the Oman Tax Authority, Tally has been developed accordingly, to meet the compliance. In addition to being VAT Compliant, Tally has incorporated a robust process for VAT data validation.

"It is our endeavour to bring Tally with enhanced security and reliability as a service," said Infinity Thoughts' General Manager Tabrez Iqbal. "Passion of our Tally Clients made us think to give something more. Security of data and the flexibility to work from anywhere drove us to work along with the data centres to have Tally hosted on the Cloud. We are continuously striving so that companies can focus on their core business while we bring them innovations to meet their ever demanding ICT needs, and at affordable costs."

In contrast to the costs associated with additional resources, servers, backup, administration, anti-virus, and other related products and services, TSO enables companies to utilise the same Tally at an additional affordable monthly cost, with all businesses — from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to big corporates.

Own a Kia Seltos and get a chance to win
fully paid trip to Fifa World Cup Qatar

MUSCAT: Football fans looking forward to owning their favourite Kia Seltos SUV now have an opportunity to win a fully paid trip to watch Fifa World Cup event in Qatar. Kia customers owning a brand new Kia can get a chance to Scratch & Win more than 100 match tickets where they can witness teams like Belgium, Brazil, Germany, Japan and more, LIVE in action.

Apart from Fifa Qatar match tickets, customers will also get comprehensive service up to 50,000 kms and 1 year insurance. The campaign will end on November 4, 2022. (Conditions apply. Please visit Kia showroom for details.)

The Kia Seltos is spacious and includes a suite of world-class safety features. Its stylish



characteristics lend it a very distinctive look.

Especially its exterior design details, such as its long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork. Making the Seltos instantly recognisable is the full LED headlights and taillights.

For daytime driving, the car also has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps, and 3D multi-layer indicators to make it clear exactly where the Seltos is heading.

For driving in foggy conditions, the car is also equipped with LED fog lights.

The interior of the Seltos

contributes to making every drive amazing. The cabin is characterised by broad, sweeping shapes and highly technical details and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

For thrilling driving experiences, the Seltos is equipped with a 1.6-litre gasoline engine producing 121 HP paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT).

To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions.

Drivers can choose from 'Normal', 'Eco' and 'Sport' mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximise vehicle range by using

fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximise the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership award', 'Family Like Care' Service award, and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award.



ECB policymakers make the case for a big rate hike

JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING: European Central Bank policymakers made the case on Saturday for a large interest rate hike next month as inflation remains uncomfortably high and the public may be losing trust in the bank's inflation-fighting credentials.

The ECB raised rates by 50 basis points to zero last month and a similar or even bigger move is now expected on September 8, partly on sky-high inflation and partly because the US Federal Reserve is also moving in exceptionally large steps.

Speaking at Fed's annual Jackson Hole Economic Symposium, European Central Bank board member Isabel Schnabel, French Central Bank chief Francois Villeroy de Galhau and Latvian central bank Governor Martins Kazaks all argued for forceful or significant policy action.



A man walks by the Euro sculpture in front of the old the European Central Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. — AFP

"Both the likelihood and the cost of current high inflation becoming entrenched in expectations are uncomfortably high," Schnabel

said.

"In this environment, central banks need to act forcefully." Markets were betting on a 50

basis point move on September 8 until just days ago but a host of policymakers, speaking on and off record, now argue that a 75

basis point move should also be considered.

"Front loading rate hikes is a reasonable policy choice," Kazaks, said. "We should be open to discussing both 50 and 75 basis points as possible moves.

From the current perspective, it should at least be 50." Rate hikes should then continue, the policymakers argued. With rates at zero, the ECB is stimulating the economy and remains far from the neutral rate, which is estimated by economists to be around 1.5 per cent.

Villeroy said that the neutral rate should be reached before the end of the year while Kazaks said he would get there in the first quarter of next year. "In my view, we could be there before the end of the year, after another significant step in September," Villeroy said.

Schnabel also warned that

inflation expectations were now at risk of moving above the ECB's 2 per cent medium term target, or "de-anchor" and surveys suggested that the public has started to lose trust in central banks.

The rate hikes come even as the euro zone growth slows and the risk of a recession looms.

But the recession will be mostly due to soaring energy costs, against which monetary is powerless. The downturn is also unlikely to weigh on price growth enough bring inflation back to target without policy tightening, many argue.

