

315,000 travel via Salalah Airport

As the khareef tourism season gathers momentum, Salalah Airport has experienced great rush, with the number of passengers who travelled through the airport crossing the 315,000 mark since June 2022 as of August 13. Dhofar has become the prime tourist destination, par excellence, in the Arab Gulf during the monsoon season – thanks to its diverse natural features, its exotic climate and unique topographical and ecological characteristics. **DETAILS ON P3**



P10

JACOBS STORMS TO EURO 100-M CROWN



P13

SMART METERS TO COVER OMAN'S POWER SECTOR BY 2025



P18

SLOW-COOKED LAMB THAT CAN STAND THE HEAT



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable on the death of Prince Abdulrahman bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, King Salman expressed thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for his sentiments, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty against all harm. — ONA

CRUDE PRICE AT \$91.44 A BARREL

Oman oil price for October delivery on Wednesday reached \$91.44, comprising a drop by 86 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$92.30. The average price of Oman oil for August delivery has stabilised at \$112.93 per barrel, thus \$5.71 per barrel higher than July delivery. World oil prices steadied after recent heavy falls caused by forecasts of weaker demand on slowing economic growth.



REDUCING CARBON EMISSIONS



The Sultanate of Oman aims to shift to renewable energy and achieve a balance between the requirements of sustainable development and the optimal use of natural resources for the growth of the national economy. Also as part of the efforts to reduce the impact of climate change, the daily production of electricity from renewable energy is 650 MW, which will be increased to 3,350 MW by 2027. The Ibri solar power plant is built on an area of 13 million sqm and was opened at the beginning of this year, with a production capacity of 500 MW, enough to cover 50,000 homes and contribute to reducing 340,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually. **DETAILS ON P13**

National diversification plan to boost economy

TANWEEA FOCUSES ON TWO TRACKS

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with Oman Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit, the Ministry of Economy has launched a national diversification programme code-named ‘Tanweea’ (diversification), a flagship component of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025).

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, said, “Tanweea comprises a set of procedures aimed to speed up the rate of economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman.”

The programme seeks to enhance frontline and rear-line connections among economic sectors, with a view to expanding the base of production and export and empower economic sectors that contribute to non-oil revenues.

Dr Said told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the programme operates along two tracks — a planning track and an executive track. “The planning track focuses on shaping initiatives, studies and

80% revenues from four govt bodies

The total current revenues of ministries, government units and public institutions for the past fiscal year amounted to RO 2.87 billion. According to the final account of the state for the fiscal year 2021, which was published in the Official Gazette, about 80 per cent of these revenues were from four government institutions. While the Tax Authority topped the list, it was followed by Oman Investment Authority, Royal Oman Police and Ministry of Labour. **DETAILS ON P5**

research, conducts financial and economic analyses and develops a risk management system. The executive track operates in connection with establishments dealing with specific diversification sectors — mining, transport, logistics, foodstuff and tourism,” he added.

The minister said he expects the programme to come up with plenary economic diversification policies, incentive packages and the development of detailed national indicators that will bring about a transformation in the overall vision.

Mohammed bin Hamad al Hashmi, Executive Manager of Tanweea, said that the programme seeks to achieve target percentages in the sectors of mining, tourism, converting industries, transport, logistics and food security.

It also harmonises all strategies and national goals of the 10th Five-Year Plan and Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

Qadiroon, first e-platform for the disabled launched

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

A platform hosting 100 sustainable projects and with dedicated specialised outlets for shopping and direct electronic sale of all types of products of interest to people with disabilities was launched on Wednesday.

The launch took place during ‘Qadiroon’ (capable) forum, held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik al Said and attended by officials and representatives of the departments concerned.

The electronic platform for people

with disabilities is part of the first sustainable project.

Introduced in 2007, ‘Qadiroon’, termed as an initiative for people of determination, has seen success in various Arab countries including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, before being launched in the Sultanate of Oman in 2017. The forum, organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with Asas Muscat firm, discussed ways to establish sustainable projects that empower people with disabilities, notably in the field of entrepreneurship catering to their experience and abilities. **TURN TO P2**



READY FOR MOON MISSION

Nasa's next-generation moon rocket, the Space Launch System Artemis 1 rocket with its Orion crew capsule rolls to launch pad 39B at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida, US, on Wednesday.

