

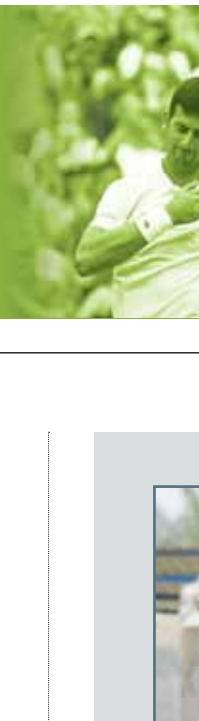
Campaign to tow away abandoned vehicles

Muscat Municipality has stepped up the campaign to tow away abandoned vehicles from parking slots in commercial and residential areas in the city. Starting with the Wilayat of Al Seeb, a number of vehicles were towed away to a scrapyard to prevent the distortion of the general appearance of the city. **SEE P2**



P12

DJOKOVIC, ALCARAZ CLOSE IN ON WIMBLEDON DUEL



P13

135 KEY ENABLERS TO RAMP UP OMAN'S INVESTMENT APPEAL



P19

KAZAKHSTAN MULLS ENDANGERED ANTELOPE CULL AFTER POPULATION BOOM



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO BELARUS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent greetings to President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to President Lukashenko wishing him good health and happiness and the friendly Belarusian people further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**

ROP BID TO EASE KHAREEF TRAFFIC

The Directorate-General of Airport Security at Royal Oman Police (ROP) is making great efforts to ease passenger traffic through Oman's airports during Khareef season in Dhofar Governorate and is providing different kinds of support and services to the visitors in accordance to the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in the Sultanate of Oman. **SEE P3**

INSIDE



UKRAINE MAYOR ACCUSES RUSSIA OF USING CLUSTER BOMBS

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HYDROPOWER A BAD BARGAIN

P9



OMAN CONDOLES WITH IRAN ON QUAKE DEATHS

The Foreign Ministry expressed the Sultanate of Oman's condolences and sympathy to the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the victims of the earthquake that hit Hormozgan Province in southern Iran on Saturday morning, wishing the injured speedy recovery. **SEE P6**

MORE RAINS LIKELY DUE TO LOW PRESSURE

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Several wilayats like Jabal Al Akhdhar, Samayil as well as some parts of North Al Sharqiyah, Ibra received heavy rains on Saturday as low pressure systems approaches from the Indian Peninsula to the Arabian Sea and the Sea of Oman.

While heavy rains continued around Al Hajar Mountains due to local cloud development, convective clouds had been gathering up for the

western Hajar and moving to the eastern Hajar bringing heavy rains and by Saturday evening scattered clouds covered Al Wusta Governorate.

The Meteorologist from the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre of Civil Aviation Authority while speaking to 'Observer' said

The low pressure is related to the monsoon and Inter Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), explained the meteorologist.

The latest weather map forecasts

that the extensions of low pressure might affect the Sultanate of Oman on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

"By this low pressure some scattered and broken clouds have headed to coastal areas of northern parts of Oman. It would enhance the local cloud activities especially in the governorates of Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah, North and South Al Batinah, North and South Al Sharqiyah and some parts of Muscat especially south of Muscat — Al Amerat and Qurayat. The impact is also expected in the plains and deserts of Al Dhahirah, Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Sharqiyah.

The alert is expected to continue for Tuesday and Wednesday for Al Hajar Mountains and the mountainous areas in the mentioned governorates. The amount of rain is currently forecast to be ranging between 15-40 millimetres.

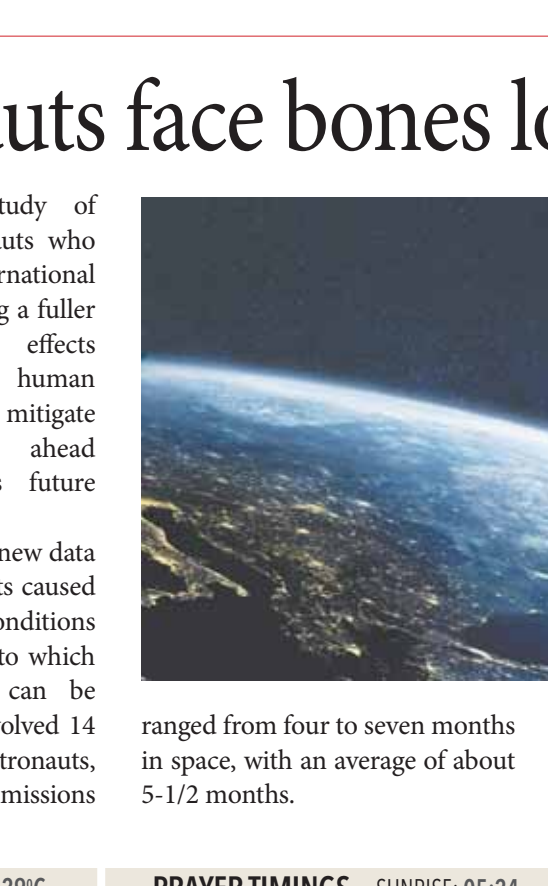
The Arabian Sea is expected to be rough with a wave height of four metres.



Adventure centre in Khasab among RO 960m projects

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion works has unveiled five tourism projects for investment and development — an initiative it has launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and a number of private sector companies. Total investment in the five projects is estimated at RO 960 million.

Notable is a proposal for the development of a National Leisure and Tourism Destination at Barka in South Al Batinah Governorate. Other schemes for investments pertain to the Madinat Al Irfan development in Muscat Governorate and another project in the Wilayat of Bausher — also in the capital city. Rounding off the list is a proposal for an adventure centre at Khasab in Musandam Governorate. **SEE ALSO P13**



GRAPES HARVEST BEGINS

Farmers begin to harvest garpes and market their farm produce in various traditional markets. During these days, the crop is offered at auction in the markets of the wilayats of Nakhli, Rustaq and Nizwa. **SEE ALSO P2**

200 Omani job seekers to get training in maritime sector

MUSCAT: Asyad Group, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Ministry of Labour signed a memorandum of understanding to train 200 national job-seekers.

The programme aims to sharpen the skills of national cadres and enable them to assume leadership positions. The training will be implemented in

phases the first of which is the theoretical phase which will be followed by training on ships. The programme is in line with the efforts being made by Asyad Group to boost Omanisation in the transport and logistics sector in Oman in partnership with the MoL and the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology which will provide technical support. — **ONA**

Astronauts face bones loss after space travel

WASHINGTON: A study of bone loss in 17 astronauts who flew aboard the International Space Station is providing a fuller understanding of the effects of space travel on the human body and steps that can mitigate it, crucial knowledge ahead of potential ambitious future missions.

The research amassed new data on bone loss in astronauts caused by the microgravity conditions of space and the degree to which bone mineral density can be regained on Earth. It involved 14 male and three female astronauts, average age 47, whose missions



ranged from four to seven months in space, with an average of about 5-1/2 months.

A year after returning to Earth, the astronauts on average exhibited 2.1 per cent reduced bone mineral

density at the tibia — one of the bones of the lower leg — and 1.3 per cent reduced bone strength. Nine did not recover bone mineral density after the space flight, experiencing permanent loss.

"We know that astronauts lose bone on long-duration spaceflight. What's novel about this study is that we followed astronauts for one year after their space travel to understand if and how bone recovers", said University of Calgary professor Leigh Gabel, an exercise scientist who was the lead author of the research published in the journal 'Scientific Reports'. — **Reuters**



Grapes harvest revving up traditional markets

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

The villages located on the slopes of the Hajar Mountains are famous for the cultivation of a number of seasonal crops, the most important of which are grapes, mountain pomegranates and apricots. This time of the year, the farmers of these mountain villages begin to harvest the fruits and market their farm produce in various traditional markets.

“Grape cultivation requires special effort and care by irrigating regularly, fertilising, and pruning the branches from time to time,” the farmers say.

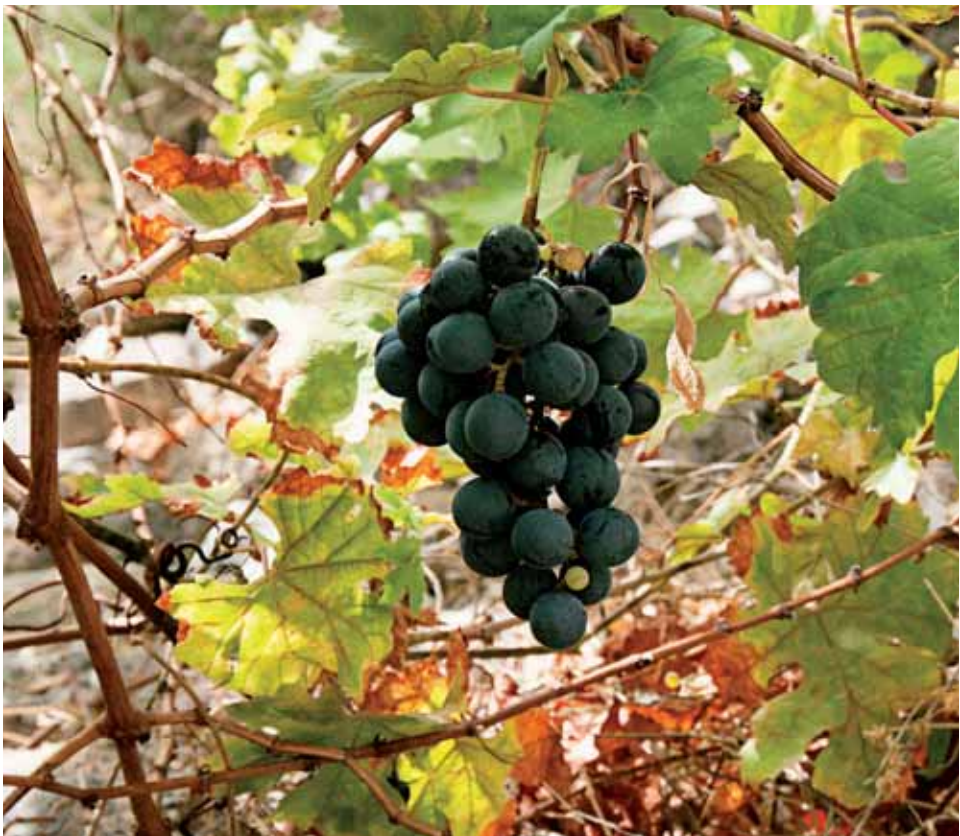
During these days, the crop is offered at auction in the markets of the wilayats of Nakhil, Rustaq and Nizwa, and the grapes are also sold to tourists who frequent these villages during the holidays.

The grape harvest season activates economic activity and boosts trade in the Omani markets with the supply of various agricultural products.

Grapes are widely cultivated in high altitude areas and villages because they need moderate and cool climate during their growth. Therefore, it is easy for farmers in mountainous areas to grow many varieties of fruits that cannot or are difficult to grow in dry or hot areas. It is this feature that characterises the mountainous villages in Oman.

In irrigating vineyards, farmers depend on the falaj system, where they are keen to store rainwater and use the flowing falaj water to irrigate their farms throughout the year. Omanis have been keen on building dozens of water channels in the mountainous terrains to be able to carry water to great distances.

The farmers highlighted the necessity of allocating large areas for the cultivation of grapes, and they stressed the importance of providing high quality fertilisers in large quantities.



The grape is widely cultivated in high altitude areas and villages because it needs moderate to cool climates during their growth. Its harvest season kicks up economic activity and boosts trade in the Omani markets

For the cultivation grapes, farmers place wooden poles and ceilings in the form of squares, ensuring that the grapevine climbs in a position commensurate with its nature, thus making it easier for farmers to reap the grapes that hang from the roofs of these wooden poles.

The farmers affirm that the grape has health benefits, the most important of which are: it reduces incidence of cancers, heart and arterial diseases, besides diabetes, which are common in Oman.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has adopted a project to develop grape cultivation and production in the country with the aim of expanding the cultivated areas using modern irrigation system methods, and urging farmers to market the produce using modern methods.

The project aims to develop the grape cultivation and increase its productivity in various governorates, and to train and qualify a number of farmers on how to use modern technologies to grow, produce, harvest and market grapes. This project also aims to establish specialised farms for the cultivation and production of high-yielding varieties of grapes, in addition to establishing genetic banks for grape varieties for the purpose of future propagation and research.

Municipality campaign to tow away abandoned vehicles

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samuelkuttyp

Muscat Municipality has stepped up the campaign to tow away abandoned vehicles from parking slots in commercial and residential areas in the city.

Starting with the Wilayat of Al Seeb, a number of vehicles were towed away to a scrapyard to prevent the distortion of the general appearance of the city.

“As they obstruct roads and cause traffic and nuisance to pedestrians, our colleagues in Al Seeb towed away vehicles neglected at the commercial and residential areas in the wilayat, after the expiry of time period given to take them away,” the municipality said in its twitter handle sharing images of the vehicles.

A number of citizens and residents reacted to the posts by bringing to fore the menace that the abandoned vehicles pose in their respective areas.

Officials have been making field visits to monitor abandoned vehicles, especially near tourist attractions, main streets, workshops, warehouses and open parking spaces.

“Some cars have been parked here for years. They are a risk to our health and safety as they may

Officials have been making field visits to monitor abandoned vehicles, especially near tourist attractions, main streets, workshops, warehouses and open parking spaces.

contain hazardous waste. It is time they move them,” said a response from Al Khuwair.

Speaking to the Observer, a municipality official said that the campaign aims at raising the level of awareness on the damage done by neglected vehicles to the city and its appearance.

“This also intends to promote the values of social responsibility in maintaining the sustainability of the public appearance and beauty of public utilities,” he said.

According to the official, leaving vehicles in public places unattended for a longer period of time violates the administrative decision No 171/2018 issued by Muscat Municipality.

“Articles in the decision prohibit owners of vehicles from leaving them in public places in a way that distorts the general appearance of



the place while stipulating that the municipality shall place a warning poster on vehicles which are found to be abandoned,” he said.

If the owner of the vehicle fails to comply, the municipality can tow away those vehicles at the expense of the owner, 14 days from the date of placing the warning poster

without taking any responsibility for damage to the vehicle during transportation to the scrapyard.

According to the decision, an administrative fine of RO 200 will be imposed on owners of cars or buses that carry less than 15 passengers and bicycles. While the fine will be RO 400 for trucks,

vehicles used for transporting hazardous materials will be slapped with RO 1,000. Vehicle owners will be fined RO 5 a day in case of delay.

The municipality will coordinate with the Royal Oman Police to take action to sell those vehicles in a public auction in case the owner of the vehicle fails to appeal to the

municipality to take the vehicle, and pay the fees due within 90 days from the date of towing away the vehicle.

In the capital city of Muscat, it is common to see vehicles covered in dust at different parking places unattended for months, indicating they have been abandoned.



ROP bid to ease traffic through airports during khareef

MUSCAT: The Directorate-General of Airport Security at Royal Oman Police (ROP) is making great efforts to ease passenger traffic through Oman's airports during Khareef season in Dhofar Governorate and is providing different kinds of support and services to the visitors in accordance to the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in the Sultanate of Oman.

In exclusive comments to ONA, Brigadier Ali bin Mohammed al Nofali, Director-General of Airport Security, affirmed that the preparations for receiving an increased inflow of visitors at Salalah Airport have been completed.

He noted that Salalah Airport has received more trained staff and advanced equipment and technology in order to enhance the safety and security level. Besides, the technical support team is working round-the-clock to ensure that the systems are functioning properly to handle any technical emergency.

The Directorate-General of Airport Security is striving to spread the security system in all the civil airports of the Sultanate of Oman in coordination with the other departments including the Directorate-General of Combating Narcotic Drugs



Brigadier Ali bin Mohammed al Nofali, Director-General of Airport Security, said preparations for receiving an increased inflow of visitors at Salalah Airport have been completed. Salalah Airport has received more trained staff and advanced equipment and technology in order to enhance the safety and security level

and Psychotropic Substances at Muscat International Airport, which plays a major role in combating and controlling all crimes related to drugs and



psychotropic substances. Besides, the Customs Department at Muscat International Airport plays a major role in combating smuggling operations whether by persons or shipments and prevents the entry of illicit, hazardous, adulterated and counterfeit materials that are harmful to human health and safety, he added.