The looming downturn is an argument to front load rate hikes as it becomes difficult to communicate policy tightening when the slowdown is already visible. "With this high inflation, avoiding a recession will be difficult, the risk is substantial and a technical recession is very likely," Kazaks said. — **Reuters**

Oman — a pioneer in regional Islamic finance

FROM PAGE 13

This constituted about 15.9 per cent of the banking system's assets at end- June 2022, the Central Bank of Oman said in its recently published Review of Banking and Monetary Developments. Islamic banking entities provided financing of RO 5.1 billion at the end of June 2022, recording a growth of 11.2 per cent over that a year ago.

Total deposits held with Islamic banks and windows increased by 12.8 per cent to RO 4.7 billion. Redmoney noted that although the Sultanate of Oman is relatively new in Islamic finance and banking compared to other GCC countries, it now has total Islamic assets of RO 5.9 billion, which represents 15.2 per cent of the country's total banking sector assets.

Earlier this month, CBO reported that the Islamic banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman,

which comprises of two Islamic banks and five Islamic banking windows, has continued its double-digit growth in 2021 despite the adverse economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The apex bank noted in its Financial Stability Report 2021 that the total asset base of Islamic banking sector in Oman reached RO 5.9 billion (versus RO 5.2 billion in 2020) with a growth of 13.6 per cent.

This "corresponds to market share of 15.2 per cent of total banking sector assets, thereby gaining systemic significance as a sector," the Central Bank stated. Similarly, as of December 2021, total deposits and total financing of the Islamic banking sector reached RO 4.4 billion and 4.9 billion respectively, with a corresponding share of 17.2 per cent and 17.4 per cent, the report noted.

Crypto giant Bitcoin dips below \$20,000

WASHINGTON: Bitcoin dipped below \$20,000 on Saturday, continuing a drop that has taken it down nearly 60 per cent from its year high.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, was last down 1.5 per cent at \$19,946 on Saturday, down \$298 from its previous close. It is down 58.7 per cent from the year's high of \$48,234 hit on March 28.

Ether, the coin linked to the ethereum blockchain network, meanwhile dipped 2.76 per cent to \$1,467.2, losing \$41.60 from its previous close. Bitcoin's fall comes after a weak day on Friday for the currency, which fell as Wall Street slumped with all three benchmarks ending more than 3 per cent lower.

The weakness in risk assets came after Federal Reserve Chief Jerome Powell cautioned against



expecting a swift end to its rate tightening. The Fed's actions on interest rates has caused some investors to forecast more pain for equities.

"Bitcoin broke below 20,000 as investors expect a weekend full of pessimism from Jackson Hole to drag down sentiment," Edward Moya, senior market analyst at OANDA, said on Saturday.

"European and Asian central bankers will likely be much more pessimistic than Fed Chair Powell and that has many traders bracing for a weak open on Sunday night," he added. —**AFP**

How British energy prices are set



STANLEY REED

The writer is a London-based journalist, has been writing for The New York Times on energy, the environment and the Middle East since 2012.

energy a household used, as well as its location and other factors. The cap used to be updated every six months, but starting in October it will be reset every three months.

Ofgem said the increase announced on Friday was nearly entirely due to higher wholesale energy costs, largely stemming from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In a typical bill starting in October, wholesale energy costs will represent about 70 per cent of the total.

The suppliers are permitted to make a 1.9 per cent profit under the pricing programme. Ofgem called such profit levels "modest" on Friday, although it is looking into whether they are too high.

The regulator noted that "most domestic suppliers are currently not making a profit." Energy, though, is currently a tale of haves and have-nots. Producers of oil and gas like BP and Shell have reported record profits, while consumers and some businesses are taking a beating.

Dozens of small startup utilities have gone bust in Britain, but generators of electricity with largely fixed costs, like nuclear plants and wind and solar farms, are most likely "doing well" from the high prices, said Martin Young, an analyst at Investec, an investment bank.

Announcements like those on Friday of sudden, huge surges in prices have led some commentators to say the regulator and the price caps are not functioning. "The price cap doesn't work," said David Howell, a former British energy minister who is now a member of the House of Lords.

As things stand, the reality is that energy prices must be either paid by consumers or somehow subsidised by taxpayers for those who can't afford them.

— **The New York Times**

US energy secretary urges refiners not to increase fuel exports

WASHINGTON: The US Energy Secretary urged domestic oil refiners this month to not further increase exports of fuels like gasoline and diesel, adding that the Biden administration may need to consider taking action if the plants do not build inventories.

US refiners have boosted oil product exports this month as domestic crude oil production rose and global fuel demand continued to recover. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm (pictured), in a letter sent August 18, urged seven refiners including Valero, ExxonMobil and Chevron, to build supplies of fuels as the United States enters peak hurricane season.