— Reuters

OMAN FM 90.4

MUSCAT CANDID

WEEKDAYS 12-3PM HOSTED BY ASMA AL RIYAMI





QADIROON, FIRST E-PLATFORM FOR THE DISABLED LAUNCHED

FROM PAGE 1

During the forum, a cooperation agreement was signed between Asas and Ishraqa Institute (a Khimji Ramdas wing for social development). The agreement provides for training and rehabilitation programmes to empower the disabled.

The forum touched on indices and statistics about people with disabilities in Oman, as well as efforts made by government and private establishments to help



this segment of society address issues that might face them in the labour market.

Speaking to the media at the event, representatives from the Ministry of Social Development and Asas said the first edition was a great success and many disabled benefited from this project.

“We made the decision to continue the programme with more projects to support the disabled following the success of the first version,” said a representative of the initiative.

According to her, the outcome of the first edition saw more than 100 options for education and certification of the qualified and support for over 100 people for treatment.

The second edition will support families of the disabled with 250 projects around the country, and has chosen to adopt a mindset aligned with the 2040 goals by establishing sustainable projects which give a helping hand to people with disabilities.

Chances of dust rising on Adam-Salalah road, drivers urged to exercise caution

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Chances of dust and dust rising due to the active south/southwesterly winds are expected on the road between Adam and Salalah, which may cause a decrease in the horizontal visibility, alerted Oman Met Office.

This is expected to be so for the next three days, according to the weather forecaster at Oman Met Office, Civil Aviation Authority.

It might be best to follow the weather bulletin before embarking on a road trip to Dhofar or back from there for the weekend.

“Southerly to southwesterly light to moderate winds are on the forecast for Friday, with occasionally fresh over deserts and open areas of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates with chances of blowing dust,” stated the weather forecaster.

Meanwhile, there are good chances of cloud formation and thunderstorms accompanied by active downward winds on the Hajar Mountains and the surrounding areas during the afternoon and evening.

Expansion of local formations on the western and central Al



Hajar Mountains impacting Yanqul, Al Hamra, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Bahla, and rainfall of varying intensity with the beginning of the activity of local formations on the Eastern Al Hajar Mountains affecting Ibra, Dima W'attayeen and Samayil with chances of rain later with the possibilities of formations expanding on the rest of Al Hajar Mountains.

According to the weather experts at Oman Met Office, there are opportunities for the formations to expand over the rest of Al Hajar Mountains and the neighbouring areas, and even expand during the upcoming period towards the desert areas of the interior and Al Dhahirah.

According to the Met Office,

Akhdhar with sporadic rainfall on Ibri and chances of local formations expanding later with chances of thunder rain.

The Met Office also stated that the flow of clouds are expected over the governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, and the coasts of Muscat.

The weather forecast for Friday states that mainly clear skies are expected with advection of medium and high clouds over most of the governorates and chance of clouds formation and isolated thundershowers associated with downdraft over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon. It is expected to be partly cloudy to cloudy skies along the coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate and adjoining mountains with intermittent drizzle occasionally isolated rain. Chance of thundershower is forecast over desert areas of Dhofar Governorate. In addition, there are alerts for low clouds of fog at late night or early morning over parts of the coastal areas of Arabian Sea.

Meanwhile, the low pressure system that had headed towards the Pakistan coast has gone farther away with no impact in the Sultanate of Oman.

RAFO supplies foodstuff to remote area

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman, with the support of the Royal Army of Oman, has delivered essential items to citizens residing in Saya village in the mountainous areas of the Wilayat of Qurayat in Muscat Governorate.

This comes within the framework of national efforts and the development and humanitarian services provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces and other departments of the Ministry of Defence to citizens.

Grooming leaders seminar held

SALALAH: A seminar themed “Grooming second line leaders in line with Oman Vision 2040” kicked off on Wednesday.

The two-day seminar is organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with Fikr Media.

The seminar aims to promote the professional performance of managers in various sectors. It also targets sharpening their skills and to equip them with necessary abilities to handle the necessities of future leadership.