The Customs Department at Muscat International Airport managed, over the past year, to foil many attempts to smuggle contraband and successfully handled other cases related to submission of fake documents and non-disclosure of goods, the official said, advising the people wishing to import any goods from abroad to communicate with the customs authorities to check the restrictions on the goods in order not to get involved in violations upon their arrival at the airport.

Regarding the danger of receiving goods on behalf of others and bringing them into the Sultanate of Oman without knowing their content, the Director-General of Airport Security said that this is one of the wrong actions committed by some travellers in good faith and with the intention of assistance. By doing so, some travellers get involved in legal accountability when they unknowingly carry illicit or banned items. — ONA

Heart attacks among young adults a cause for concern

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

'Pulse', a health event on 'heart attack among young adults', a topic that has been a concern for many, drew a large number of people.

Organised by the Ministry of Health, represented by the Higher Institute of Health Specialties (HIHS), Adult Critical Care Nursing Programme 2021-2022, the event was held recently under the patronage of HH Dr Taghreed al Said, and in the presence of Dr Manal bint Abdul Majeed al Zadjali, HIHS Dean, along with a number of officials, academics, teaching staff, and students of the Institute.

HH Dr Taghreed al Said, speaking to the Observer, said that she was impressed with this event mainly because it highlighted important points to the public.

"One of the important points is that people generally think that one has to reach a certain age to develop heart conditions, or have a heart attack or visit a doctor for check-up. What I heard was that around 5,000 people have heart-related issues and this has also begun to include young adults and even younger ones, which means we need to look into this further," she said.

She added that even people who are active and engage in sports have been noted to develop heart conditions, indicating there is a genetic aspect and acquired part.

"Another interesting point the event focused on is the need for people to learn about first aid to save lives. I did not know about the crucial four minutes to save a person who is going through a heart attack. The fact is you can do quite a bit at home before getting the person to the hospital," pointed out HH Dr Taghreed.

In recent months there has been



People should learn to do a CPR to rescue the life of a person. It is known that if you rescue a person in the first few minutes of a heart attack you are actually increasing the chances of survival of that person

increasing discussions on heart attacks and causes in the social media.

"People are puzzled with some blaming on Covid or vaccinations. People come up with rumours and consequently people do not understand what is going on. Today we can see lots of efforts are done, and I think we all have to get together to work on this – we need to educate children in schools on how wrong habits and lifestyles, eating fast food, sitting for long, and not being active all this needs to be changed," she explained.

Meanwhile, Dr Manal al Zadjali said that the postgraduate students regularly organise activities for adult care programme. They



felt these days heart attacks are becoming common.

"There is no specific age,

they are younger people getting affected so people are connecting to Covid, vaccine and so on.

However, we wanted people to realise that there are other factors, which can play a role in one getting the disease. That is why the students have chosen the name of the programme as 'Pulse'. The pulse means heartbeat and it is known that there predisposing factors and precipitating factors. The predisposing factors are those that dispose from yourself – such as genetics but there are precipitating factors such as sedentary lifestyle that is very common. We also see the gift of globalisation and modernisation — the junk food. We can observe the stressful life we are living and factors like people not going out because of the heat. All of this

causes stress on our heart because it all comes back to our body," explained Dr Manal al Zadjali.

According to Dr Manal al Zadjali, the whole objective of the event was to talk to the public about what they should be careful about. For example, people are drinking a lot of fizzy drinks and sodas, sugar-coated products. People are not moving out of their offices. We say that there should be a minimum of 30 minutes of walking or household activities to make our lives more healthier. Doing some meditation and prayers or even sitting down to think quietly makes a difference.

The event also had a session on CPR where experts showed what should be done if someone falls sick at home.

"People should learn to do a CPR to rescue the life of a person. It is known that if you rescue a person in the first few minutes of a heart attack you are actually increasing the chances of survival of that person," she pointed out.

A number of governmental and private authorities including the National Health Centre at the Royal Hospital, Royal Oman Police, Medical Services of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Oman Heart Association, and Heart and Vascular Center attended the event. A visual presentation was presented on "Heart Attacks" prepared by students of the Critical Care Nursing Programme for Adults at the Higher Institute of Health Specialties. The event also included an exhibition that highlighted disease onset, risk factors, disease causes, mental health, definition of heart attacks, methods of prevention, rehabilitation and healthy nutrition, the risks leading to heart attacks, their symptoms, methods of treatment and treatment of heart attacks.



Drive safe to Salalah



SAMUEL KUTTY

[@samuelkuttyvp](https://twitter.com/samuelkuttyvp)

A pleasant weather awaits visitors to Salalah, the summer paradise in the Sultanate of Oman. However, authorities have urged caution while driving to the tourist destination.

“Since it is khareef season in the Governorate of Dhofar, a lot of vehicular movement is expected on the Adam-Salalah route. Special bulletins will help travellers to take necessary road safety precautions,” the Oman Meteorology Department has said.

“Traffic looks set to be stronger for this time thanks to the Eid holiday break as more people will be travelling to Salalah to escape the scorching heat in other parts of the country and region,” an official at the Met Department told the Observer.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority announced its readiness to provide all services to citizens, residents and visitors of Dhofar Governorate during the khareef season.

First Lieutenant Musallam al Amri said field teams have been placed at different locations and command centres along the many carriageways to provide assistance to travellers.

“These teams, in addition to creating awareness on safety and guide the travellers, help people reach their destination without any damage to life and property,” he said while urging visitors to follow the Authority’s media platforms to check

out and benefit from brochures and awareness messages.

During this time of the year which is known locally as khareef, Salalah turns into lush greenery. With intermittent rains, misty fogs and green pastures, Salalah and its surrounding areas are visited by people during the three-month period of pleasant weather.

With Eid al Adha holidays already announced, the hospitality industry along with other sectors in this summer destination is expecting a tourism peak in contrast to the last two years when coronavirus restrictions dampened travel.

“Visitors have already started arriving. The coming weekend, which coincides with Eid al Adha holidays, will see Salalah humming with thousands of them,” said Hamoud al Alawi, a customer care official and guide at a hotel.

Hotels and tour operators have already come up with different packages which include single full-day tours to even week-long accommodation in hotels, return airport transfer to people who are eager to book a holiday staycation.

All big hotels are showing good occupancy all through July and August. Furnished apartments are in good supply in areas like Saada, Dahariz, Sahalnut and Awqd.

Demand for local agriculture products goes very high during the khareef season. This is also the time traditional markets become alive with buying traditional Omani items from clothing to gold and silver handicrafts, and of course a wide variety of frankincense.

“Eid holidays and khareef are the times when we do maximum business. There were no people during the last two years. We expect good demand for products like coconut, papaya and bananas this time,” said Mohamed Usman, roadside fruit seller.



New batch of officers to graduate on Tuesday



MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) will celebrate the graduation of a new batch of specialised university officers at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences in Nizwa on Tuesday, under the auspices of Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior. The graduation ceremony will be attended by senior officials, commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Oman Police and the other military and security forces and families of the graduates. – ONA

Dates harvest, processing under way

MUSCAT: With a diverse landscape that is ideal for growing date palm, the Sultanate of Oman is home to over 100 varieties of dates, each with its own unique qualities and production value.

Oman's role in global dates production has been growing significantly and with the 1 Million Dates Project, its position as dates producer will be dramatically felt not only in the region but internationally in the coming years.

From mid-May when the heat ripens the fruit, the date harvest gets into full swing. A man climbs up to the tree's crown to harvest them. Dates are then brought to market in places such as Rustaq, Samayil and Sinaw, or pre-sold to a date-packing factory.

The harvest season for dates has already begun in the Sultanate of Oman.

The traditional date harvest season, called 'Jidad' or 'Al Tabseel', is still followed across the country. It starts in June and continues until September, depending on the type of palm tree and the method of harvesting.

Al Sharqiyah is the first governorate in Oman to start the harvest season in June continuing to July.

Date farming is of great economic and social importance in Oman. The date palm is the primary agricultural crop in the country, and it constitutes 80 per cent of all fruit crops produced and 50 per cent of the total agricultural area in the country.

Traditionally, village date farms were family run and a palm tree would often be planted for the birth of a son. This tree would grow with him and provide nourishment throughout his lifetime.

Given Oman's high urbanisation rates, palm tree owners may no longer live in the village — but date farming is still very much a family affair.



A man harvests Mabsali dates from a date palm in Bidiya, 220 km east of Muscat. – AFP



Immunology workshop organised

MUSCAT: Business International Group LLC, a division of the Zubair Corporation, recently organised a scientific talk and immunology workshop at the Crowne Plaza Muscat. The workshop was conducted in coordination with its principal company, SNIBE Diagnostics, a Global Bio-Medical Company specialised in clinical laboratory instruments and in vitro diagnostic reagents.

Sunny Peter, General Manager, who highlighted the importance of the workshop, said it followed the BIG and SNIBE partnership discussions making the the best use of mutual capabilities, expertise and resources to enable the latter to introduce the products and technologies to healthcare institutions and professionals across Oman. "We are proud to be partnered with SNIBE and align with their innovations that will benefit the local medical industry," he added.

The event saw the presence of around 65 delegates, including senior consultants in biochemistry, microbiology and immunology.

Also in attendance were medical pathologists and several laboratory professionals from various institutions across the country, such as the Ministry of Health, the Royal Hospital, Khoula Hospital, Al Nahdha Hospital, SQU Hospital, Royal Oman Police Hospital and Ministry of Defence Hospital.

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (20/2022)

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

Tender No.	E- Tender No.	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/22/060	2022/MM/QS-30	Beautification Works at Al Rawdah in Quriyat (E- Tender)	Rial 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	Second
PRE/22/061	2022/MM/QS-31	Faced Clock System Replacement at Muscat Municipality Building, Darsait (E- Tender)	Rial 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	Specialist
PRE/22/065	2022/MM/QS-32	Proposed Parking in AL Mabellah South (Hey Al Walaa) (E- Tender)	Rial 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	First
PRE/22/066	2022/MM/QS-33	Proposed Parking in AL Mabellah South (Hey Al Shorooq) (E- Tender)	Rial 25	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	First
PRE/22/055	2022/MM/HQ-5	Design and Improvement of Al Jami Roundabout and Drainage Works near to Maizoon Mosque (E- Tender)	Rial 300	23/07/2022	11/08/2022	Excellent

Tender Conditions :-

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

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces the following Tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
6/2022	Supply, instillation, testing and commissioning a new data center infrastructure in MOI premises in Salalah	International Excellent	14/7/2022	14/8/2022	25/-
7/2022	Supply, Development, Implementation and Support "Ain"	Interantional Excellent	21/7/2022	31/8/2022	25/-

- All specialized companies in the field of the tenders shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

- Bidder shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of the a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to the Ministry of Information. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for (90) days. Any tenderers which do not meet the required bond shall not accept. Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

Note: The original bank guarantee should be submitted to the General Directorate of Administrative and Financial Affairs, Project Depatment Building at Ministry of Information, if it **Requested**.

- The Ministry has the right to:
 - Add or Cancel some works in the tender if necessary.
 - Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943093, 24943785, Email id: (projects@part.gov.om)



SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH ANNOUNCEMENT



The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 08:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/HQ-112/2022	Provision of Operation and Maintenance Services for Equipment at Khoula Hospital in Muscat Governorate	07/July/2022	27/July/2022	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in The Excellent Grade	R.O 220.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-113/2022	Provision of Operation and Maintenance Services for Equipment at Ibra Hospital and Its Affiliated Health Units in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate				R.O 260.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-114/2022	Provision of Operation and Maintenance Services for Equipment at Sohar Hospital and its Affiliated Health Units in North Al Batinah Governorate				R.O 290.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-115/2022	Supply of Surgical Items (Cardiac)			Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 50.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-116/2022	Supply of Surgical Items (Cochlear Implants)				R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-117/2022	Supply of Surgical Items (Dental)				
MOH/HQ-121/2022	Supply of surgical items (Rehabitation, Orthotic & Prosthetic)	03/August/2022		Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in The Excellent Grade	R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-122/2022	Supply of Pharmaceuticals for The Royal Hospital				R.O 30.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-124/2022	Supply of Pharmaceuticals				
MOH/HQ-125/2022	Maintenance Works at the Royal Hospital			Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 27.500 Per set
MOH/HQ-126/2022	Supply of Surgical Items for Insulin Infusion Pump at the Royal Hospital				R.O 25.000 Per set
MOH/HQ-127/2022	Supply of Surgical Items for Insulin Infusion Pump at the Royal Hospital				

- Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> enclose **Electronic Bank Guarantee** issued by a Local bank for not less than One percent (1%) for the Tender value validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date, addressed to The Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om.



Channel crossings: June sees record number of migrants

LONDON: More than 3,000 migrants crossed the English Channel to the UK in June - the highest monthly total this year.

Some 3,136 made the crossing on 76 boats in the 30-day period, with journeys taking place on 19 of those days, according to PA news agency analysis of government figures.

Of the 12,690 people who made the journey in the first half of this year, the second highest month for crossings was 3,074 in March.

After navigating busy shipping lanes from France in small boats such as dinghies, 2,871 made the crossing in May, 143 in April, 1,322 in January and 144 in February, according to Home Office figures for the first quarter of the year and subsequent data collected by the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

The highest month on record since 2018 was for 6,971 crossings in November 2021.

The total for 2022 so far is more than five times the amount recorded between January and June 2020 (2,493) and more than double the six-month tally for the first half of last year (5,917).

Crossings continued on Thursday with 94 people arriving in Dover, Kent, in two boats.

A change in the weather saw activity slow on Friday.

The figures indicate 51,824 people have made the crossing since 2018.

Home Office figures show 28,526 crossed in 2021, compared with 8,466 in 2020, 1,843 in 2019 and 299 in 2018.

Despite the increasing numbers, the UK's small boat arrivals are a fraction of the number of people going to Europe.

Data from the UN Refugee Agency shows at least 120,441 people arrived in Europe via the Mediterranean by land and sea in 2021.

Earlier this week, British Home Secretary Priti Patel struck a fresh deal with Nigeria, which her department said will do more to tackle "illegal migration" and speed up the "removal of foreign criminals." At the same time, the Home Office said 13 people who had "no right to be in the UK" were deported to Nigeria, with a further eight flown to Ghana.

— dpa

STRONG QUAKES KILL 5 IN SOUTHERN IRAN

TEHRAN: A series of strong earthquakes rocked southern Iran on Saturday, killing at least five people, injuring over 80 others and flattening dozens of buildings.

The quakes, including two of magnitude 6.0, struck west of the major port city of Bandar Abbas in Hormozgan province, the US Geological Survey said.

The first rattled an area north of the town of Dezhgan shortly after 2 am, before a 5.7 tremor hit two hours later followed quickly by the second 6.0 magnitude quake, said the USGS.

Hormozgan governor Mehdi Dousti said five people were killed, as cited by the official news agency IRNA.

Dousti told state television that the village of Sayeh Khosh, close to the epicentre, had been completely destroyed.

"84 people were injured out of whom only 15 are still in hospital for treatment," national emergency services spokesman Mojtaba Khaleli told state television.

The state broadcaster showed video footage of residential buildings reduced to rubble in Sayeh Khosh, which was plunged into darkness in a power outage.

Ambulances and other vehicles tried to navigate roads covered in debris as shocked residents took to the streets or tried to recover items from their flattened homes.

People also spent the night outdoors in the provincial capital Bandar Abbas, with a population of more than 500,000, located about 100 kilometres east of the epicentre, where long queues formed in front of gas stations, state media reported.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi visited Hormozgan province and



A car is seen under the rubble after an earthquake in Sayeh Khosh village in Hormozgan, Iran. — Reuters

Restoring water and electricity are among the government's top priorities, says Iranian Interior Minister

told state television that restoring water and electricity are among the government's top priorities.

Iran's Red Crescent Society said in the morning that search and rescue operations were nearly over.

"We are concentrating on housing the victims of the earthquake," Dousti told television.

Iran sits astride the boundaries of several major tectonic plates and experiences frequent seismic activity.