"Given the historic level of US refined product exports, I again urge you to focus in the near term on building inventories in the United States, rather than selling down current stocks and further increasing exports," Granholm



said in the letter sent to refiners.

High US oil product exports have been a concern for the administration of President Joe Biden this summer as gasoline prices briefly hit a record of \$5 a gallon, helping drive inflation to 40-year highs.

Gasoline prices have since fallen to about \$3.86 per gallon. Federal weather forecasters have

projected an above-average Atlantic hurricane season, which can be a perilous time for refiners.

Still-high gasoline prices remain a threat to Biden's fellow Democrats ahead of the November 8 midterm elections, when they hope to retain control of both chambers of Congress.

Granholm said the

administration is talking with state officials along the East Coast, where gasoline levels are at their lowest in nearly a decade.

It is putting the gasoline and heating oil reserves in the US Northeast, which hold 2 million barrels of fuel, on "active standby" for potential release, and preparing other emergency contingency actions, she said. The administration hopes that companies will "proactively address this need" of building inventories, she said.

If that does not happen, the administration "will need to consider additional federal requirements or other emergency measures," Granholm added, without providing details.

In a wide-ranging meeting with the same refiners in June, Granholm backed off a plan to ban US fuel exports, but the idea has never fully left the table.

— **Reuters**

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Friendship through flowers: Oman on global floral map

The Sultanate of Oman will host the first-ever international floral event in the Arabian Gulf region. Called 'Bloom Oman,' the event is scheduled to be held in Muscat from January 27 to February 1, 2024. Making this possible is Oman's top florist Madhvi Ramesh Khimji, who was instrumental towards Oman becoming a member of World Association of Floral Artists. Check what Madhvi has to say about this event and the preparations done to host WAFA Oman 2024... **P20**

Indonesian knights keep medieval sword-fighting alive

ARMED WITH BLUNT swords, a dozen would-be chevaliers are put through their paces in a gallant effort to keep alive European medieval martial arts taught hundreds of years ago.

But this is not a scene from Game of Thrones or the Adventures of Robin

Hood — it's a breezy Sunday afternoon in the middle of Jakarta, one of the world's biggest megacities. The fighters are practicing sword-fighting techniques that were honed across Europe from the 14th to 18th centuries — known as Historical European



Martial Arts (HEMA). After a quick warm-up, members of the Gwaith-i-Megyr group take turns to show off their swordsmanship outside the massive Gelora Bung Karno stadium. "The training is beyond my expectation. As we spar using weapons, the adrenaline rush from attacking and defending is more keenly felt compared to hand-to-hand combat," said Gede Indra Krisega, a 23-year-old civil servant. 'Fellowship of Swordsmen' The Gwaith-i-Megyr was established in 2016 after several members of a local fan club of English author JRR Tolkien — who wrote the Lord of the Rings trilogy — showed an interest in HEMA. Nearly 50 people have recently joined the group in Jakarta and its sister branch in the Javan city of Bandung. The group's name means "Fellowship of Swordsmen" and comes from the Sindarin language, one of the fictional lan-

guages created by Tolkien in his novels, said Ahmad Rizal Souliisa, one of the founding members of the group. HEMA enthusiasts usually pore over manuals left behind by past masters as they learn, train and revive the moves, Souliisa said. But it is not only the fighting and fandom of films that inspire the duellists — they also love studying the history of European sword-fighting. 'WORLD TOURNAMENTS' Sekar Widya Putri did not have high hopes when she was invited by her friend to join the Gwaith-i-Megyr in 2017, but she said she has come to appreciate the education associated with HEMA. "I love learning about such details from the arts — why we need to parry this way, which body parts that are open [to attack]," she said. After years of training, the 30-year-old copywriter wants to see her name on the international HEMA rankings, which track tournaments around the world. There is currently just one Indonesian on that list of 9,000 competitors — a man who took part in a Taiwan tournament in 2019. "I would like to add one more Indonesian to the list," said Putri. — **AFP**

READ

DAUGHTER OF THE DEEP

BY RICK RIORDAN

Ana Dakkar faces the weekend trials at the Harding-Pencroft Academy.