— ONA

Rehabilitation work intensifies in flood-affected areas

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Authorities have intensified their efforts in restoring services, especially roads, in the wilayats that were affected by the recent climatic conditions.

Several corporate houses have also announced their support to help those affected by damages from heavy rains.

The Board of Directors of Omantel recently approved a donation of RO 150,000 to help restore services and help those affected by the recent heavy rainfall in the wilayats of South Al Batinah Governorate.

The donation comes as part of the company's commitment to supporting the government's efforts in such extraordinary circumstances.

Bank Nizwa also provided aid to flood-stricken communities in Al Rustaq and Al Awabi in response to the severe flooding that struck the area.

The bank pledged RO 40,000 to support impacted people and companies in the two wilayats. “Our commitment to giving back

to our community is a core pillar of Bank Nizwa's operations. Since CSR is an integral part of the way we do business, we strive to help those in need. In light of the floods in Al Rustaq and Al Awabi, the Board of Directors decided to contribute and support the communities affected,” said Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of Bank Nizwa.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is working on the implementation of 140 projects for the maintenance of aflaj, auxiliary wells in various governorates, including those affected by Cyclone Shaheen.

Work on the falaj system has been under way in the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, North Al Sharqiyah and Al Buraimi.

The authorities in South Al Batinah Governorate recently confirmed that it has reopened all roads affected by the climatic conditions, which will help in facilitating movement between various villages.





Construction of Mazyouna Hospital in full swing

AL MAZYOUNA: Construction is in full swing at the Wilayat of Al Mazyouna's hospital in the Governorate of Dhofar. The facility, being set up on an area of 90,000 sqm (building area 15,276 sqm), costs RO 15,359,970. Eng Jamal bin Salim al Shanfari, Director-General of Projects and Engineering Affairs at the Ministry of Health, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the hospital comprises general clinics, internal medical clinics, as well as dental, paediatric,

surgery, ENT, ophthalmology and obstetric clinics. In addition, the hospital conducts an 'expanded immunisation programme'. Al Mazyouna Hospital has 50 beds and wards for men, women, children and maternity, besides emergency, dialysis, X-ray and laboratory sections. Auxiliary units at the hospital include a biomedical engineering workshop, a sterilisation unit, a medical warehouse and a general store. — **ONA**



Arab sports media forum opens in Dhofar

SALALAH: The Arab sports media forum kicked off on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, with the participation of 100 media and sports persons.

The event is organised by the Omani Journalists Association (OJA), represented by its sports media committee. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

The forum includes a seminar on Qatar 2022 Fifa World Cup. In addition, a session on Arab sports media will be held. Moreover, an exhibition on Qatar 2022 Fifa World Cup is held on the sideline of the forum. — **ONA**

Salalah Airport witnesses rush as khareef season peaks

SALALAH: As the khareef (monsoon) tourism season gathers momentum, Salalah Airport has experienced great rush, with the number of passengers who travelled via the airport crossing the 315,000 mark since June 2022 (as of August 13).

Salim bin Awadh al Yaf'ee, Deputy CEO of Salalah Airport, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the number of weekly flights stood at 195 (arrivals, departures).

Dhofar has become the prime tourism destination, par excellence, in the Arab Gulf during the monsoon season — thanks to its diverse natural features, its exotic climate and unique topographical and ecological characteristics, Al Yaf'ee added.

Among airline companies frequenting the region, Al Yaf'ee mentioned low-cost Wizz Air, which operates two weekly flights from Abu Dhabi to Salalah, and Gulf Air, which operates two weekly flights from the Kingdom of Bahrain.

In addition, Al Jazeera



Airways and Kuwait Airways operate 6 weekly flights from the State of Kuwait, while Flynas Airline operates 4 weekly flights from Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Al Yaf'ee said.