The Islamic republic's deadliest quake was a 7.4-magnitude tremor in 1990 that killed 40,000 people in the north, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless.

In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake in southeastern Iran levelled the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killed at least 31,000 people.

In November 2017, a 7.3-magnitude quake in Iran's western province of Kermanshah killed 620 people.

In December 2019 and January 2020, two earthquakes struck near Iran's Bushehr nuclear power plant.

Iran's Gulf Arab neighbours have raised concerns about the reliability of the country's sole nuclear power facility, which produces 1,000 megawatts of power, and the risk of radioactive leaks in case of a major earthquake.

In February 2020, a magnitude 5.7 earthquake in northwestern Iran killed nine people, including children, in neighbouring Turkey and injured dozens on both sides of the border.

One person was killed in November last year when Hormozgan province was hit by twin 6.4 and 6.3 magnitude quakes. — AFP

Ukraine mayor accuses Russia of using cluster bombs

KIEV: Russia is using banned cluster munitions in attacks on the city of Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine, leading to the deaths of at least four people, according to accusations by Ukrainian officials.

The overnight strikes hit civilian areas where there are no military facilities, Sloviansk Mayor Vadim Lyakh wrote on messaging service Telegram.

Seven people were also injured, he said.

Cluster munitions are rockets and bombs that burst in the air over a target and release many smaller explosive devices. Their use is illegal under an international

convention. Information from the combat zones in Ukraine is difficult or impossible to independently verify.

The Russian war against Ukraine has now lasted more than four months, with the stated aims of controlling the east and southern parts of the country.

Kiev said on Saturday that Russian forces were continuing their attacks across a broad front in eastern Ukraine.

In the Kharkiv region near the northern border with Russia, the Russian army is trying to recapture lost positions with the support of



A view shows damaged buildings, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in Bakhmut, Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine. — Reuters

artillery, the Ukrainian general staff said.

Explosions were also reported from the Mykolaiv region in the south early on Saturday, although the Ukrainian side had no concrete details.

Two weapons depots near the city of Mykolaiv were among military targets that were destroyed, Russian Defence Ministry spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said, according to the TASS news agency.

In the east, a weapons store in a tractor depot near Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, was

hit, he said. In the Donetsk region, a Russian attack was repelled, the Ukrainian side said.

Additionally, pro-Russian separatist forces claim they have fully encircled the embattled city of Lysychansk with help from Russian forces.

Separatist spokesperson Andrey Marochko told the Interfax news agency that "the last strategically important heights" have been taken.

Ramzan Kadyrov, the president of the Russian republic of Chechnya, said Russian troops have already reached Lysychansk's centre.

— dpa

SHORT TAKES

SHANGHAI

China lashed by year's first typhoon

China's first typhoon of the year brought gales and rain to its southern shores as forecasters warned of record rainfall and high disaster risk in provinces including Guangdong, the country's most populous.

Typhoon Chaba, the Thai name for the hibiscus flower, was moving northwest at 15 to 20 km per hour after the eye of the storm made landfall in Guangdong's Maoming city, the National Meteorological Center said. Chaba is likely to bring



extremely heavy rains and may break the record for cumulative rainfall as it pulls the monsoon rain belt in the region inland, said the centre's chief forecaster.

— Reuters

MANILA

Marcos appoints career diplomat as foreign minister

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos appointed career diplomat Enrique Manalo as foreign affairs secretary, the president's press secretary said.

Before the appointment, Manalo served as the Philippine Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York.

Prior to that, he was under-secretary for policy at the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Manalo has asked for a few days before he takes over the



position previously held by Teodoro Locsin so he could wind up affairs in his previous post, press secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles said in a text message. — Reuters

KABUL

Taliban's gathering calls for global recognition

A Taliban-run gathering of thousands of male religious and ethnic leaders ended by asking foreign governments to formally recognise their administration, but made no signals of changes on international demands.

The Afghan economy has plunged into crisis as western governments have withdrawn funding and strictly enforced sanctions, saying the Taliban government needs to change.

"We ask regional and international countries, to recognise the



Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan ... release all sanctions, unfreeze (central bank) funds and support in development of Afghanistan," the gathering's participants said.

— Reuters

Some monarch butterfly populations are rising. Is it enough to save them?



Emily Anthes

Every autumn, swarms of migrating monarchs descend on the mountains of central Mexico. It is the final stop on a journey of thousands of miles, as the butterflies travel from their North American breeding grounds to their winter colonies, where they blanket fir trees. Visitors who time their trips correctly might find the air so thick with monarchs that they can hear the butterflies' wings beating.

"That's bucket-list stuff", said Andrew Davis, an ecologist at the University of Georgia, Athens. "Imagine being surrounded by gazillions of butterflies. It's a magical experience."

It is also one that may not last. In recent decades, the number of monarchs spending the winter in Mexico and overwintering sites in Southern California has plummeted, prompting concerns that the species might be at serious risk of disappearing.

But a new study, which focuses on the size of the summer breeding population, could complicate that picture. Although summer monarch abundance has declined in some areas, including parts of the Midwest, it has increased in others, the scientists found. Overall, across the entire North American range, abundance held steady or even increased slightly between 1993 and 2018, according to the paper, which was published Friday in *Global Change Biology*.

The findings suggest that so far monarch populations have been able to recover enough during the summer breeding season to make up for winter declines, the researchers say.

"So it's not really a production problem", said Davis, an author of the new paper. "We don't have fewer monarchs. We have fewer monarchs reaching the wintering colonies."

But not all scientists agree with that interpretation of the findings, which seem likely to fuel an ongoing debate about the threats monarchs face and the causes of the well-documented winter declines.

"There are some areas where monarch numbers are going up a little bit, but those aren't the heart of the breeding range", said Karen Oberhauser, a conservation biologist at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who was not involved in the new research.

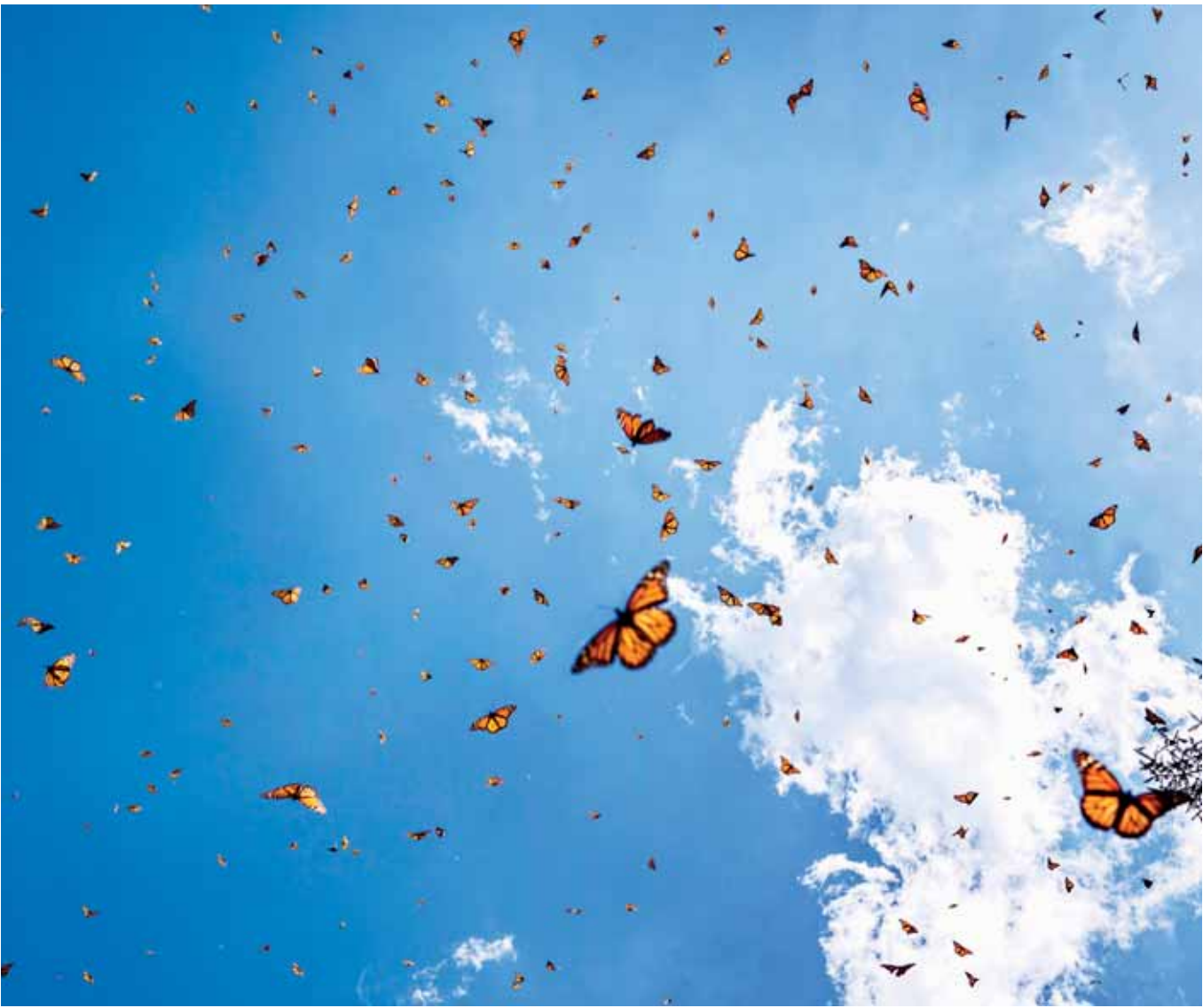
The new study, she noted, documented a decline in monarch abundance in the Midwestern "Corn Belt" — an agricultural region that makes up a critical monarch breeding area. "The numbers are declining mostly in the Corn Belt", Oberhauser said. "That's where most of the monarchs are."

North America is home to two populations of monarchs. The larger, Eastern population spends its summers breeding in milkweed-filled fields along the East Coast and the Midwest before winging its way down to Mexico each fall. A smaller, Western population generally converges on California each autumn.

Numerous studies have found that the size of these winter colonies has fallen precipitously since the mid-1990s. "They're a mere shadow of their former self", said Jeffrey Glassberg, President of the North American Butterfly Association and an author of the paper.

These declines have been attributed to a variety of factors, including climate change and logging near the overwintering sites.

The losses have also coincided with the increasing use of an herbicide known as glyphosate across large swaths of



Wintering butterflies at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Michoac.

the butterfly's Midwestern breeding range. The herbicide kills milkweed, which often springs up in corn and soybean fields and plays a critical role in the monarch life cycle; adult butterflies lay their eggs on the plants, which serve as the sole source of food for the caterpillars. Use of the herbicide increased sharply during the 1990s and early 2000s.

The new study was led by Davis and Michael Crossley, an entomologist at the University of Delaware. They and their colleagues leveraged data collected as part of the North American Butterfly Association's annual summer butterfly count, in which volunteers tally the number of butterflies they observe in defined areas.

The scientists analysed more than 135,000 monarch observations at 403 sites, limiting their analysis to locations that had data spanning at least a 10-year period between 1993 and 2018. They adjusted the tallies to account for how many hours volunteers spent on the task, and then modelled the relative abundance of monarchs over time.

The scientists found evidence of summer population declines in the Southwest, Northeast and the Corn Belt. But in the Upper Midwest, as well as in the Northwest and Southeast, monarch abundance appeared to increase over time. Across all the sites together, relative abundance increased by about 1.36% annually, the scientists calculated.

"The monarchs in the summer are doing fine", Davis said.

So what explains why winter monarch colonies have contracted? It's not yet clear, Davis said, but one possibility is that the warming climate means fewer monarchs are making a seasonal migration. It's also possible that fewer monarchs are surviving their southward journeys, for reasons that could be anything from an increase in car

strikes to rising rates of infection with a parasite that reduces migration success.

"There's a number of natural and anthropogenic threats to the fall migration that could be increasing over time", Davis said.

Leslie Ries, an ecologist at Georgetown University, praised the paper's broad sweep. "The geographic scope of their analysis is bigger and more comprehensive than anything I've seen", she said.

But she said it was not clear that population increases in some areas of the country could completely offset declines in important breeding grounds, like the Midwest.

Davis and his colleagues also used federal data to estimate how much glyphosate was being used in the area around each survey site. They found that in some regions, especially in parts of the Midwest, glyphosate use was associated with declines in abundance.

But they also documented a countervailing force: Climate change. In the northern part of the United States, increasing temperatures were correlated with increases in monarch abundance. This effect was especially pronounced in the Midwest, suggesting that the warming climate might have partly offset the effects of glyphosate in that region, Davis said.

In parts of the country that typically have warmer climates, however, increasing temperatures were correlated with declines in monarch abundance, consistent with previous research.

"Warmer temperatures where it's normally cold are good for monarchs, but warmer temperatures where it's usually warm are bad", Oberhauser said.

The new study documented a decline in monarch abundance in the Midwestern 'Corn Belt' — an agricultural region that makes up a critical monarch breeding area

KAREN OBERHAUSER
conservation biologist
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Fourth of July will test airlines struggling to bounce back



Lauren Hirsch

Delays and cancellations have plagued air travel, and the Fourth of July weekend may be the biggest test yet for the airline industry, which has faced scrutiny from customers, regulators and investors.

The industry has not fully recovered from the depths of the pandemic. Airlines, eager to cut costs and uncertain about the future of travel, halted hiring and doled out early retirement packages.

Now, they are scrambling, the DealBook newsletter reports. On Thursday, Robert Isom, the American Airlines CEO, said the company had offered pilots pay raises totalling nearly 17 per cent as part of the fierce talent war.

Other airline executives have weighed in on staffing challenges.

"Most airlines are simply not going to be able to realise their capacity plans because there simply aren't enough pilots, at least not for the next five-plus years", Scott Kirby, the CEO of United Airlines, said in April.

Airlines are pinning the blame on the Federal Aviation Administration, which they say is experiencing its own staffing shortages and pandemic-related absences.

"When we look at our operations this year, versus three years ago", Barry Biffle, the Frontier CEO, told DealBook, "the No 1 issue that has impacted our operations has been air traffic control."

Airline representatives met with the FAA on Thursday to discuss travel disruptions.

Regardless of who is at fault, passengers are mad. They lodged 3,173 complaints against US airlines in April, according to a recent Transportation Department report, over issues like refunds, delays and baggage. That's nearly



After shedding staff in the pandemic, airlines are scrambling to respond to increased demand

three times as many complaints as were made a year earlier.

Investors are also unhappy as they consider other challenges, like rising fuel prices. Shares of most major US airlines are down about 30 per cent this year.

Members of Congress are threatening action. Some are still upset about the \$54 billion pandemic bailout that the industry received.

Sen Bernie Sanders, I-Vt, is asking Pete Buttigieg, the transportation secretary, to require airlines to pay fines of \$15,000 per passenger for certain delays unrelated to weather.

House Republicans want Buttigieg to explain the administration's plans to address the flight mess.

Delta's CEO, Ed Bastian, posted a note last week that seemed to be an effort to get ahead of any holiday travel pain: "If you've encountered delays and cancellations recently, I apologise."

When doctors become patients



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

Dr Paul Kalanithi was 36-years-old and about to complete his training as a neurosurgeon when he received the shock of his life as he was diagnosed with lung cancer. In his book ‘When the breath becomes air’ he describes his journey within hours his world turned upside down from being a doctor examining and treating patients to a patient receiving medical care. Spoiler alert, he dies before completing the book. In his book, he captures moments that make the reader — especially if they are from the medical field — reflect on their own lives like when he was waiting patiently to see his cancer consultant who refuses to answer his question, “How long would I live?!” The same question that he personally refused to answer when his patients asked.