HISTORIC DROUGHE

An aerial view shows the shores and the dam of the artificial lake of the Saint-Peyres in Angles, southwestern France. According to information collected by the observatory managed by the European Commission, the European continent has experienced a historic drought, the worst in nearly 500 years after the Global Drought Observatory (GDO) published a damning report on the current situation in Europe. — **AFP**



MEOW-TIFUL

Cats can be cuddly and cute but did you also know that there is a competition specifically for cats? In Indonesia, this cat is taking part in a cat competition in Banda Aceh. — **AFP**





Dry summer puts squeeze on French Alps cheese

FRANCE'S RECORD heat and drought have not spared the majestic pastures under the snow-capped Alps, where cows are struggling to find enough grass to produce milk for reblochon and other prized cheeses.

"Everything's yellow and parched, so we'll have to bring them down from the pastures a month early," said Theo Bargetzy, 28, as cowbells rang out in a field some 1,600 metres (5,250 feet) above sea level.

Crowds of tourists in search of cooler climes have flocked to the Alps this summer where buying local raw-milk reblochon and other hand-made cheeses directly from local producers is a cherished ritual.

But this year, some heading to Bargetzy's Lorettes farm perched above La Clusaz are coming away empty-handed — cows are not getting their usual fill of fresh grass, and their milk is less rich as a result.

July was the driest month on record for France overall since 1961, and heat waves pushed temperatures near La Clusaz above 30 degrees Celsius (86 Fahrenheit) on several days, unheard-of on the steep slopes.

"We're losing one reblochon per cow per day, so in a week that's 300 fewer cheeses," Bargetzy says later, while moulding fresh curds into discs that will be carefully aged on wooden planks in a cellar until the distinctive orange-gold rind forms.

It takes four litres of milk (just over a gallon) to make each cheese that weighs some 450 grammes (just under a pound) — within the guidelines set by the National Institute of Origin and Quality (INAO), the guardian of France's strict food and wine appellations.

"The worst thing is that this is when we have lots of tourists wanting to buy, and we don't have enough for everyone — we run out, and can't sell to all the people coming to visit," he said.

RAISE PRICES AGAIN?

Dozens of farmers have already dipped into their winter feed stocks, but overall dairy production in the region is down 15 per

cent from last year's levels, according to the AFTA cheese producers' association.

"The situation is difficult — we've had droughts in the past but this is going on everywhere in France, Italy and elsewhere in Europe," said the association's president Jean-Luc Duclos.

Duclos and his family manage a farm with more than 200 cows for making emmental as well as meat near Frangy, with an app-controlled

create a vicious circle of price speculation and hoarding that could hurt farmers for months to come.

"We've already had to raise the prices of our Savoy products... but I think we'll have to raise them again, by around five to eight per cent, to cover the impact of this drought," he said.

What for generations was subsistence farming has become a thriving Alps industry, though most operations are still family affairs

es many countries do not allow because of bacterial risks.

"Our output is down around four or five per cent. It's not a complete catastrophe because some farms are higher up, and temperatures were a little lower than in the valleys," Gallet said.

"But it's true that it's going to have an impact on our volumes, we're hoping to recover this winter but it's going to be hard to make up for what we've already lost," he said.



milking system that would astonish his grandfather, who had "four cows and four hectares to feed 11 children."

He worries that rising costs of feed, gas and electricity since the outbreak of the Ukraine war will

that rely on both local and national networks to distribute their stocks.

Felix Gallet, 46, plays a key role as technical director of the reblochon cooperative in nearby Thones, ensuring the strict hygiene protocols required to sell raw-milk cheeses

Gallet also warned that in response, producers can increase prices only so much.

"It's hard to go much higher, even for high-quality cheese. You have to bear in mind what consumers can pay," he said. — **AFP**

A LOOK INTO THE ACADEME



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Higher Order Thinking Skills, Why It Matters to Students?

TO ACHIEVE GOALS, and build great abilities, students need to acquire thinking skills. Higher order thinking skills are a necessity for learning in the 21st century. In 1956, Benjamin Bloom created these types of thinking which included a set of six cognitive skills into two categories: lower and higher order thinking skills. According to (Hilmi et al. 2022) lower thinking skills include applying simple steps to routine problems and algorithmic with indicators of remembering, understanding, and applying. Whereas higher order thinking is a problem-solving challenge for students who need to comprehend, analyse, or manipulate information with indicators of analysing, evaluating, and creating.

The rationale for developing higher order thinking skills is that the learner lives in a world of unprecedented changes with a massive expansion of new information, and this accelerated progress makes learners need a high level of skills to deal with this increased complexity, it requires reconsideration of the best effective teaching methods. On the other hand, thinking is a cognitive process thinking. To this end, teachers must guide their students to use higher order thinking as lots of students don't have the necessary thinking skills.