Qatar Airways, Air Arabia and Fly Dubai operate flights to Oman throughout the year, but they operate more flights during the monsoon tourism season, said Al Yaf'ee. He explained that, during the khareef, Qatar Airways operates 7 weekly flights, Air Arabia 14 weekly flights and



Fly Dubai 6 weekly flights. Al Yaf'ee pointed out that Salalah Airport also sees active

traffic during the monsoon tourism season by national carrier Oman Air, which operates 12 daily domestic flights. SalamAir adds another 9 domestic daily flights, he added. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), Salalah Airport registered a 68.9-per cent surge in number of flights (international and domestic) to 2,743 as at the end of May this year (2022), compared to the corresponding period in 2021.

Oman, Russia explore means of boosting trade cooperation

MUSCAT: Several officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources met here on Wednesday with a delegation from the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision of the Russian Federation.

The meeting explored means of enhancing cooperation in trade exchange for fish, agricultural and livestock products. It also reviewed the procedures and conditions related to exporting between Oman and Russia.

The meeting comes within the framework of the visit programme of the Russian delegation to Oman



to explore health practices, the quality of manufacturing in fish, agricultural and livestock facilities and the food safety system. The visit also aims to complete

the evaluation procedures of the Oman Fisheries Company in preparation for allowing its products to be exported to Russia. — **ONA**

Gulf Health Council reviews plans, programmes

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 17

Based on the interest of the Gulf Health Council to strengthen the bonds of cooperation and awareness among the various media agencies in the GCC countries, the Council held a meeting here on Wednesday and reviewed its plans and programmes with media agencies and institutions in the Sultanate of Oman.

The meeting aimed to highlight the efforts of the Council at the regional and international levels, introduce its initiatives and projects and to set up a mechanism for coordination and media publishing in various channels.

The meeting also touched upon GCC efforts and initiatives in the health media field, as well as strengthening media coordination between the Council, the Ministry of Health and media agencies in the Sultanate of Oman.

Said bin Juma al Busaidi,

Director of Corporate Communications Department at the GCC Health Council, said that the council's vision is to advance and upgrade the health sector in member states. This can be achieved, he added, by launching constructive initiatives, responding to regional and global health issues, supporting decision-making and health policies and coordinating the joint GCC action in a bid to enhance cooperation and integration in the health field.

He also said, "The unified purchase agreement for medicines and devices may not include all medicines and devices for all the GCC countries due to the different needs of each country and the presence of internal tenders that are not counted." Tenders are also issued every three months in order to support the localisation of the pharmaceutical industry in Gulf countries.

He mentioned that the health examination of expatriates covers 23 countries, which limits the entry of inappropriate cases to the



GCC countries and ensures the health and fitness of workers to work in the GCC countries.

The Gulf Health Council is a specialised Gulf health

organisation headquartered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It aims to boost cooperation and coordination among member states, spread health awareness

among citizens, and define concepts of health and scientific issues.

It also seeks to benefit from global experiences, strengthen

cooperation with Arab, regional and international organisations, raise the capabilities of national medical cadres in member states and conduct joint health research.



Let environment not pay price for Khareef Salalah

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

One of Oman’s natural wonders, the Khareef Salalah has been a fascination for people not from other parts of the Sultanate of Oman alone, but from the region and from across the continents who rush to the balmy Dhofar to drench in the drizzle and bask in the sunlight.

While the number of visitors to the green mountains of Dhofar is on the rise, a perennial question being raised is the pollution that some of the reckless visitors cause to the environment.

On a quick drive around, one would spot abandoned plastic bags, empty chips covers, food waste, and above all, charcoal waste which some outdoor loving and holidaymakers would leave blazing.

“In Oman, littering is a punishable offence and visitors to various holiday spots have been continuously urged to keep aloof from dumping waste in public and avoid burning charcoal at the beaches and parks,” Mohammed al Azeri, an environmentalist and a volunteer of various clean-up campaigns, said.

Oman’s environmental diversity ranges from its warm seas and pristine underwater reefs to its rugged mountains and stark deserts.

“Oman is blessed with immense natural beauty, a rich



cultural heritage and incredible biodiversity. The public should be inspired to actively participate in the protection of Oman’s natural heritage,” said Omar al Riyami, Board Member, Environmental Society of Oman (ESO).

As the country’s only environmental non-profit organisation, ESO has spent the last 18 years working to protect Oman’s environment through research, education, advocacy and conservation.