Dr Kalanithi received chemotherapy and was able to return to work for a few months, during which he tried to regain hope that his illness would respond to the treatment. Sadly this was not the case as the tumour started spreading to other parts of his body and he was no longer able to work. He described his last day as a doctor. “I left the operating room a little late, then I collected my things, those I had accumulated over the course of my seven years of life, extra sets of clothes for the nights I spent in the hospital, toothbrushes, soap bars, phone chargers, snacks and my collection of medical books. I reconsidered leaving the books, they will be of more use here. Tears fell as I sat in the car. I slowly drove home, walked through the front door, hung my white coat, and took

‘THE MAKING OF A MEDICAL DOCTOR BEGINS AT MEDICAL SCHOOL WHERE STUDENTS SPEND LONG HOURS READING BOOKS AND EXAMINING PATIENTS IN THE WARDS BEFORE SITTING ENDLESS EXAMS AND WITNESSING OF A BIRTH AND DEATH MOMENTS’

off my identification badge for the last time”. The book is more than a memoir of a person battling cancer, it’s full of emotions as Dr Kalanithi takes us through his reflection on his life, the time he spent chasing his dream to become a doctor, skipping all the social and family gatherings and

spending sleepless nights to care for his patients. This reminded me of my early years as a trainee in psychiatry working night shifts at a busy teaching hospital in London and seeing patients from different backgrounds each with his or her own mental health problems asking myself if I could save them all. The making of a medical doctor begins at medical school where students spend long hours reading books and examining patients in the wards before sitting endless exams. During their training, doctors witness the birth of babies and the anticipation of the parents as he draws his first breath of air and live through moments of frustration when they witness the death of a patient after all attempts to save him fails.

This is then followed by breaking the sad news to the family. I often asked, what happens when a doctor gets sick? Would he or she rush to diagnose himself or consult another doctor? Would he read about all the side effects caused by the medication they get? What if the medical condition is terminal with constant pain, weakness and fear of the unknown? Fear of being a burden on those around them needing to be washed and fed like a small child. Dr Kalanithi died before completing his book but his wife was able to describe his last days and the advice he wanted to share with other doctors. He asked doctors not to forget they are humans and to balance work with family life as the day that ends never comes back.

Covid air war being lost, experts warn, urging mass ventilation

ISABELLE CORTES

The world is still not using one of its most effective weapons against Covid — properly ventilating public spaces — more than two years into the pandemic, experts warn. At the moment there is a “fragile, armed peace” with Covid-19, said Antoine Flahault, Director of the Institute of Global Health at the University of Geneva. “In the hopes of stemming the tide of the pandemic and reducing mortality, we need to reduce the level of contamination, which the vaccine cannot do alone”, he said. “We need a new phase — improving the quality of indoor air.” Covid-19 is primarily transmitted through the air. It is carried in large droplets or fine aerosols when an infected person breathes — and even more so when they talk, sing or shout. In a closed off or poorly ventilated room, these aerosols can remain in the air for some time, moving around the space and greatly increasing the risk of infection. While it is generally accepted that Covid can be transmitted within two metres via both droplets and aerosols, there is still no consensus on the importance of long-distance airborne transmission indoors. A team of researchers from the UK Health Security Agency and the University of Bristol reviewed 18 studies in several countries on airborne transmission. In research published in the BMJ last week, they found that people can infect each other when they are more than two metres apart. We know one thing for sure: If you open a window, or well-ventilate a space, the virus-carrying aerosols dissipate like smoke. But experts say that nowhere near enough is being done to ventilate public and private spaces across the world. “On the whole, this is an issue that governments have not yet taken up”, Flahault said. He called for massively increased funding to ventilate many public spaces, starting with schools, hospitals, public transport, offices, bars and restaurants. “Just as we knew to filter and treat drinking water” in homes at the beginning of the 1900s, “one can imagine some households will equip themselves with air purifiers and consider opening their windows”, Flahault said. Only a few countries have announced ventilation plans since the start of the pandemic. In March the US government called on all building owners and operators, as well as schools and universities, to “adopt key strategies to improve indoor air quality”. The plan, dubbed the Clean Air in Buildings Challenge, is covered by previously announced Covid funding and also includes a review of existing ventilation, heating and air-conditioning systems.

— AFP

‘Long live the theatre’: Mariupol’s drama company to perform again



Megan Specia

The writers is the UK correspondent at ‘NYT’

Dressed in black, the actors moved around a sparse rehearsal room preparing a new play — the story of a dissident Ukrainian who died in a Russian prison camp decades ago. As they took a break, they gathered in a circle with their arms around each other, laughing and chattering. Though the play is set in the 1980s, for these actors, the subject is close to heart and the mere fact of rehearsal a triumph. They survived the siege of Mariupol by Russian forces earlier this year — and the destruction of their home theatre. “There is a saying: ‘The king is dead. Long live the king’”, said Liudmila Kolosovych, the acting director of the theatre company. “So, the theatre died. Long live the theatre.” Mariupol’s Academic Regional Drama theatre was destroyed on March 16 by a Russian airstrike in the midst of the weekslong siege of Mariupol, one of the earliest instances of Russia’s shocking brutality in the Ukraine war. Before the attack, the word “children” had been spelled out as a warning in large white lettering on the ground outside. Hundreds of people had sheltered in the theatre during the siege, among them four members of the theatre company. On Thursday, an Amnesty International report called the attack a “clear war crime”, determining that the strike killed at least a dozen people “and likely many more.” The precise casualty count has been impossible to determine because the city remains under Russian control after falling to those forces in late May. Vira Lebedynska, 64, an actress, recalled the day the theatre was hit. “There was an explosion, walls started crumbling and then I heard screams”, Lebedynska said. “We couldn’t move.” She sought safety in a basement office with a colleague and that woman’s family, but even before the strike, food and water were running low. Lebedynska said that nearly 1,000 people were gathered in the theatre when the missile hit, and that she believed hundreds died. After the initial impact, her colleague’s husband walked up a

crumbling staircase and returned to say: “There is no theatre anymore.” Eventually, Lebedynska and her group fled on foot to a nearby town, and joined a humanitarian convoy that brought them to safety. In all, 13 members of the Mariupol troupe survived the weeks of bombardment of their city. Some were THE MARIUPOL THEATRE HAS WRESTLED WITH THE LEGACY OF RUSSIAN DOMINANCE IN THE REGION, WHICH OFTEN IS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE UKRAINIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE removed to Russian filtration camps; others were displaced from their homes. Some took refuge in cellars. Some were unable to bury relatives who died alongside them. In recent weeks, the group has reconvened in the western Ukrainian city of Uzhhorod — where they live

together in a dormitory — to rehearse the new play. It is based on the life and works of Vasyl Stus, a Ukrainian poet, human rights activist, dissident and nationalist hero who died in a Soviet prison camp in 1985. He lived in the Donetsk region when it was part of the former Soviet Union, and was persecuted for his efforts to develop Ukrainian literature and language and for his outspoken opposition to Russian rule. He was put on trial twice and died while on a hunger strike in the Soviet prison in 1985. Ukrainian independence arrived just six years later, in 1991. “It’s a bit scary to stage this performance”, said Kolosovych, the 58-year-old director, who wrote the play in collaboration with others in the company. “The world expects a premiere from the Mariupol theatre company.” Anatoliy Shevchenko, 68, spent decades acting with the Mariupol troupe. During the siege, he hunkered down in his basement for weeks alongside his elderly mother and sister — with no electricity, and limited food and water. He heard about the theatre’s destruction over the radio. Shortly after, his mother died of a heart attack. He laid her body out on the sidewalk, covered in a sheet, alongside six other corpses, he said.

— New York Times



Vira Lebedynska is one of the Mariupol acting companys four members who survived the Russian airstrike on the theatre.

Wanna be a
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Ray Petersen
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The writer is a media
consultant

Job Vacancy: Teacher. Short workdays, weekends off, long vacation and all public holidays, free training, guidance, and support, come and be a part of a highly respected, highly regarded community team. It sounds good doesn't it, yet without the compassion and dignity that teachers, almost without exception, devote to

their vocation, education could well be a broken concept, all... over... the... world! Teachers are amazing, fantastic, and outstanding, and yet, when the kids get it wrong... it's always the teacher's fault! What happens then is that teachers are criticised, by the parents as a convenient scapegoat, for being lazy, with short working days and too many holidays, and don't care! Parents.

If only you knew, cared to ask, or looked at yourselves first! Especially during the pandemic, teachers, almost without exception, toiled above and beyond any prior expectations of them in upskilling quickly, impossibly quickly, to provide lessons on Zoom and Teams, creating new resources, learning about, understanding, and implementing, the new dynamics of a completely new, alien almost, method of teaching and learning. Think of the difference between walking everywhere, and then having to roller skate everywhere, including upstairs, and you get some idea of the magnitude of that commitment.

Imagine too, as parents, where you would have been without the virtual learning experiences, the full-time teacher engagement with that online teaching and learning. Too many memories are too short, and just because Summer has arrived, and the kids are around your feet all day, you appear to think it's okay, once again, to make light of your teachers. I guess that is human nature, short memories, and facile thanks indications of a sector of the community so callously taken for granted.

Across the last decade teachers have learned to embrace new technologies, but, unlike most people, not for their own, selfish, benefit. The new teaching smartboards, and associated Internet, www interactions are incredibly powerful teaching tools, however, they can also be remarkably frustrating if they are not used with knowledge and skill, the 'how to,' part.

The growth too of the identification of neurodiversity issues among learners is something educational authorities are becoming increasingly aware of, and also more aware of the need to provide learning support for the affected learners. Schools, and consequently teachers, have borne the brunt of the differentiation required to appropriately support dyslexic, dyspraxic, dyscalculia, Aspergers, ADHD, autistic, and other neuro-diverse learners, in what is a truly humbling display of compassion and professionalism.

Classroom behaviour too has slipped into a void of neglect, as parents defer much of the disciplinary element of their children's behaviour to schools and teachers. What's to blame for this? Social media, television, mobile phones, the collapse of society? Nobody can solve it all in a news bite, but don't worry... their teachers will fix it when they get to school! Trust me, I've heard it all before.

How many parents out there have never taken a moment to look in, at school or college, or university, to see and understand their kid's experience. How many parents out there have never attended a PTA meeting? How many parents out there have never cancelled a teacher conference, and how many of you have never looked at a school report without doing a genuine debrief with your kids, and no, I don't mean a "well done," or a "not good enough." Really? Your noses will grow... This, on top of what have over the years become significant documentation obligations, child safeguarding imperatives, quality assurance targets, continuous professional development requirements, school and parent/teacher meetings, assignment, test, and exam markings, invigilations, and lesson preparations. All the time, presenting a knowing, understanding, informative, professional manner and appearance... and incredibly, usually smiling, because that's just who... and what they are.

Almost without exception, teachers have committed to improving lives. Don't just understand them though... appreciate them... teachers will never, never, never ever... be paid enough for all they do... most of it in your name... but a kind thought goes a long way...



BRIDGE
REVEALED

A tourist river boat sailing near the Vittorio Emanuele II bridge, as the low water level of the river Tiber reveals an ancient bridge built under Roman Emperor Nero (Bottom R).
– AFP

Hydropower a bad bargain



Brahma Chellaney

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The era of cheap oil and gas is over. Russia's war in Ukraine – or, more specifically, Europe's ambitious effort to wean itself off Russian fossil fuels at a time when international supplies are already tight – is driving up global energy prices and raising the specter of a global energy crisis. Alternative sources of energy are looking more appealing by the day, as they should. But the embrace of hydropower, in particular, carries its own risks.

Hydropower is currently the most widely used renewable, accounting for almost half of all low-carbon electricity generation worldwide. Its appeal is rooted in several factors. For decades, it was the most cost-competitive renewable, and many hydropower plants can increase or decrease their electricity generation much faster than nuclear, coal, and natural-gas plants. And whereas wind and solar output can fluctuate significantly, hydropower can be dependably produced using reservoirs, making it a good complement to these more variable sources.

But there is a hitch. The most common type of hydropower plant entails the damming of rivers and streams. And hydroelectric dams have a large and lasting ecological footprint.

For starters, while hydroelectric generation itself emits no greenhouse gases, dams and reservoirs emit significant amounts of methane, carbon dioxide, and nitrous oxide. Under some circumstances – such as in tropical zones – they can generate more greenhouse gases than fossil-fuel power plants. One study found that methane – a greenhouse gas that is at least 34 times more potent than CO2 – can make up some 80 per cent of emissions from artificial reservoirs, though a wide variety of geographical, climatic, seasonal, and vegetational factors affect reservoir emissions.

Moreover, while hydroelectric dams are often touted for delivering clean drinking water, controlling floods, and supporting irrigation, they also change river temperatures and water quality and impede the flow of nutrient-rich sediment. Such sediment is essential to help re-fertilise degraded soils in downstream plains, prevent the erosion of the river channel, and preserve biodiversity.

When dams trap the sediment flowing in from the mountains, deltas shrink and sink. This allows salt water to intrude inland, thereby disturbing the delicate balance between fresh water and salt water that is essential for the survival of critical species in coastal estuaries and lagoons. It also exposes deltas to the full force of storms and hurricanes. In Asia, heavily populated deltas – home to megacities like Tianjin, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Bangkok, and Dhaka – are already retreating fast.

Dams also carry high social costs. In 2007, then-Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao revealed that China had relocated 22.9 million people to make way for water projects – a figure larger than the populations of more than 100 countries. The Three Gorges Dam, the world's largest hydropower station, which became fully operational in 2012, displaced more than 1.4 million people.

To top it all off, there is good reason to doubt hydropower's reliability. If mitigation measures prove unable to slow global warming adequately – an increasingly likely scenario – the frequency and intensity of droughts will continue to rise. As water levels in rivers and reservoirs drop – exacerbated by evaporation from open reservoirs – so will the water pressure needed to spin turbines, resulting in less electricity. And this is to say nothing of giant dams' ability

UNDER SOME
CIRCUMSTANCES – SUCH
AS IN TROPICAL ZONES
– THEY CAN GENERATE
MORE GREENHOUSE GASES
THAN FOSSIL-FUEL POWER
PLANTS. ONE STUDY
FOUND THAT METHANE – A
GREENHOUSE GAS THAT IS
AT LEAST 34 TIMES MORE
POTENT THAN CO2 – CAN
MAKE UP SOME 80 PER
CENT OF EMISSIONS FROM
ARTIFICIAL RESERVOIRS,
THOUGH A WIDE VARIETY
OF GEOGRAPHICAL,
CLIMATIC, SEASONAL, AND
VEGETATIONAL FACTORS
AFFECT RESERVOIR
EMISSIONS.

to compound downstream droughts, as has been seen in the Mekong River Basin.

Given that dams are expensive, years-long undertakings, the wisdom of investing in building more of them is questionable, to say the least. But the world's love affair with dams continues. Almost two-thirds of the Earth's long rivers have already been modified by humans, with most of the world's almost 60,000 large dams having been built over the last seven decades. And, global dam construction continues at a breakneck pace. In 2014, at least 3,700 significant dams were under construction or planned. Since then, the dam boom has become more apparent, with the developing world now a global hotspot of such construction.

While dam-building activity can be seen from the Balkans to South America, China leads the way as both the world's most-dammed country and its largest exporter of dams. From 2001 to 2020, China lent over \$44 billion for the Chinese construction of hydropower projects totalling over 27 gigawatts in 38 countries.

China is not hesitating to build dams even in seismically active areas, despite the risk of triggering a devastating earthquake. And China really should know better: its own scientists linked the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake, which killed more than 87,000 people in the Tibetan Plateau's eastern rim, to the new Zipingpu Dam, located near the quake's epicentre.

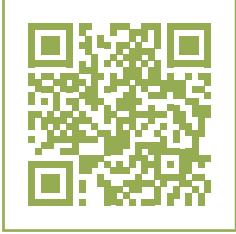
There is no question that the world must cut its reliance on fossil fuels. But building more hydroelectric dams – especially in the Earth's most biodiverse river basins, such as the Amazon, the Brahmaputra, the Congo, and the Mekong – is not the way to do it. On the contrary, the global dam frenzy amounts to a kind of a Faustian bargain, in which we trade our planet's long-term health for a fleeting sense of energy security.

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sport

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OHA to launch first 5s hockey women league this season

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

Oman Hockey Association (OHA) will launch the first edition of 5s women's hockey league in line with Oman's preparations to the host FIH Hockey5s World Cup in 2024.

The league will feature participation of more than 26 players who went through several internal camps in the national hockey women team. OHA is very keen to provide all kinds of support to the women's team to participate in the World event, which will be hosted in January 2024.