In view of the imperative of developing higher order thinking, Mainali (2012) stated that there are five steps to move learners towards higher level thinking, as follows: 1. Determine learning objective: to make high level thinking happen, learning objectives must require students to perform and demonstrate high level thinking. Thus, a well-written lesson plan should target a specific behaviour, introduce, and practice the desired behaviour and end with learner exhibition of the behavioural response. 2. Teach through a question, this technique helps students become more aware of the relationship between textual information and prior knowledge and enables them to make appropriate decisions about which strategies to use as they seek answers to questions. This technique has proven to be especially beneficial for low-achieving students and those with learning differences in the elementary grades. 3. Practice before assessment: practice is necessary to master any skill, students must have the opportunity to practice the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that will be evaluated. For students to participate in higher level thinking, they must pose arguments, state opinions, look for evidence, critique the evidence and think with fair-mindedness. 4. Review, refine and improve: students become responsible for their own learning when teachers monitor class activities, create a supportive environment, and carefully track student participation. Collecting feedback from students about what they have, or have not learned, may present the need to need to offer opportunities for relearning and expose areas in need of improvement. 5. Provide feedback and assessment of learning: students' feedback and assessments provide an immediate and significant source of information for the outcome-based assessment process in evaluation instructional techniques students, achievement, specific learning activities, the course, departmental programme, etc. comparing urticaria and standards to student performance in feedback to students and assessment of course and departmental programmes provides a significant source of information when determining effectiveness".

To conclusion, it can't be deniable the importance of teaching thinking skills in the learning process; since it makes students' role more active, which is reflected in their achievement, and success on school tests. Moreover, higher order thinking skills are not only acquired through the accumulation of information, yet they can be developed out of training, practice, and the design of specialised educational programmes that boost students' ability to be independent learners, and more confident about their mental abilities.



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

From fashion to films — ex-Zara boss Isla starts production company



FORMER CHIEF executive of textile giant Inditex, Pablo Isla, has started his own film production company, saying in a statement on Friday that he hoped to use his “deep passion for film” and business experience to advance Spain’s movie industry.

Isla stepped down from the owner of the global fashion brand Zara in April after more than a decade leading the company’s global expansion, passing the torch to Marta Ortega, the daughter of Inditex owner Amancio Ortega, who took over as non-executive chairwoman.

“I intend to contribute my business experience to the audiovisual world and, based on my deep passion for film, help the development of the thriving Spanish audiovisual industry,” Isla wrote in the statement issued by the new company, Fonte Films.

Founded by Isla alongside Goya Award winning producer Carla Perez de Albeniz and lawyer Maria Jesus Roman, it aims to “develop projects with top technical quality for a global audience and promote new forms of audiovisual expression”.

Following his departure from Inditex in April, Isla has remained a member of the board of Nestlé, joined US private equity firm General Atlantic as a global senior adviser, and became advisory board chairman at Spain’s IE University. — **Reuters**

TRAVEL TALES

Mexico lures visitors on new age tourism trail



WITH RESTORATIVE rituals, yoga retreats and psychedelic experiences, Mexico has become a magnet for spiritually minded tourists seeking an alternative vacation far from the troubles of the modern world.

While many visitors head straight to the beach, a different type of tourist chooses the village of Tepoztlan, a haven for artists and intellectuals an hour’s drive from the capital.

Some of its residents once came for a short stay and found it hard to leave.

“I love the vibes here,” said Ania Bitiutskaia, a 31-year-old Russian living at the foot of the Tepozteco Mountain, the legendary birthplace of the Aztec feathered serpent god Quetzalcoatl.

“People are more relaxed, more spiritual,” she added, browsing an organic market where the sound of a folk guitar and drum beats filled the air.

“I don’t see much news. I almost live in the mountains,” Bitiutskaia said, adding that she prefers to know as little as possible about the war in Ukraine.

The special vibes come at a price: costing upwards of \$50-60 a night, Tepoztlan’s hotels are more expensive than those in many parts of Mexico, which welcomed nearly 32 million foreign tourists last year.

Visitors can also stay in holistic centres offering yoga and meditation.

“Since the pandemic, many people have come to live in Tepoztlan... foreigners as well as people from Mexico City who realised that their energy would be blocked,” said Alizbeth Camacho, of the Luz Azul (Blue Light) holistic center.

Camacho offers guests “aura pictures” to visualise their energy, karma and chakras.

Mexico’s new age tourism dates back to the 1970s, when the anthropologist Carlos Castaneda sold millions of books about the teachings of an Indigenous Yaqui

shaman.