International media has lauded the heterogeneous landscapes which are breath-taking and the initiatives that yield positive results in their respective mediums and highlighted the cleanliness and hygiene that people

generally follow. However, such unprecedented actions that cast a shadow on Oman’s beauty is highly deplorable, says Greg Stevan, a senior manager in hospitality. “It’s the positive and vibrant images that a country should leave

in visitors’ minds and not the eyesore which will inadvertently deter the tourists from visiting the place again. Hence, both citizens and expatriates need to be united in keeping our surroundings neat and clean,” adds Stevan.



شركة المطاحن العمانية (ش.م.ع.)
Oman Flour Mills Company (S.A.O.G)

P.O. Box 566, P.C 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman



BOARD OF DIRECTORS' REPORT

RESPECTED SHAREHOLDERS,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present Oman Flour Mills Company SAOG (the Parent Company) along with its subsidiaries (The Group's) unaudited financial statements for the quarter ended 30 June 2022.

GROUP PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS:

Revenue: The total revenue recorded is RO 57.58m as compared to RO 48.63m recorded in the previous year i.e. an increase of 18.4%. All sectors achieved increase in the revenues, notably in feed by 30.12%, bakery by 13.49% and flour by 8.36%.

Expenses: The group total expenses (COGS, selling and admin) have increased by 34% as compared to the previous year's same period. The main reason for its increase is attributed to the increase in the purchase prices of raw material compared to last year.

Investment income: The group earned total investment income of RO 82k as compared to RO 409k in 2021. The group's investment income has decreased by almost RO 327k in 2022 mainly due to decrease of the value of the company's investment in the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Net Profit: The net profit after the tax recorded for the year is RO 856k as compared to RO 5.25m in 2021. The group's net profit has reduced by 83.7% compared to the previous year.

PARENT, SUBSIDIARY AND ASSOCIATES COMPANIES:

The parent company performance (before tax) along with our subsidiaries and associates is as follows:

- Oman Flour Mills SAOG (OFM):** OFM recorded a profit (before tax) of RO 1,429k as compared to previous year's profit (before tax) of RO 6,409k. Sales revenue has increased by RO 8.5 million 21.85% as compared to last year mainly due to increase in sales price by 13.20% and increase in sales volume by 8.65%. Further, raw material cost has increased by RO 13.34 million (43.51%) mainly due to an overall increase in the prices of raw materials (grains) by 34.86% and 8.65% increase in cost of material due to volume mix. This has led to an overall decrease in the operating profit by RO 4.76 million (79.74%) as compared to last year.
The Ministry of Finance (MOF) has taken an initiative to stabilise the fluctuating wheat prices and has granted a subsidy. MOF will bear the difference of the market price and the annual average base price (USD 300) of wheat, this subsidy is effective from 1st of May 2022. The cost of material of the parent company is net of the government approved subsidy.
- Atyab Food Industries LLC (AFI) (100%):** AFI made a profit (before tax) of RO 298k as compared to previous year's profit of RO 484k. The bakery has decrease in its profitability because of the high purchase of its major raw materials.
- Atyab International Services LLC (formerly Atyab FoodTech LLC) (AIS) (100%):** AIS made a profit (before tax) of RO 99k as compared to the previous year's profit (before tax) of RO 239k. The decrease in profit is due to decrease in the revenue by 7% and increase in cost of sale by 8%.
- Atyab Technical Services LLC (ATS) (100%):** ATS earned a net sponsorship fee (before tax) of RO 160k as compared to RO 100k in the previous year's same period.
- Sohar Flour Mills LLC (SFM) (60%):** The Company has reported a net loss of RO 926k as compared to loss of RO 564k for the same period last year. While sales improved (1%) as compared with Q2 2021, the increase in loss for the period is mainly due to increase in the cost of goods sold (7%) which is linked to the increase in the raw materials prices.