Oman women hockey team was launched in last March in line with the 2022 Women's Asia cup which was hosted in Oman in 2022. Japan team were crowned as the champions of the event.

The Hockey5s' flagship event is a brand-new FIH competition. About 16 teams per gender (3 per continent + Oman, as hosts) will take part in this very first edition. Continental Hockey5s qualifiers for the World Cup will

be organised in 2022.

Hockey5s is played with 5 athletes per team. It is particularly known for its non-stop end to end action, since the ball is in play for about 90% of a match, thanks to rebound-boards placed against the outside of the side-lines and back-lines. Furthermore, there are usually more goals with Hockey5s than with the more traditional 11-a-side format of hockey, since players can score from anywhere after the attacking line.

On the other hand, OHA will launch the first edition of the Premier League with the participation of six clubs, as the top tier league edition and top domestic competition for the game which will be distinctive and unique.

The other division of league will be the First Division league and this will witness participation of six clubs. The Competitions Committee decided that it was time to implement all international and continental standards to hold these high level of competitions.



Oman Olympic Team to gear up for WAFF meet in Turkey



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 2

The Oman Olympic football team is back in action again on Friday through an internal preparatory camp at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

The seven days of domestic warm up gathering will be followed by an external camp after Eid break holidays in Turkey from July 18 to 31.

Khalid al Wahaibi, team manager, said that the overseas camp will feature several friendly games against some Turkey clubs.

"We are in communication with many clubs to arrange many preparatory matches in the external camp. The confirmation of the warm up matches are still pending and it may get confirmed in the coming days," he added

The team, coached by Akram Habresh, is gearing up to take part at 2022 West Asian Football Federations (WAFF) U-23 Championship which will be played in Iraq during 3 to 18 November, 2022.



Moreover, the team will participate at Gulf Cup for U-23 championships in August 2023 and then at AFC Asian U-23 qualifiers in September 2023 which acts as qualifiers to 2024

Paris Olympics Games.

The ongoing internal camp is part of the set plan for the team to raise their readiness for the future's assignment.

The preparatory camps are

inline with the player's summer educational leave as most of them are students in colleges and universities.

Oman Olympic team had several short internal camps during the past few months and played some local games. The team defeated Royal Navy team 4-1 and suffered a 1-0 loss against Ministry of Defence team. The friendly games were an opportunity for the coaching staff to evaluate the squad performance.

Oman U-23 squad: Maytham al Ajmi, Nasser al Rasbi, Nawaf al Hosni, Osama al Hadabi, Said al Salami, Mutee al Saadi, Mohammed al Hatmi, Abdullah al Habsi, Muntaser al Zadjali, Abdullah al Qatabi, Salim al Abdusalam, Abdullah al Musharafi, Fahad al Rasbi, Khalid al Ghatrefi, Khalid al Abadi, Nooh al Zadjali, Mouter al Khalili, Issa al Naabi, Mulhem al Sunaidi, Musaab al Lamaki, Nasser al Rawahi, Ahmed al Busaidy, Tariq al Mashari, Basil al Jabri, Abdullah al Yarubi and Mohammed al Hina.

Lampaert shocks 'big guys' in rain-drenched Tour de France opener

COPENHAGEN: Belgian Yves Lampaert shocked the favourites to pull on the leader's yellow jersey after the rain-drenched first stage of the Tour de France, an individual time-trial in the Danish capital on Friday.

Quick-Step rider Lampaert suffered less thanks to a later start than the pre-race favourites on the slippery 13.2 km route, finishing five seconds ahead of compatriot Wout van Aert, with defending champion Tadej Pogacar third best seven seconds off the pace.

Massive crowds lined the streets as riders sped past the Little Mermaid statue, the harbour-front Blox building and the Amalienborg palace, where Crown Prince



Frederik joined the celebration.

Lampaert was overwhelmed with emotion as the 31-year-old realised he would wear the overall leader's yellow jersey on Saturday's second stage.

"I was hoping for a top ten, but not this", said the 2021 Belgian time-trial champion.

"I beat the big guys. Somehow I managed to beat the best riders in the world. I'm just a farmer's son from Belgium, so this is something I would have never dreamed of. My mind is exploding.

"I think I'll only realise what I have done after the Tour, when I'll return to my family. I'm so happy with this victory and honoured to wear the yellow jersey."

Two-time defending champion Pogacar pulled on the white jersey as the fastest under-25 rider.

"It's great to be back on the Tour, the white jersey was my aim today", said the Team UAE leader.

"I loved the crowds and my time was good for the GC (General Classification) against my rivals", he said.

Dutch rider Mathieu van der Poel had set the early pace when the rain was at its heaviest.

His face creased in pain from the relentless effort and stress of the rain-slick road, van Aert then took the lead ahead of his arch-rival, world champion Filippo Ganna, who suffered a puncture along the way. — AFP

Liverpool’s Salah signs contract extension



LONDON: Liverpool forward Mohamed Salah on Friday signed a long-term contract extension, putting an end to a lengthy saga about his future at the Premier League club.

The Egypt international has signed an extension until 2025, with the deal coming after strike partner and Senegal forward Sadio Mane left to join German Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich on a three-year deal last month.

“I feel great and (I am) excited to win trophies with the club. It’s a happy day for everyone,” Salah said in a statement on the club website.

“It takes a little bit of time, I think, to renew, but now everything is done so we just need to focus on what’s next.

“I think you can see in the last five or six years the team was always going (upwards). Last season we were close to winning four, but unfortunately in the last week of the season we lost two trophies.”

Salah scored 23 league goals for Liverpool last season to share the Premier League golden boot with Tottenham Hotspur’s Son Heung-min.

He was named the Professional Footballers’ Association Player of the Year and also took the top honour from the Football Writers’ Association.

The 30-year-old scored 31 goals in all competitions for Liverpool and helped them capture the League Cup and FA Cup. They were beaten 1-0 by Real Madrid in the Champions League final in May.

Salah, who joined the Merseyside outfit from Italian side AS Roma in 2017 and has scored 156 goals in 254 appearances, would have been available to leave them on a free transfer at the end of next season.

He is now expected to lead a new-look front line for Juergen Klopp’s side in the absence of Mane and Divock Origi — who left the club — with Uruguayan forward Darwin Nunez having joined in the close season.

“My message (to the fans) is the players in the team want to give our best next season to try to win all the trophies,” Salah added. “As usual, you stay behind us and give us a big push and I’m sure we are going to win trophies again (together).” — **Reuters**

USA, Dominican Republic earn 2024 Olympic berths

SAN PEDRO SULA: The United States beat Honduras 3-0 in the semifinals of the CONCACAF Under-20 Championship on Friday to secure a berth in the 2024 Paris Olympic football tournament.

The Dominican Republic also punched their ticket to Paris, beating Guatemala 4-2 in a penalty shootout after the teams played to a 2-2 draw.

For the Dominican Republic it will be a first appearance in the Olympics, while the United States will return to the Games for the first time since 2008.

The USA took control early, with goals from Paxten Aaronson in the third minute, Alejandro

Alvarado in the 22nd and Quinn Sullivan in the 43rd giving them a 3-0 lead.

They made it stand up against a determined Honduras side, who saw Jeffryn Macias sent off in the 87th minute.

In the first semifinal, Guatemala grabbed a 2-0 lead with a goal from Arquimides Ordonez in the 23rd minute and an own-goal from Dominican defender Sebastian Manon in the 29th.

The Dominican Republic scored two goals in three minutes in the second half as Guillermo De Pena struck in the 62nd and Edison Azcona made it 2-2 in the 64th. — **AFP**



TON-UP PANT

Turns the tables on England

BIRMINGHAM, United Kingdom: Rishabh Pant gave Ben Stokes’ England a taste of their own medicine with a superb counter-attacking century as India recovered from a top-order collapse to 338-7 at stumps on Friday’s opening day of the Covid-delayed fifth Test.

Recalled England great James Anderson and fledgling quick Matthew Potts reduced India to 98-5 at Edgbaston after Stokes won the toss under overcast skies.

Pant responded with a brilliant 146 off just 111 balls.

The wicketkeeper hit 19 fours and four sixes while dominating a partnership of 222 with fellow left-hander Ravindra Jadeja, 83 not out at stumps.

England came into this match following a 3-0 whitewash of Test world champions New Zealand, several times hitting themselves out of trouble in their first series under captain Stokes and red-ball coach Brendon McCullum.

The aggressive approach has been dubbed ‘Bazball’ in honour of McCullum’s nickname, but the 24-year-old Pant has played this way for pretty much his entire career.

“In English conditions, especially where you know one bowler is pitching on the same spot, then it is important to disturb him,” Pant told reporters. “As a player I give my 100 per cent. Yes, I might play some different shots sometimes, but I try to play my percentage (strokes).”

- ‘Under pressure’ — England assistant coach Paul Collingwood paid tribute to Pant by saying: “He is certainly entertaining, doesn’t take a backward step and he puts you under pressure.”

But having seen England reach three stiff targets against New Zealand, he added: “The guys are confident they can chase down no matter what in the fourth innings.”

Pant was especially severe on Jack Leach, swinging himself off



India’s Rishabh Pant hits a four off the bowling of England’s James Anderson. — **Reuters**

his feet while slogging a four and later driving the left-arm spinner one-handed for six.

Leach, fresh from a 10-wicket haul and the player award in the third Test against New Zealand, conceded an expensive 71 runs in nine wicketless overs.

Part-time off-spinner Joe Root succeeded where the frontline bowlers had failed when Pant edged a drive to Zak Crawley at slip.

It was the end of a double

century partnership that lasted a mere 39 overs, with Pant’s hundred his fifth in 31 Tests and third against England.

Potts, who only made his international debut against New Zealand, had earlier added to his growing reputation by removing Virat Kohli for 11.

The 23-year-old had dismissed Black Caps skipper Kane Williamson three times in four innings. On Friday, following a 90-minute rain delay, the paceman

took two wickets for five runs in seven balls to reduce India to 71-4.

Potts had Hanuma Vihari plumb lbw for 20 before he induced Kohli to play on. It is nearly three years since India’s star batsman made the last of his 27 Test hundreds. Friday’s match should have been played in Manchester last September only to be postponed just hours before the scheduled start because of coronavirus concerns within the India camp. — **AFP**

England expects as record crowds flock to Euro 2022

MANCHESTER: England will play host to the women’s European Championship over the next month with record crowds raising hopes the tournament will take the female game’s rising profile to an even higher level.

Nearly half a million tickets have been sold to fans in 100 countries, including sell-outs for the opening game at Old Trafford when England face Austria on Wednesday and the final at Wembley on July 31.

Initially scheduled for 2021, UEFA moved the tournament back a year after the men’s Euro 2020 had to be delayed 12 months due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

As governing bodies scrambled to restart the men’s competitions as soon as possible to secure lucrative broadcast income, even the elite end of the women’s game was treated as somewhat of an afterthought.

But aided by a rare space in the



men’s football calendar due to the later start to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the stars of the European game on the women’s side have the chance to take centre stage.

The five years since the last

women’s Euro, won by the Netherlands on home soil, have been transformative for the sport.

Money has flowed in from new sponsors, television rights deals and major clubs now prepared

to spend big on improving the standards of their women’s teams.

That investment is expected to be reflected at international level in the most competitive women’s Euro to date, with half of the 16 teams regarded as realistic contenders.

“The top of the pyramid became a bit wider,” UEFA’s head of women’s football Nadine Kessler told AFP.

“It’s good that so many contenders, so many teams, have even declared ambitions publicly that they all want to go for it.”

- Spain favourites -

After losing three consecutive semifinals, England have to handle the weight of expectation to win a first major tournament on home soil.

The Lionesses have Euro-winning experience on their side, though, in the form of manager Sarina Wiegman, who led the Dutch to the title in 2017. — **AFP**



Johnson, Ortiz share LIV Golf lead in Portland

LOS ANGELES: Dustin Johnson and Carlos Ortiz shared the second-round lead in the LIV Golf Series stop in Portland on Friday as players jumping to the breakaway circuit continued to face criticism.

Johnson, the former world number one whose two major titles include the 2020 Masters, briefly threatened to make it a runaway before three late bogeys saw him settle for a four-under par 68 and an eight-under total at Pumpkin Ridge.

He'll go into the final round of the 54-hole, shotgun start event neck and neck with overnight leader Ortiz, who birdied the final hole to cap a 69.

They are two strokes ahead of South African Branden Grace, who also signed for a 69.

"I'm really happy with the way I'm swinging it", said Johnson, who at 17th in the world is the highest-ranked player to risk the wrath of the US PGA Tour and make the jump to the lucrative new circuit.

"Tomorrow I just need to go and do the same thing, just drive in the fairway."

Johnson made his LIV debut in the inaugural event near London in June while Mexico's Ortiz is playing for the first time.

Ortiz won his lone US PGA Tour title at the Houston Open

in 2020, joined the list of players suspended by the US circuit after teeing off in the upstart Saudi-backed series.

The DP World Tour has also sanctioned members lured by the massive paydays on offer that included signing bonus and a \$20 million purse for this week's 48-player field with an additional \$5 million prize money on offer in a team competition.

DP World Tour Chief Executive Keith Pelley launched a scathing attack Friday on players who threatened the tour with legal action unless their sanctions — fines and suspensions — for competing in LIV Golf were rescinded.

Pelley called their demands, made in a letter that was published in 'The Telegraph', contained inaccuracies and that the players knew "there would be consequences if they chose money over competition."

Hostility from the established tours and concerns over the human rights record of LIV's Saudi backers apparently aren't slowing the upstart circuit.

Golf Digest reported on Friday that the series has accelerated growth plans for 2023 with 14 events rather than 10 and plans a name change to the LIV Golf League. — **AFP**

DJOKOVIC, ALCARAZ CLOSE IN ON WIMBLEDON DUEL

LONDON: Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz closed in on a Wimbledon generational clash on Friday as the women's draw was left with just four top-10 seeds standing.

Three-time defending champion Djokovic demolished Serbian compatriot Miomir Kecmanovic 6-0, 6-3, 6-4 in the third round to stay on course to equal Pete Sampras as a seven-time champion, one behind Roger Federer's men's record.

Friday's win was the 330th of Djokovic's Grand Slam career.

"So far, so good", said the 35-year-old top seed.

"I expect high standards from myself. You always want to raise the level and things are shaping up well."

Djokovic has now won 22 successive matches on grass and is in the last 16 at Wimbledon for the 14th time.

He has not lost a grasscourt match since falling to Marin Cilic in the final at Queen's four years ago.

"I started very well, very strong with a lot of intensity and focus", added Djokovic, whose only blip was being broken when he served for the match at 5-2 in the third set.

In the last 16, he will face Dutch wild card Tim van Rijthoven.

Playing in his debut Grand Slam main draw, the world number 104 defeated 22nd seed Nikoloz Basilashvili of Georgia, 6-4, 6-3, 6-4.

The 25-year-old Van Rijthoven proved his prowess on grass by winning the Hertogenbosch title last month, defeating world number one Daniil Medvedev in the final.

"Before the tournament started, it was a dream for me to play Djokovic", said Van Rijthoven, only the seventh man since 2000 to reach the round of 16 on his Grand Slam debut.

"So to be able to have that chance and to maybe even play on Centre Court or Court 1 is beautiful and magical."

After needing four sets to get past Kwon Soon-Woo in the first round, Djokovic has dropped just 14 games since.

If he beats Van Rijthoven, he could meet Alcaraz in the quarterfinals.



Novak Djokovic acknowledges the crowd after winning his third round match against Serbia's Miomir Kecmanovic. — **Reuters**



Carlos Alcaraz in action during his third round match against Germany's Oscar Otte. — **Reuters**

The 19-year-old Spaniard swept past Germany's Oscar Otte 6-3, 6-1, 6-2 to make the fourth round for the first time.

Alcaraz, who hit 37 winners in total, goes on to face Italian 10th seed Jannik Sinner, who put out John Isner in straight sets.

The only consolation for Isner was passing Ivo Karlovic as the sport's greatest hitter of aces, taking his career total to 13,748.

British ninth seed Cameron Norrie also qualified for the last 16 with a thumping 6-4, 6-1, 6-0 win over Steve Johnson.