Pre-Hispanic traditions also inspired Miguel Ruiz’s 1997 self-help bestseller “The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom.”

INNER JOURNEY

For some visitors, a vacation in Mexico would not be complete without a different kind of trip — hallucinogenics.

American author Robert Gordon Wasson paved the way in

but after 10 to 15 minutes you’ll laugh, and maybe cry a little,” he added.

Araceli Perez said she decided to try the mushrooms following the deaths of her husband, a doctor, from Covid-19 in 2020.

“I’m looking for answers and acceptance,” she said.

“I want to live and no longer just survive as I think I was doing,” she added.

Another major attraction on Mexico’s new age tourism trail is



the 1950s by revealing the secrets of a traditional healer, Maria Sabina.

Sampling peyote is still possible with Indigenous communities such as the Wixarika, who use the mind-bending drug derived from a cactus in their religious rituals.

And in the mountains of Oaxaca, guides like Pedro Ramirez offer the chance to try magic mushrooms at more than 2,500 metres (8,200 feet) above sea level.

“It’s going to be an inner journey,” said Ramirez, leading a group of Mexicans and foreigners to a clearing in the village of San Jose del Pacifico.

“You might be scared at first,

the temazcal, a kind of Mesoamerican sweat lodge that guide Nicolas Lopez said can “awaken our spirit, our soul.”

Near the Mayan pyramids of Palenque in the southern state of Chiapas, visitors enter Lopez’s heated chamber filled with the aroma of incense and dance to the sound of a tambourine.

“It’s something sacred, pure,” 30-year-old Mexican tourist Valeria Landero said after experiencing the purification ceremony with her husband and teenage daughter.

“It’s about letting it all out, the illnesses, all the bad things, and bringing me pure positivity,” she said. — **AFP**

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



Rasha al Raisi

Love — A Movie Review

WHAT IS LOVE? Is it everlasting the way it’s presented in art and literature? Most importantly, what happens to it after marriage? Does marital bliss exist or is it hard to attain? These questions and more are what director Khalid Rahman tries to answer in his movie *Love*.

The opening scene is of Deepthi (Rajisha Vijayan) in a maternity clinic getting a scan. To the surprise of her doctor, she doesn’t seem too thrilled about being two months pregnant. The scene then moves to her husband Anoop (Shine Tom Chacko) who’s playing a video game and drinking.

He receives a message informing him about the pregnancy that he ignores. Deepthi walks in and they start arguing, a fight breaks and it ends with an accident. After that, Anoops receives three visits: one from his father-in-law whose been calling Deepthi but she never replies, another from his friend (played by Gokulan) whose world is collapsing and is in a suicidal mood and the last is from another friend (played by Sudhi Koppal) who’d brought his girlfriend with him in hope of spending some time with her in Anoop’s flat. The three friends have one thing in common: unhappy marriages.