Maria Sakkari became the sixth of the top 10 women's seeds to crash out before the end of the third round.

The fifth-seeded Greek lost 6-3, 7-5 to German world number 103 Tatjana Maria, who returned to the tour last year after maternity leave.

Maria, in the fourth round of a Slam for the first time, will face former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko for a place in the quarterfinals.

"It feels amazing, first time in the last 16. To win against Sakkari,

it's pretty awesome", said mother-of-two Maria.

Ostapenko, a semifinalist in 2018, took her winners count to 102 over three rounds by defeating Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania 3-6, 6-1, 6-1.

Germany's Jule Niemeier followed up her win over second seed Anett Kontaveit by seeing off Ukraine's Lesia Tsurenko in three sets.

Also exiting on Friday was 2018 champion Angelique Kerber, with the German 15th seed beaten 6-4, 7-5 by Elise Mertens. — **AFP**

Sainz on top at Silverstone as Verstappen remains confident

SILVERSTONE: Carlos Sainz upstaged local hero Lewis Hamilton to top the times for Ferrari in Friday's second practice at the British Grand Prix, outpacing his Mercedes rival by just over a tenth of a second on a wet and windy day.

The Spaniard, recording his first session-topping time since the Australian Grand Prix in April, clocked a best lap of one minute and 28.952 seconds to beat the seven-time champion, who appeared to have rediscovered his verve, by 0.163 seconds.

It was an uplifting day for Sainz, who was frustrated two weeks ago in Canada where he was fastest in the race, but unable to pass Max Verstappen's Red Bull to win.

"We expect to be competitive at every circuit and we hope to do well here", said Sainz. "I expect it because the car is a very competitive car, as



is the Red Bull, as is the Merc when there's a bit less bumps, and there's a bit more high-speed!"

"So, yes, I think we all knew coming into this weekend that it

was going to be a tight battle and again, it looks like it's the same here."

Another Briton, Lando Norris of McLaren, was third fastest for

McLaren ahead of world champion and series leader Max Verstappen of Red Bull and Charles Leclerc in the second Ferrari.

"It was a tricky day and we

had a few problems on my side", said Leclerc, winner of six pole positions this year. "Hopefully, we have a cleaner day tomorrow and things go our way."

'A BIT TRICKY'

After an unimpressive day for Red Bull, Verstappen remained confident of finding the improvement he needed to return to the front.

"It's always a bit tricky, of course, after not driving in FP1 and then FP2 becomes a bit of guessing, let's say it like that. Whereas normally in FP1 you just build it up", said the 24-year-old Dutchman, who leads the title race ahead of team-mate Sergio Perez by 46 points with Leclerc third and adrift by 49.

"It was maybe not ideal, but also not a big issue. I think we know what we have to work on and that's what we'll try to do overnight. But, again, tomorrow probably it's raining so you have again different kinds of conditions. — **AFP**



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RO 960 million investment tourism projects unveiled

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 2

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion works has unveiled five tourism projects for investment and development — an initiative it has launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and a number of private sector companies.

Total investment in the five projects is estimated at RO 960 million. Notable is a proposal for the development of a National Leisure and Tourism Destination at Barka in South Al Batinah Governorate. Other schemes for investments pertain to the



Madinat Al Irfan development in Muscat Governorate and another project in the Wilayat of Bausher — also in the capital city.

Rounding off the list is a proposal for an adventure centre at Khasab in Musandam Governorate.

According to Faisal bin Said al Hakmani (pictured), Director of investment opportunities at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the proposed projects will help attract investment



that supports economic diversification, strengthen the power sector, boost GDP growth and position Oman as a promising investment destination. Oman's tourism sector, he said, is undergoing a major transformation designed to boost foreign direct capital and investment inflows, support integrated tourism investment and development, and open up opportunities for SMEs.

(With inputs from ONA)

135 key enablers to ramp up Oman's investment appeal



ACCELERATING GROWTH:
Broad array of initiatives to impart new momentum to investment inflows, export development

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

A diverse array of initiatives — among them a host of regulatory and legislative statutes, new accountability and governance procedures, digital tools for fast-tracking of permits and approvals, and a portfolio of investment opportunities — promise to position the Sultanate of Oman for a new phase of strong investment inflows and export development.

In all, about 135 such initiatives — dubbed as 'powerful investment and economic enablers' — were outlined as part of the strategy of the National Programme for Investment Export Development (Nazdaher), unveiled last week.

While a significant proportion of them have already been

brought into effect in recent years, others are in various stages of implementation. Together, they have the potential to impart new momentum to Oman's development objectives enshrined in the Vision 2040 Strategy.

The enablers are distributed across a total of 11 sub-heads: Enhancing the Business Environment; Enactment of New Supportive Legislative and Regulatory Laws; Strengthening of Judicial Systems; Initiatives to Strengthen Energy Supply and Availability; Port and Transportation Development; Aviation; Information & Communications Technology; Food Security; Agriculture & Livestock Wealth; Tourism; and Water Resources.

Business Environment:

Initiatives since implemented include measures to fast-track application procedures and reduce bureaucracy, as well as a scheme to offer longer-term residency to expatriate investors. Other initiatives in various stages of development include plans for a National Investment Strategy,

Unified National Promotion Plan, and the formulation of an Investment Map.

Aviation:

Bringing Oman into compliance with international civil aviation standards is a key goal under this sub-head. It also lists initiatives to support capacity building in the sector, enable the operation of aircraft maintenance at Muscat International Airport, introduce amphibious aviation services, strengthen early warning systems, restructure the airspace, electrify Omani airports with solar energy, and establish a new airport at Khasab in Musandam Governorate.

Enabling Legislation:

Envisioned under this sub-head is the following set of new statutes, many of which have been enacted in the Sultanate of Oman: Small and Medium Enterprises Law, Law of Special Economic Zones and Free Zones; Financial Law, Taxes and Fees Collection Law, Public Debt Law, Commercial Register Law, One-Stop-Shop project, Industrial Promotion Law, and Commercial Law.

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Public Auction Announcement

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), in partnership with Worley Oman, is pleased to announce the sale of the following written-off materials on "As Is Where Is Basis" through online bidding as detailed below:

Auction Ref.	Description	Location	Viewing Date	Last date for Document Submission	Online Bidding Date	Cheque Guarantee Amount
A1/2022/S10K	Assorted Scrap/line pipes/tubing/casing, well head materials, cable drums, scrapped equipment, tanks, structural materials etc. (Qty: 10,000 tonnes)	Bahja/Rima/Nimr	17-07-2022	24-07-2022 2:00 pm	27-07-2022	OMR 25,000/- (Twenty five Thousand Omani Rials)
A1/2022/N15K	Assorted Scrap/line pipes/tubing/casing, cable drums, tanks, scrapped equipment, structural materials etc. (Qty: 15,000 tonnes)	Qarn Alam /Fahud	18-07-2022	24-07-2022 2:00 pm	27-07-2022	OMR 25,000/- (Twenty five Thousand Omani Rials)
		Yibal/ Lekhwair	19-07-2022			
		MAF Tank Farm	20-07-2022			
A1/2022/CB	Scrapped/used cables (with cable drums) (Qty: 535 tonnes)	Bahja	17-07-2022	24-07-2022 2:00 pm	27-07-2022	OMR 20,000/- (Twenty Thousand Omani Rials)
		Qarn Alam/ Fahud	18-07-2022			
		Yibal Khuff	19-07-2022			

- This auction is open to all registered companies under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and Investment Promotion with activities of buying /selling scrap or Omani smelter factories or activities covered under the scope of sale items.
- All interested bidders shall be registered with Be'ah for the activity of scrap metal collection and trade.
- Bidding documents, photos and details of LOTS offered for sale can be accessed via the following link: https://supplychain.requis.com/share/oman_pdo_assets
- All interested companies/parties must confirm their participation for the material viewing with a confirmation e-mail to the auction focal point by attaching copies of valid ID cards on or before **06 July 2022 (02:00 pm)**. **Prior registration for the visit is mandatory to organize entry permits for the visitors.**
- The auction focal point shall communicate the visit schedule, meeting points and other logistic details via e-mail and/or phone conversations to all registered bidders.
- The Value Added Tax (VAT) of 5% of the total bid value shall be paid by the buyer to PDO within five (5) working days from the date of notification of award.
- This auction is in line with the PDO HSE Policy and HSE specifications SP2000 and SP2001 (Policy/Specifications can be viewed online through the following link: <http://www.pdo.co.om/hseforcontractors/> username: pdohse01 and password: contractor01). **All HSE rules on safe handling and transportation of materials from PDO sites will be applied. Please ensure that you are familiar with the PDO HSE requirements before participating in this auction.**
- Only two personnel from each company are allowed to attend the material viewing event as per above schedule. Unregistered visitors will not be permitted in the material viewing and will be reported to the authorities.
- Bidders joining the visit shall carry the evidence of vaccination certificate for two doses.
- Participants showing any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 will not be permitted entry.
- Bidders shall wear basic PPE such as coveralls, safety boots, helmets, etc. at all times during the visit.

For any clarification about this auction, please contact the auction focal point (Tel: +968-24473498 or via e-mail: Auctions.Focal@worley.com)



MoHERI, Bank Muscat sign cooperation agreement

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) and Bank Muscat signed a cooperation programme in the field of scientific research and innovation.

The agreement was signed by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Shaikha bint Yousuf al Farsi, Chief Operating Officer, Bank Muscat.

Under the agreement, Bank Muscat will be supporting and financing the best graduation projects prepared by Omani students enrolled at higher education institutions within and outside Oman. The supported projects will cover areas of national priority as per Oman Vision 2040, aiming to transfer them into start-up companies.

The agreement states that the Ministry would choose the right approach for this programme according to the national priorities stipulated in Oman Vision 2040.

The Ministry would also form an executive committee to



UNDER THE AGREEMENT, BANK MUSCAT WILL BE SUPPORTING AND FINANCING THE BEST GRADUATION PROJECTS PREPARED BY OMANI STUDENTS ENROLLED AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OMAN.

organise, manage and operate the programme in coordination with Bank Muscat to ensure the success of the business plan agreed upon.

The designated committee will also follow up, evaluate and supervise the winning projects during the incubation phase. This agreement highlights the necessity of cooperation and partnership between different institutions in Oman.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation is keenly working towards enhancing and developing partnerships to support youth and provide capabilities to build and

foster specific programmes that focus on entrepreneurship and innovation.

Bank Muscat also believes in strategic partnerships that enhance its social responsibility strategy which includes providing a standing point for business projects for the youth.

The programme, which aims at transferring graduation programmes into start-ups, is one of the programmes the Ministry implements to provide support to university students.

The support would help students turn their graduation projects into start-ups that can develop sustainable growth benefiting from a series of financial, advisory and technical support offered by sponsoring partners.

For Bank Muscat, this is an additional step to enhance its leading role in corporate social responsibility. The bank fosters innovation by providing support for Omani youth and helping them develop their skills and implement their innovative ideas eventually turning them into projects that will benefit the community.

Mazoon Dairy launches new cheese products

MUSCAT: The flagship dairy company of the Sultanate of Oman, Mazoon Dairy, has recently launched a new spicy flavour to its spread of cheese products.

The new spicy cheese product made its debut in markets across the Sultanate of Oman along with the launch of Mazoon Dairy's cheese campaign.

Added to an already successful string of cheese products namely, Mazoon's Cream Cheese and Cheddar Cheese spread which are available in 240g, 500g and 900g, the new and flavourful Spicy Cheese is a welcome extension to the Omani brand's unique variety of products. With the launch of its cheese campaign, Mazoon Dairy endeavours to reach a wider segment of consumers in Oman.

With Mazoon Dairy unveiling new products under the highest standards of quality and food safety, it is no wonder that it is the leading Omani cheese brand in the country.

Free of additives like



hydrogenated vegetable oils, Mazoon cheese is made from pure cow's milk sourced straight from their state-of-the-art integrated dairy farm in Al Sinaina, and under the direct supervision of

nutritious products to every home in Oman and the region.

Mazoon Dairy's export operations have expanded to reach a number of countries in the region, with its wide range of dairy products being exported to 20 countries.

Ever since its inception, Mazoon Dairy has been working tirelessly to launch its products and meet the needs of the local market.

Mazoon Dairy's array of products, which includes fresh milk, fresh yoghurt, flavoured milk, long-life milk, long-life flavoured milk, flavoured yoghurt, natural juices, cheese, fresh cream, labneh and ice cream, are the hallmark of quality and signifies the importance of local produce.

In addition to producing high-quality products for Oman, and raising the local dairy industry standards to support and develop the same, Mazoon Dairy is dedicated to playing a key role in creating sustainable communities throughout Oman and the GCC.

Gold prices reduced to 'consumer-friendly' levels in GCC

MUSCAT: Gold prices have reduced to 'consumer-friendly' levels in the GCC and it is the perfect time for customers to make use of this opportunity to benefit from the gold rate ahead of the holiday season and buy jewellery as gifts for dear ones back home.

"We are also expecting tourists from India to increase their jewellery purchases during their visit. The price advantage here will further enhance the bridal jewellery purchases from residents and tourists alike," Shamlal

Ahamed (pictured) – MD – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said.

"The recent announcement by the Indian Government to raise import duty to 12.5 per cent from 7.5 per cent is expected to make gold more expensive across India. This hike has increased the gold price difference between GCC and India. The gold price in GCC will get more attractive than in India with a saving of 12-15 per cent. The weakening rupee will further increase the gold rate in India," he added.



MSX30 Index closes the week marginally higher

MUSCAT: MSX30 Index ended the week higher by 0.18 per cent. Services Index was the only index ending higher by 0.61 per cent. The Industrial Index and Financial Index closed lower by 0.31 per cent and 0.56 per cent respectively.

The MSX Shariah Index closed down by 0.50 per cent.

The EGM of National Life & General Insurance Company SAOG approved the company's proposal of acquiring 49.99 per cent share capital of Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance (Middle East) BSC Bahrain shares in return for the issuance of up to a maximum of 133,374.343 new shares through private placement.

The issued share capital of the Company Royal & Sun Alliance Insurance will increase from RO 26,500,000 up to a maximum of RO 39,837,435. The company also approved the increase in the

authorised share capital of the company from RO 50,000,000 to RO 100,000,000 and amend the Company's Articles of Association.

Oman Chlorine SACG Company has announced to its shareholders that it has started production of its new calcium chloride plant in Suhar Industrial City on June 25, 2022. The new plant has designed capacity of 80 metric tonnes per day.

In regard to the complaint filed by Sweets of Oman with regard to informational falsification, the court found the defendants from the first to fourth one are guilty of the minor offence of using information technology tools to commit a crime of informational falsification.

Accordingly, the court ruled that they should be punished by imprisonment for one year obliging them to pay an amount



of RO 1,000 as a fine for each one of them, and to be expelled from Oman once they complete their terms. The other defendants were acquitted.

The Sustainable City — Yiti, set to be the first fully sustainable community in the Sultanate

30/2018, which aims to protect developers' funds.

Accordingly, The Sustainable City — Yiti can now offer Escrow services for the buyers of its upcoming 1,657 residential units — including 300 eco-friendly and energy-efficient villas, 1,225 apartments and 132 luxury serviced apartments.

The total number of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) registered in the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development increased by 46.9 per cent in May 2022 compared to the same period in 2021 to reach 78,089 compared to 53,166 in May 2021, according to the data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Among the governorates, the Governorate of Muscat topped the list by reaching 26,374 enterprises, comprising a rise of 47.1 per cent,

followed by the Governorate of North Al Batinah with 12,030, comprising an increase by 43 per cent, the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah with 8,821, going up 33.3 per cent and the Governorate of Dhofar by 7,887, constituting an increase by 77.7 per cent compared to the same period in 2021.

Total expatriate worker numbers rose 1.2 per cent MoM and 7 per cent YoY in May 2022. Private sector expatriates rose by 7.8 per cent YoY in May 2022, while family expatriates also rose 7.2 per cent YoY. Government expatriates continue to decline (fell 17.2 per cent YoY).

The total number of expatriates stood at 1.51 million at end-May 2022, forming 33 per cent of Oman's population and 82 per cent of total expatriate population.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)



Majan Electricity begins implementing Guaranteed Standards of Service

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 2

Majan Electricity Company, a member of Nama Group, began implementing Guaranteed Standard of Services with effect from July 1, 2022 — in line with standards prescribed by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) for licensed distribution and supply companies.

The standard, first announced by APSR on June 26, 2022, includes a list of 10 items aimed at increasing customer satisfaction with the electricity services and assisting the electricity distribution companies in improving the quality of their services.

The standard covers several aspects including meter reading, customer complaints, new



electricity connections and unplanned outage notifications.

APSR also confirmed customers' entitlement to compensation

if electricity companies do not comply with the required level of

service.

Commenting on the announcement, Ibrahim al Farsi, Senior Director of Customer Affairs at Majan Electricity Company, said implementation of the new standard at Majan Electricity Company and other distribution and supplying companies will help increase customer satisfaction with the services that they receive, protect the rights affirmed by APSR and raise people's awareness about their rights and responsibilities with regards to public services.

Majan Electricity Company has already been implementing these standards through the customer charter, which measures the level of customer satisfaction.

The company's performance is continuously being evaluated to monitor the extent of compliance with the charter standards.

Ghana seeks IMF support for ailing economy



ACCRA: Ghana said on Friday it was seeking International Monetary Fund (IMF) support for its economy, battered by inflation, a pandemic slump and the war in Ukraine.

President Nana Akufo-Addo (**pictured**) had previously rejected calls to seek financial assistance from the IMF.

But on Friday, Information Minister Kojo Oppong Nkrumah said the president had "authorised Finance Minister Ken Ofori-Atta to commence formal engagements" with the IMF.

Ghana will invite the Fund "to support an economic programme put together by the government of Ghana", he said in a statement.

The announcement followed a phone conversation between Akufo-Addo and IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, he said. It came after a two-day protest hit the capital, Accra, over the rising cost of food and fuel.

The West African nation saw inflation surge to more than 27 per cent in May — the highest in almost two decades.

"The engagement with the IMF will seek to provide balance of payment support... in the face of challenges induced by the Covid-19 pandemic and, recently, the Russia-Ukraine crises", the minister said.

In 2015, Ghana secured a \$918 million credit facility as part of a three-year arrangement from the IMF. Akufo-Addo has been in office since 2017. He was re-elected in 2020, but his second term has seen a series of protests over economic problems.

Brawls have erupted in the hung parliament as the government tries to push tough policies it believes could salvage the economy. — AFP

Sierra Leone slashes 'zeros of shame' from banknotes

FREETOWN: Sierra Leone on Friday introduced a new family of banknotes, stripping three zeros off the leone, in a bid to restore confidence in the inflation-hit national currency. The Bank of Sierra Leone announced the move last August, insisting the public's purchasing power would not be affected by the change.

"We have removed three zeros from our banknotes but the money yesterday is the same value as today", President Julius Maada Bio said at ceremonies at the central bank where the new bills were unveiled.

A note of 10 new leones is the equivalent of a note of 10,000 old leones, which changes hands for around 75 US cents. Year-on-year inflation in the West African state was 24.87 per cent in May, according to the national statistics agency.

Rising prices had driven the printing of banknotes, resulting in a mountain of paper money that is costly to sustain and unwieldy for the public. Shoppers need huge quantities of banknotes for the simplest



A general view of the new banknotes released in Sierra Leone. — AFP

transactions and unscrupulous bank tellers sometimes pilfer notes from sealed bundles of bills.

"We are removing the 'zeros of shame' to get the currency properly aligned", Morlai Bangura, a central bank director said. He said the bank had begun distributing the new paper notes to commercial banks last week.

On Friday, customers braving the rain queued at commercial banks to swap their old banknotes for new ones. "The changing of our currency is necessary — we were used to carrying bags to the bank to withdraw our money, but not anymore", Alice Frazer, 70, said after exchanging her notes at the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank, a state-owned bank in central Freetown. — AFP

135 key enablers to ramp up Oman's investment appeal

FROM PAGE 13

Judicial Systems:

Several far-reaching initiatives have been launched to help strengthen the delivery of justice in accordance with the country's laws and statutes. In addition to a broader effort to strengthen judicial integrity, the National Programme has also recommended, among other things, the introduction of mobile notary services, digitising of public notary services, specialised departments to adjudicate on investment issues, and digitalisation of judicial services.

Energy-related investment opportunities:

A cornerstone initiative is the North-South Interconnection Project, which integrates the grids of North Oman and Dhofar via Duqm and includes the internal grid of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO). Phase 1 of the project is well under way.

Other enabling initiatives include recommendations for investment in solar and

wind based renewable energy projects, introduction of energy efficiency labelling standards for electrical appliances, development of a national environmental policy for the energy sector, and a new Climate Management Strategy.

Port and Land Transportation:

Several landmark initiatives have been listed under this sub-head. Notable are proposals for the establishment of a dedicated truck road between Al Maabelah and Tharmid, an alternative land route to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar from South Al Batinah Governorate, and a host of road projects to help boost tourism and socioeconomic development in key areas of the country.

Additionally, the National Programme has proposed, among other things, licensing of water taxis, construction of a new multipurpose post in the Wilayat of Sadah, establishment of small and medium marine industrial zones, and the launch of an International Ship Registration System (Al

Numan).

Food security / Fisheries:

Envisioned is a sizable portfolio of shrimp and fish farming projects along Oman's coast, a first-ever salmon fishing project, series of pelagic fishing schemes, canning and seafood project in Duqm, and fish collections centres.

Tourism:

Notable initiatives for implementation include tourism development ventures in Al Dakhiliyah, South al Sharqiyah and Dhofar governorates; value creation from a number of forts and castles; developing waterfront tourism activities, and the establishment of a number of resorts.

Agricultural and Livestock:

Initiatives progressed under this sub-head including several projects in support of poultry farming, poultry feed production, veterinary pharmaceuticals, central livestock market in Al Suwaiq, Omani goats farming venture, fodder cultivation for livestock, and integrated camel milk scheme.

OHEC 2022 to spotlight potential of healthcare sector

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 2

The demand for healthcare facilities and medical supplies has drastically increased in the Sultanate of Oman, as the nation witnessed a rapid recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. To give impetus to the healthcare industry, the 13th edition of Oman Health Exhibition & Conference (OHEC) will be held in-person during September 26-28, 2022 at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, Muscat, Oman.

OHEC is Oman's leading exhibition and conference for the health and medical sector providing a networking and business-centric event platform for professionals from the hospital

infrastructure, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, medical supplies, medical tourism, medical technology, laboratory equipment, instruments and services, international hospitals, health and medical centres.

The event will welcome more than 150 local and international participating companies from Czech Republic, Iran, India, Oman, Poland, Thailand, Turkey and the UAE over 5,000 healthcare professionals and buyers from across Oman and the Middle East region during three days of networking and knowledge exchange sessions.

Rising investment in the Omani public and private medical sector is reflected in the opening of the SQU Cancer Centre,



Hematology Centre, Ministry of Health Diabetic Centre, Oncology Centre, Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy Centre, Cardiac Centre,

Genetic Centre at The Royal Hospital, IVF Centre at Khoula Hospital and similar centres in other governorates of Oman.

Ashley Roberts, General Manager, CONNECT — the organiser of Oman Health Exhibition & Conference in partnership with Ministry of Health Oman states, "Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in realising the importance of investing in sound healthcare system.

With advancements in healthcare technology, increasing awareness of personal fitness and wellness, and importance of pre-emptive measures to address health-related issues, Oman Health Exhibition & Conference is set to highlight the demand in healthcare and innovative technologies.

In three days of business networking and knowledge exchange in a face-to-face

environment, the event will facilitate the industry to reconnect and collaborate for development of the industry."

In addition to the exhibition showcase, the Oman Health Conference will continue to present fresh insights into the evolution of health and medical sectors post Covid-19.

The free-to-attend conference is organised by Oman Medical Association in partnership with Oman's Ministry of Health where renowned speakers, policymakers, practitioners, academicians, researchers, advocacy groups, influential policymakers and industry experts will participate to discuss policies, public health challenges and solutions in a global context.

Saving energy now is an EU no-brainer

The European Union’s gas headache hasn’t gone away. Despite strong progress in hiking liquefied natural gas (LNG) purchases, the bloc is some way off its self-imposed year-end target of cutting Russian gas imports by two-thirds, or about 100 billion cubic metres (bcm).

That leaves key member states like Germany vulnerable to an economic shock should Russian President Vladimir Putin turn off the taps. They shouldn’t wait until the weather turns cold to implement robust energy-saving measures.

Brussels’ “REPowerEU” plan requires 50 bcm of additional LNG imports this year. During the first five months of 2022, the 27-nation bloc imported 54 bcm of LNG, Rystad Energy reckons. That’s up 18 bcm, or 50 per cent, from the same period last year. The EU, which can import up to around 13 bcm of LNG per month, could in theory add another 20 bcm between now and the end of September, and hit its overall goal by year-end.

That looks like a stretch. Spain imports lots of LNG, but pipeline bottlenecks complicate getting it to EU neighbours.

Meanwhile, about 11 bcm of EU imports this year are Russian LNG, making the true replacement target even bigger. Germany and Italy, the EU’s biggest Russian gas consumers, have filled storage facilities to 60 per cent of capacity but may struggle to hit a critical EU goal of 90 per cent by October.

That leaves the bloc at the mercy of brutal, Putin-prompted gas outages this winter. Hence the need to enforce energy-saving measures now to reduce demand and cool down fossil fuel prices. Relying on information campaigns to use less energy, as the EU has done so far, is unlikely to work. Rebates on petrol or cuts to energy bills avoid social unrest, but don’t encourage savings.

A better approach has been set by Italy, which mandated in May a reduction of air conditioning usage in public buildings. This alone should save Rome 4 bcm or 13 per cent of its annual Russian gas imports. Milder Germany, where 50 per cent of office buildings have nonetheless installed air conditioning, needs to follow the example.

— Reuters

Germany and Italy, the EU’s biggest Russian gas consumers, have filled storage facilities to 60 per cent of capacity but may struggle to hit a critical EU goal of 90 per cent by October.



IMPROMPTU MARKET

This picture shows an aerial view of an impromptu livestock market near the town of Maaret Misrin in northern part of Syria’s northwestern Idlib province.

— AFP

The domino effect when crypto collapses



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The writer is a member of the International Press Association

SINCE 2019, BILLIONS UPON BILLIONS WERE PILED UP IN RISKY SPECULATIVE INVESTMENT INSTRUMENTS.

Not everyone is feeling it yet, but the global economy is in pretty bad shape at the moment. In some countries prices are skyrocketing. Fuel and energy in general have become terribly expensive.

Financial markets are also impacted significantly. So, the readers living in an oil and gas rich country with good domestic production like Oman might find this article somehow hard to fully relate.

However, the readers from Europe, the US and other countries in Asia understand perfectly what I am trying to convey. We have seen crisis playing out several times in our generation.

The most recent was in 2008. I recall the feeling when the financial system was collapsing, but my business was doing relatively well in Singapore.

I did not perceive the degree of catastrophic impact that the crisis was having around me. But this time is different. Especially when I look at the crypto market. When Terra — Luna crashed the market a couple of months ago, set in motion a domino effect.

Last week, Three Arrows Capital (3AC) became insolvent, threatening a tsunami that could have tremendous repercussions.

Three Arrows Capital’s implemented an aggressive investment strategies, but with poor risk management. This is probably the simplest summary of its failure to maintain short-term liquid assets to cover the liabilities.

Over \$300 million of assets were liquidated since the middle of June. 3AC’s collapse highlighted the risks linked to speculative leveraged positions with major lending protocols in Decentralised Finance (DeFi). \$1 billion in uncollateralised crypto loans are now at serious risk if borrowers run out of liquidity to repay.

This brought the spotlight onto Wintermute Trading and the Amber Group, the two biggest borrowers in the uncollateralised lending market, with total loan value of \$160 million each.

The ecosystem partners of 3AC are “bleeding” badly. Celsius blocked withdrawals on its platform since the liquidity struggle started in mid June.

Finblox reported that its multiple demands for 3AC’s full loan repayment were unsuccessful. Investor and crypto lender BlockFi liquidated some of 3AC’s positions. Genesis apparently also liquidated 3AC when failed to meet a margin call.

Towards the end of June, Voyager Digital

issued a loan default notice to 3AC for \$670 million.

Now the eyes are all on the biggest crypto lenders in decentralised finance: AAVE, Compound, and MakerDAO. Collectively they hold billions of crypto assets available for borrowing.

They played a critical role in facilitating speculation by allowing big position leveraging when liquidity was abundant.

They were offering very attractive interest rates to encourage large funds and institutional investors like 3AC to borrow for trading and investing. But now these large lenders feel the pinch of a potential domino effect on their liquidity.

When the average crypto enthusiast talks about his or her holding in Bitcoin or Ethereum, might not really grasp the magnitude of the ramifications when large investors fail to repay their borrowings. This crypto crisis seems to have no end.

Since 2019 — circa when the DeFi movement started — billions upon billions were piled up in risky speculative investment instruments.

As it often happens, when making money seems too easy, there is something that does not adds up, and the repercussions could be behind the corner. Calls for stricter regulations always follow big losses.

A stagflationary debt crisis looms



NOURIEL ROUBINI

The author, Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University’s Stern School of Business, is Chief Economist at Atlas Capital Team, CEO of Roubini Macro Associates and Co-Founder of TheBoomBust.com

The global financial and economic outlook for the year ahead has soured rapidly in recent months, with policymakers, investors and households now asking how much they should revise their expectations, and for how long. That depends on the answers to six questions.

First, will the rise in inflation in most advanced economies be temporary or more persistent?

This debate has raged for the past year, but now it is largely settled: “Team Persistent” won, and “Team Transitory” — which previously included most central banks and fiscal authorities — must admit to having been mistaken. The second question is whether the increase in inflation was driven more by excessive aggregate demand (loose monetary, credit and fiscal policies) or by stagflationary negative aggregate supply shocks (including

the initial Covid-19 lockdowns, supply-chain bottlenecks, a reduced US labour supply, the impact of Russia’s war in Ukraine on commodity prices, and China’s “zero-Covid” policy).

While both demand and supply factors were in the mix, it is now widely recognised that supply factors have played an increasingly decisive role. This matters because supply-driven inflation is stagflationary and thus raises the risk of a hard landing (increased unemployment and potentially a recession) when monetary policy is tightened.

That leads directly to the third question: Will monetary-policy tightening by the US Federal Reserve and other major central banks bring a hard or soft landing?

Until recently, most central banks and most of Wall Street occupied “Team Soft Landing.” But the consensus has rapidly shifted, with even Fed Chair Jerome Powell

recognising that a recession is possible, and that a soft landing will be “very challenging.”

Moreover, a model used by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York shows a high probability of a hard landing, and the Bank of England has expressed similar views. Several prominent Wall Street institutions have now decided that a recession is their baseline scenario (the most likely outcome if all other variables are held constant).

In both the United States and Europe, forward-looking indicators of economic activity and business and consumer confidence are heading sharply south. The fourth question is whether a hard landing would weaken central banks’ hawkish resolve on inflation.

If they stop their policy tightening once a hard landing becomes likely, we can expect a persistent rise in inflation and either economic overheating (above target inflation and above potential growth) or

stagflation (above target inflation and a recession), depending on whether demand shocks or supply shocks are dominant.

Most market analysts seem to think that central banks will remain hawkish, but I am not so sure. I have argued that they will eventually wimp out and accept higher inflation — followed by stagflation — once a hard landing becomes imminent, because they will be worried about the damage of a recession and a debt trap, owing to an excessive build-up of private and public liabilities after years of low interest rates.

Now that a hard landing is becoming a baseline for more analysts, a new (fifth) question is emerging: Will the coming recession be mild and short-lived, or will it be more severe and characterised by deep financial distress? Most of those who have come late and grudgingly to the hard-landing baseline still contend

that any recession will be shallow and brief.