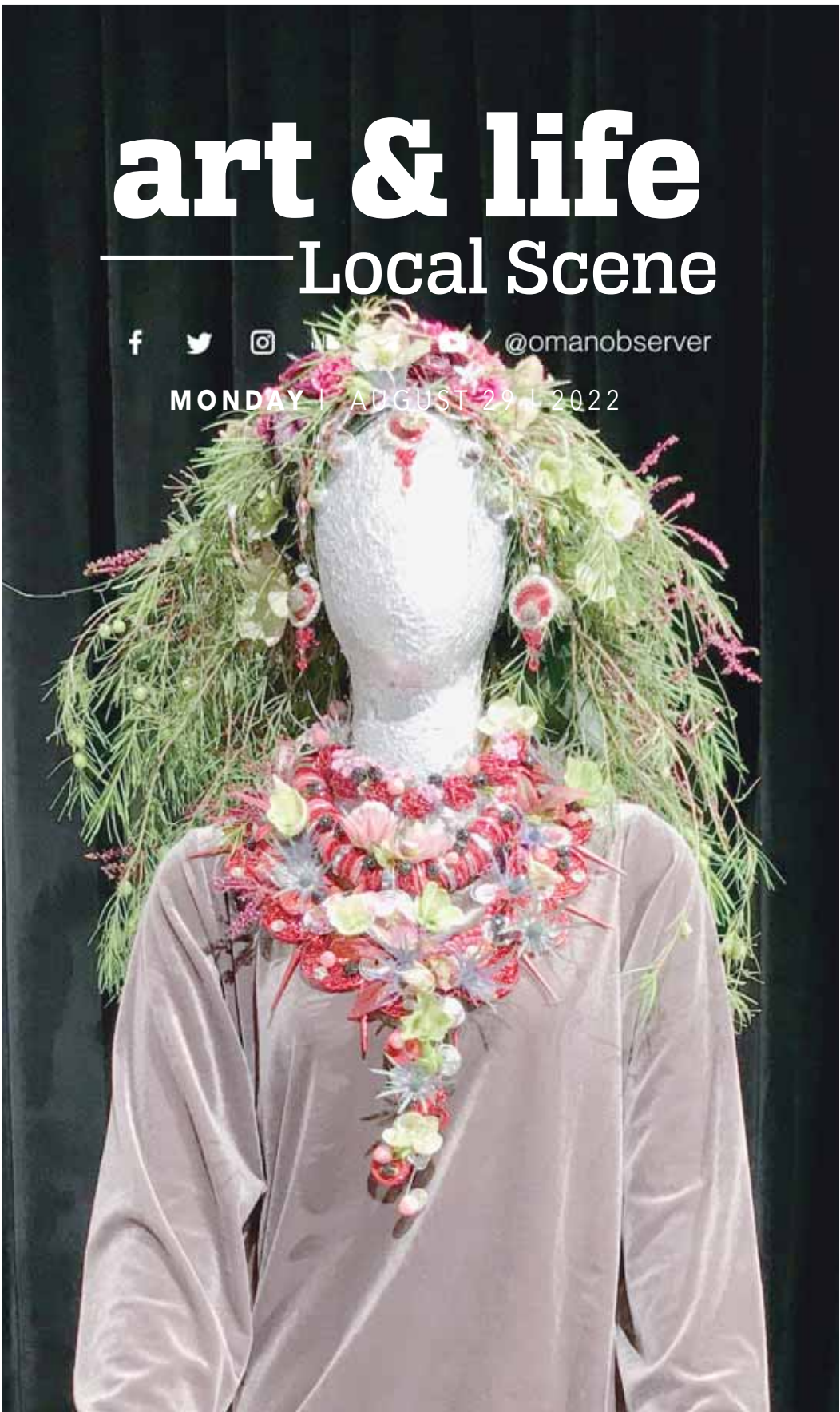
While Anoop is trying to find a way out of his own disaster, he ends up helping his friends to get over their own problems by offering them sincere advice and ways out of tricky situations. The irony is that he fails to see the blatant truth: his friends merely reflect his own marital issues that he’s been failing miserably to resolve. Clearly, Anoop is doing what most of us are guilty of: offering advice that we seldomly follow (an Arabic proverb that describes such situation is: a carpenter’s door with loose hinges). Although the movie only lasts for an hour and a half, yet the whole time you’re at the edge of your seat wanting to know what’s going to happen next.

Shot during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic (and released a year later), the entire movie is set in the couple’s flat. The couple scenes are brilliant as they reflect what is like to be in a toxic relationship that lacks everything that makes a marriage endure: communication, faithfulness, honesty, and openness. However, the domestic violence scenes are shocking as the director uses slow motion to ensure that the viewers are visually and emotionally engaged. The only sign of love that existed between Anoop and Deepthi is in pictures — framed and hung around the flat — of them smiling and happy.

Gokulan’s performance as the edgy yet loyal friend is impeccable. His indecisiveness is irritating and funny at the same time. There are times when I found Anoop’s reactions to certain situation uncharacteristic but the final scenes with Deepthi were flawless. Rajisha Vijayan’s performance as the wife caught up in a miserable marriage and how it reflects upon her being is original.

There is a clever twist as the movie nears the end, yet the ending baffled me and I wished that the director had added a few more minutes to explain it to the unimaginative viewers like me. *Love* was released in the UAE cinemas on October 2020 and became the first Malayalam movie to be screened after Covid-19 restrictions. It didn’t do well in the box office yet when streamed on Netflix, it captured a wider audience. Movie critics recommends to watch it twice in order to pay attention to clues planted in many scenes. Like its title, *Love* is a deceiving movie where reality is often blurred with illusion. Recommended for movie fanatics. Available on Netflix.

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Friendship through flowers: Oman on global floral map

Liju Cherian
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The Sultanate of Oman is fast emerging as a floral destination in the Arabian Gulf region. Oman as member of World Association of Floral Artists (WAFA), an organisation of international floral art societies, will host its mega event called 'Bloom Oman' in Muscat on January 27 to February 1, 2024.

Every three years the show is hosted by a WAFA member country. Formed in 1981, WAFA through its worldwide scope, enhances the diversity of the floral art form by transcending international cultural barriers and bringing together fresh ideas.

Oman thus becomes the first country in the Gulf to have the honour of hosting this prestigious floral event. 'Bloom Oman' will be held at InterContinental Hotel Muscat for six days and will have demonstrations by local and international artists, workshops, competitions, and sightseeing places around Oman. WAFA members will participate in competitions, demonstrations, workshops to enhance the floral art.

Madhvi Ramesh Khimji, honorary country president, WAFA, and the lady responsible for placing the Sultanate of Oman on WAFA and World Flower Council (WFC), mentions that Oman is the first and the only country in the Middle East to become a member of WAFA. Thus 'Bloom Oman', a WAFA Oman event, will be organised by Madhvi and The Art of Flowers Oman.

Says Madhvi, "I am hosting the event with floral artists and friends from Oman with great enthusiasm. As an honorary country president, I am inviting other member countries to participate in this exciting event in beautiful Oman. After a difficult three years of pandemic, I have accepted the proposal from WAFA to host the event in Muscat."

Madhvi creates her own floral

designs with passion and love. "It was indeed a proud moment for me during the London National Alliance Floral Association (NAFA) show when one of my floral structure designs was from Oman. This was displayed during the celebrations in the Winchester Cathedral for Queen Elizabeth II," she adds.

One of the main highlights of her floral career was the creation of Omani silver jewellery with plant materials which was appreciated around the world.

For this she used different dried leaves from the Ramesh Khimji's Farm in Barka which includes materials like betel nut star Anise, small pieces of wood discs, some seeds and other items. Alstroemeria or Peruvian Lily, Cymbidium or boat orchids, or Freesia and Lilium can also be made best use of for floral design.

Madhvi recollects how she got into this amazing art in 2002.

She grew up in South Africa surrounded by the flowers and fauna of Kanji Ved, her father's garden, which led her to her passion in the 1980's. This blossomed her expression through flower arrangements when she began attending flower shows internationally. In 2002 she visited the WAFA flower show in Glasgow which opened her mind to the endless possibilities of flower arrangement with a special modern twist. This later led her to complete a course with NAFA.

From then on, there has been no looking back. She then brought her new experience and knowledge of the art of flowers back to Oman where she began a group for flower arranging.

"I love all the flowers which I use and the materials are what my design calls for," reiterates Madhvi. She began to demonstrate and teach her shared passion with an audience that has grown extensively over the years, popularising flower arranging in Oman. The Khimji's



group later went on to be affiliated with WAFA in 2009.

Residing in Oman since 1973, Madhvi has created a small but enthusiastic floral community in Muscat and regularly shares her learning with them.

Madhvi has attended flower shows and conferences all over the world from the UK, Japan, India, Pakistan, Italy, Australia, China and the US. Extending her knowledge over the years, she has invited esteemed floral artists to Oman to share their knowledge and techniques with Flower Arranging Group and has represented Oman internationally at flower shows and global conferences.

These include international big names in floral design masters like Phubast Chesdmethree from Thailand, Hitomi Gillian from Canada, Mary Franciose from France and Carla Barbaglia from Italy to visit Oman and share their experiences. She came across five different masters and Master Phubast helped and supported her growth.

Oman has been firmly placed on the floral world map thanks to Madhvi's efforts who considers 'flowers and plants' as her loved ones.

"It has been a great journey for me in this very exciting field which I call 'friendship through flowers' as I have made many friends around the world," recalls Madhvi. She has been successful towards getting membership of WAFA and WFC for the Sultanate of Oman as a certified judge demonstrating floral arrangements.

"I love to teach floral art to my friends, students and to popularise the art in Oman. I am also training young Omanis which was held up due to the pandemic," she adds.

"It has been a great journey for me in this very exciting field which I call 'friendship through flowers' and I have made many friends around the world," she says.

She was able to travel to a host of European countries with her daughter Radhika Khimji, an artist. The visits became a turning point in her life espe-



cially to museums which exposed her to flower arranging courses in London obtaining certificates from the UK and Australia. She also took part in floral shows of WAFA and WFC bagging several awards and certificates.

Madhvi attended several WAFA shows across the world, namely in Japan, Pakistan, Boston, Barbados, Ireland and India. In addition, she also participated at the Chelsea Flower Show, WFC shows in Kenya, China and Brisbane.

As Oman gets ready for the big event, her joy knows no bounds and Madhvi is determined to put Oman, her second home, on the global floral map. "It will be a big event and an eye opener for those interested in floral art," she concludes.