They argue that today’s financial imbalances are not as severe as those in the run-up to the 2008 global financial crisis, and that the risk of a recession with a severe debt and financial crisis is therefore low. But this view is dangerously naive. There is ample reason to believe that the next recession will be marked by a severe stagflationary debt crisis. As a share of global GDP, private and public debt levels are much higher today than in the past, having risen from 200 per cent in 1999 to 350 per cent today (with a particularly sharp increase since the start of the pandemic).

Under these conditions, rapid normalisation of monetary policy and rising interest rates will drive highly leveraged zombie households, companies, financial institutions, and governments into bankruptcy and default.

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#Living_with_COVID19



For pandas, it's been two 'thumbs' up for millions of years

Pandas now live primarily in temperate forests in the mountains of southwestern China, with a wild population estimated under 2,000... **P20**

Bhutan to welcome tourists 'who can spend' for first time since Covid

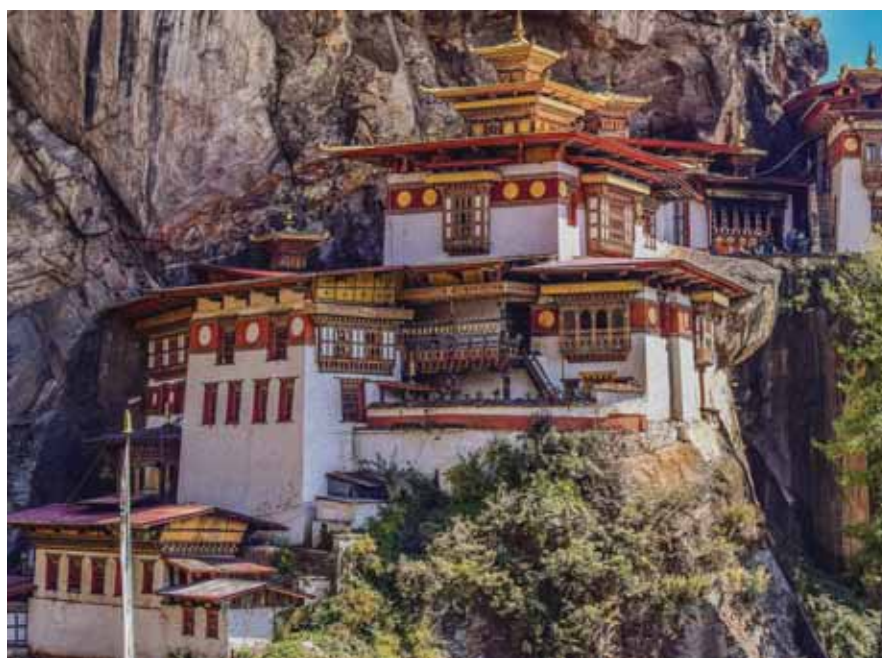
BHUTAN WILL reopen for international tourists from September for the first time since the pandemic began more than two years ago, officials said on Thursday, as the tiny Himalayan kingdom looks to revive its economy.

Wedged between China and India, the country with scenic natural beauty and ancient Buddhist culture, took drastic early steps and banned tourism, a major source of income, in March 2020 when the first Covid-19 case was detected there.

The constitutional monarchy of less than 800,000 people has reported fewer than 60,000 infections and only 21 deaths, but the \$3 billion economy contracted in the last two fiscal years, pushing more people into poverty.

The Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) said tourists would be allowed to enter from September 23.

They will, however, be charged a Sustainable Development Fee of \$200 per tourist per night, up from the \$65 charged for three decades.



Officials said the new fee would offset tourists' carbon impact.

"Covid-19 has allowed us to reset — to rethink how the sector can be

best structured and operated... while keeping carbon footprints low," Tandi Dorji, TCB chairman and the country's foreign minis-

ter, said in a statement.

Authorities said Bhutan had revised standards for service providers, such as hotels, guides, tour operators and drivers.

Tourism employs 50,000 people and contributed an annual average of about \$84 million in the three years before the pandemic in direct foreign exchange.

Bhutan opened to high-end tourists in 1974 when it received 300 visitors. The number soared to 315,600 in 2019, up 15.1 per cent from a year earlier, TCB data showed.

Tour operators said visitors would be free to choose their own operators and plan itineraries, whereas before they could choose only from the packages offered by their operators.

Sangay Phuntso, who runs the Always Bhutan Travel company in the capital Thimphu, said the fees may deter some, but not the wealthier visitors.

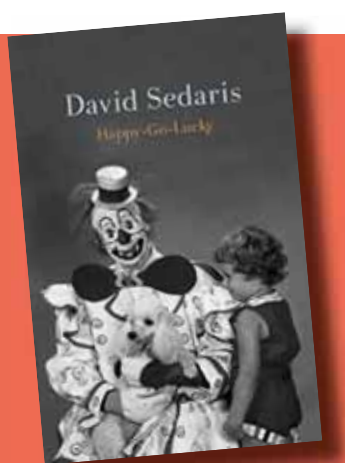
"Those who can spend are welcome," Phuntso said. "We are excited." — Reuters

READ

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY

BY DAVID SEDARIS

The humorist portrays personal and public upheavals of his life in its seventh decade and the world in the time of a pandemic.



HIGHLIGHTS OF A LIFE

Customary chiefs pose for a portrait during the funeral service of slain Congolese independence hero Patrice Lumumba at the Limete Tower in Kinshasa. The coffin of Patrice Lumumba was buried in Kinshasa on June 30, 2022, the anniversary of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo, more than 61 years after his assassination and at the end of a nine-day pilgrimage which retraced the highlights of his life. The coffin was brought to a concrete and glass mausoleum, surmounted by a statue of Lumumba, erected on the avenue that bears his name and leads to Kinshasa's international airport, at the Limete Tower. — AFP



FOOD FOR MIGRANTS

Volunteers of Corazon Ministries prepare food for migrants at a shelter in San Antonio, Texas. Dozens of migrants wait in line outside a shelter in San Antonio, most of them young men but also some women and children, hoping for a hot meal and a roof over their head. Every year thousands like them pass through this Texas city that is on the front line of the struggle to cope with waves of migrants seeking to escape poverty and violence and find a better life in the US. And the trip can be deadly: 53 people died this week after being left inside a big-rig truck abandoned by some train tracks and junk yards in San Antonio. — AFP





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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

How Alton Mason Went from 'Male Model of the Year' to 'Elvis'



Name: Alton Mason
Age: 24

NOW LIVES: A hotel room on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, although he is usually travelling. "I live in Terminal 2 in Delta," he said, jokingly. "It's just me and my suitcase!"

CLAIM TO FAME: Mason is an actor, film-maker and model known for doing back flips and other acrobatic moves down the runway for Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Versace, Valentino and other major labels. In addition to being named Model of the Year by Models.com for four years in a row, Mason was the first Black male model to walk in a Chanel show. "Now, I represent so many people that may identify with my story, my vision, my culture and me," he said. "It's a privilege to be able to open doors."

BIG BREAK: Mason was studying acting at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles and interning for choreographer Laurieann Gibson when he was discovered by a modelling agent on Instagram in 2015. He went to New York City for the first time that year and landed a major show: Yeezy Season 3, held at Madison Square Garden. "This show felt transcendental," he said. "I left that show, got a dollar slice of pizza, and flew back to LA with a clearer vision of levels I could reach."

LATEST PROJECT: In January, Mason walked in Virgil Abloh's final collection for Louis Vuitton in Paris. "Virgil was like a brother to me in this industry," he said. "He gave a platform for me to shine and believed in me, and being in that tribute really hit home." Mason recalled how Abloh encouraged him to perform his signature runway move at a 2019 show in Paris. "Backstage, after I got off the runway, he came up to me and said, 'I want you to go out there and do something.'" Mason said. Dressed in a purple silk suit, he executed a series of back flips. "Virgil walked back in and said, 'You killed that!'"

NEXT THING: Mason makes his acting debut in the Baz Luhrmann biopic "Elvis," in which he plays Little Richard. Luhrmann met Mason at a 2019 GQ Australia awards show, where Mason gave a speech that impressed the director. They struck up a conversation at the after-party and Mason was soon cast in the movie. "I'm paying tribute to such a legend, such an icon — someone that I embody the essence of," he said.

MOVES LIKE MICHAEL JACKSON: "I grew up with a bunch of Black cousins in the South and we would always be in the living room dancing and watching Michael Jackson," he said. "A lot of the moments you see me moving on the runway are really spontaneous; it's improvised, never choreographed. These are just feelings that come to me and I let them all free." — NYT

TRAVEL TALES

Kazakhstan mulls endangered antelope cull after population boom



KAZAKHSTAN IS considering culls of its endangered saiga antelope, the ecology ministry told AFP on Thursday, after citing scientific advice about the threat posed to agriculture since the population rebounded.

Conservation efforts that included a crackdown on poaching have seen the saiga's numbers in Kazakhstan soar from under 200,000 following a die-off in 2015 to 1.3 million ahead of this year's spring calving season, officials said.

"We have a scientific recommendation to regulate the population of saigas," a spokeswoman said.

"We are studying it, but no final decision has been taken," she added, without offering any deadline for the decision, set to affect some 80,000 animals.

The former Soviet country's vast steppe is home to a majority of the world's Saiga, known for its distinctive bulbous nose and the horns whose status in Chinese medicine fuelled the poaching. Russia's Kalmykia region and Mongolia host smaller numbers of the animal.

A ban on hunting introduced in the late 1990s is set to run out in 2023 and Kazakhstan's ecology minister Serikkali Brekeshev suggested on Wednesday that the ministry had "made a decision" about regularly culling up to 10 per cent of the Ural saiga population in western Kazakhstan — the largest of three saiga populations

gested on Wednesday that the ministry had "made a decision" about regularly culling up to 10 per cent of the Ural saiga population in western Kazakhstan — the largest of three saiga populations

Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, and that the "position of society" would be taken into account.

Kazakhstan's leaders intensified their crackdown on illegal hunting in 2019, after two state rangers were



groups in the Central Asian nation. "Today... saigas cross over not only into pasture land, but also farm land. It's a definite problem," Brekeshev was quoted as saying by local media.

But the ministry spokeswoman told AFP that any decision would need to be approved by President

killed by poachers, causing popular anger.

Kazakhstan's 2015 saiga antelope die-off saw more than half the global population at the time wiped out by what scientists later determined was a nasal bacterium that spread in unusually warm and humid conditions. — AFP

ART

Casting of Rodin's Thinker fetches 10.7m euros at Paris auction



A CASTING OF Auguste Rodin's "The Thinker" sculpture, one of the most iconic works of art in the world, sold for 10.7 million euros (\$11.14 million) at a Paris auction on Thursday.

The auction house, Christie's, had estimated the casting, one of roughly 40 authentic outstanding ones, would fetch between nine to 14 million euros. The record for a Rodin "Thinker" was set at a Sotheby's auction in New York in 2013, when one sold for \$15.3 million.

When conceived by Rodin in 1880 in its original size of approximately 70 cm "The Thinker" was called "The Poet" and was designed to be the crowning element of "The Gates of Hell," another major work by the French sculptor. The sculpture initially represented Dante, the medieval Italian poet and author of the Divine Comedy, leaning forward to observe the circles of Hell, while meditating on his work.

While remaining in place on the monumental Gates of Hell, The Thinker was exhibited individually in 1888 and thus became an independent work.

The statue was first enlarged in 1904, and monumental man-sized versions of the statue such as the one on display in the Paris Rodin Museum proved even more popular, with its the image of a man lost in thought but whose powerful body suggests a great capacity for action.

The copy sold this Thursday by Christie's was the size of the original model. — AFP

Francis Bacon painting of Lucian Freud sells for £43.3m: Sothebys

A PAINTING BY Irish-born British artist Francis Bacon of fellow UK painter Lucian Freud sold on Wednesday for £43.3 million (\$52.5 million, 50.2 million euros), according to Sotheby's auction house.

The price is an auction record for a painting by Bacon sold in London and also for any single panel painting by the artist.

"Study for Portrait of Lucian Freud", painted in 1964, "exemplifies an iconic pairing of two of the most significant painters within the canon of twentieth-century art", said the auction house.

The figurative work depicts a restless, bare-chested Freud, with a distorted face, sitting on a bench.

The present work is testament to Francis Bacon's

capacity to provoke emotion and capture in paint the complexities of the human psyche," added Sotheby's.

The artists were close friends but also artistic rivals fascinated by the human figure and sat for each other on multiple occasions.

Bacon's 1969 triptych "Three Studies of Lucian Freud" sold in 2013 for \$142.4 million, and held the record for the most expensive work of art at auction until being unseated by Picasso's "The Women of Algiers (Version O)" in 2015.

Snapped up by a New York gallery, it is composed of three panels or pieces which show the artist Freud sitting on the same chair but painted from different angles.

Bacon died in 1992 and Freud in 2011. — AFP

art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | JULY 3 | 2022



A panda enjoying a cake made with ice during its birthday at a zoo in Nanning. — AFP

For pandas, it's been two 'thumbs' up for millions of years



An artist's reconstruction of the extinct panda Ailurictos that lived about 6 million years ago, with its fossils unearthed near the city of Zhaotong in northern Yunnan Province in China. — Reuters



The hand bones of the modern giant panda are seen in his undated handout illustration. — Reuters

By Will Dunham

Fossils unearthed in China are helping scientists get a better grasp on one of the marvels of evolution: the giant panda's false thumb, which helps this veggie-loving bear munch the bamboo that makes up most of its diet.

Researchers said last week they discovered near the city of Zhaotong in northern Yunnan Province fossils about 6 million years old of an extinct panda called Ailurictos that bore the oldest-known evidence of this improvised extra digit - actually a greatly enlarged wrist bone called the radial sesamoid.

It closely resembled the false thumb of modern pandas, but is a bit longer and lacks the inward hook present on the end in the extant species that provides even greater ability to manipulate bamboo stalks, shoots and roots while eating.

The false thumb is an evolutionary adaptation to augment the existing five actual digits of the panda's hand. A bear's hand lacks the opposable thumb pos-

sessed by humans and various primates that enables the grasping and handling of objects using the fingers. The false thumb serves a similar function.

"It uses the false thumb as a very crude opposable thumb to grasp bamboos, sort of like our own thumbs except it is located at the wrist and is much shorter than human thumbs," said Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County paleontologist Xiaoming Wang, lead author of the research published in the journal Scientific Reports.

Ailurictos was an evolutionary forerunner of the modern panda, smaller but with anatomical traits signalling a similar lifestyle including a bamboo diet. The modern panda's false thumb has some advantages over the earlier version.

"The hooked false thumb offers a tighter grasp of the bamboo and, at the same time, its less-protruded tip - because of the bended hook - makes it easier for the panda to walk.

Think of the false thumb as being stepped on every time the panda walks. And therefore, we think that is the reason that the

false thumb in modern pandas has become shorter, not longer," Wang said.

The panda's tight grip on bamboo acts against the jerking action of the mouth in order to quickly break food into bite-size chunks, Wang added.

The researchers initially found an Ailurictos arm bone in 2010, then discovered teeth and the false thumb in 2015, giving them a much better understanding of the animal.

Until now, the oldest-known evidence of this thumb-like structure dated to fossils from about 102,000-49,000 years ago in the same panda species alive today.

The false thumb lets pandas hold bamboo to eat but not rotate the food as a true thumb would allow.

"One of the most important features of human beings and their primate relatives is the evolution of a thumb that can be held against other fingers for precise grasping,"

"The panda's false thumb is far less effective than the human thumb, but it is enough to provide the giant panda with the grasping

ability to eat bamboo," said palaeontologist and study co-author Tao Deng of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing.

Pandas, one of the world's eight bear species, once inhabited large swathes of Asia. They now live primarily in temperate forests in the mountains of southwestern China, with a wild population estimated under 2,000.

A panda's diet is 99 per cent vegetarian, though they do sometimes eat small animals and carrion. Because of their inefficient digestive system, pandas consume large amounts to meet their nutritional needs - 26-84 pounds (12-38 kg) of bamboo while eating up to 14 hours a day.

The false thumb was not present in another closely related bear that lived about 9 million years ago, the researchers said.

"This is a great innovation - transformation of a minor bone into an element that is useful for a particular purpose," said Harvard University palaeobiologist and study co-author Lawrence Flynn. — Reuters