- Oman Fisheries Company SAOG (OFC):** The shareholding of OFM reduced from 25.16% to 17.27% of the Company's capital in Q2 of 2022. OFC reported a net profit of RO 2,081k in 2022.
- Food Techno Park LLC (FTP) (50%):** AIS holds 50% stake in FTP. The company has not yet commenced its commercial operations.
- Bio Product Oman LLC (BPO) (33.33%):** Atyab Investment LLC holds 33.33% share of BPO and Nakheel Development Oman holds 66.67% shares. BPO has not yet commenced its commercial operations.
- OM AUS PTY:** OFM Australia trading co. was opened under the name "OM AUS PTY". The Australian entity is currently drafting a supply agreement and will coordinate a trial shipment with growers in Q3, 2022.
- Arabian Food Production Company SAOG (AFPC) (33.33%):**
 - Modern Poultry Farms SAOG (MPF):** MPF has reported a profit before tax of RO 101K as compared to a loss of RO 412K in the previous year.
 - Osool Poultry Co. SAOC:** The share of Atyab IFICO amounted to 9.93% of the Company's capital as of 30 June 2022. The project commenced commercial activities in the second quarter of 2021. The company has reported a net loss of RO 844k as at 30 June 2022 compared to RO 329k in Q2 2021.
 - Gulf International Poultry Farms LLC (GIPF):** The project is progressing as per schedule. GIF has incurred pre-operating loss of RO 253k in the current period which was offset by other income of RO 141k. The pre-operating loss in the year 2021 was RO 38k.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS:

To support local growers in Oman, the company has signed an agreement to continue to procure wheat from growers at harvest. The company procured 1,154 Mt of Omani wheat in the current year compared with approx. 300 Mt procured in 2021.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR):

In the last AGM held on 31-March-2022, the shareholders have approved a budget of RO 150,000 for CSR activities.

Appropriate projects covering a wide range of activities/beneficiaries such as sponsoring schools, youth training, sporting events, SME development, Ramadan initiatives, and other humanitarian aids will be taken up to achieve the objectives of the shareholders.

FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Multiple projects are being evaluated across the group. The projects focus on integration across the value chain as well diversification into new ventures.

OFM FUTURE PLANS ARE:

- OFM is introducing new several products targeting new segments of the market.
- OFM through its local company OM AUS PTY are in talks to do the trial shipment in Q4 2022 -Q1 2023.
- The consultant has completed the market assessment and opportunities report for cornstarch and value added derivatives.

- An engineering firm is currently designing a layout for the mini factory cluster. This shall be completed in Q3 2022. In addition
 - French Fries – The technical consultant has evaluated various machinery solutions from leading manufacturers and has provided his detailed comments on the same.
 - Plant based meat – A tasting session was conducted in June 2022.
 - Health Bars – A technical expert has been identified, she will be submitting a proposal for product development to be undertaken for development of various health bar Products.
- Merger and Acquisition opportunities for four companies were identified and currently under evaluation.
- The company has identified potential partners for bakery retailing, the company has appointed a consultant to do a due diligence on this opportunity.
- Pre-Mix Plant and Feed Mill expansion are in Implementation phase currently.

OTHER GROUP COMPANIES

Atyab International Services (AIS):

AIS is progressing in the setting up a fully integrated laboratory in Uzbekistan. The Company has got its office ready. RFQs for the equipment's are already shared with the suppliers and are waiting for the quotations.

AIS is in the initial planning stage of setting up an office in Kazakhstan. An MOU has been signed with KAZ-NARU, to start a joint venture with KAZ-National Agricultural University to start all AIS services in Kazakhstan. The company had several meetings and has decided to send experts to analyzing the gaps of laboratories in the country.

Atyab Food Industries (AFI):

AFI has developed its operations to capitalize on the growth opportunities available in the market and region, a company was formed in UAE and the company commenced its operation from 29th May 2022.

THANKS AND APPRECIATIONS:

The Members of the Board of Directors would like to extend their most sincere appreciation and gratitude to the wise government for the continuous support under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may God protect and preserve him.

Best Regards,

Salah Hilal Al Maawali
Chairman, Board of Directors

Unaudited group statement of comprehensive income For the six months ended 30 June 2022

	Group		Parent Company	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Revenue	57,576	48,631	47,461	38,949
Cost of sale	(51,296)	(37,091)	(44,014)	(30,670)
Gross profit	6,280	11,540	3,447	8,279
Selling & distribution expenses	(2,221)	(2,134)	(208)	(289)
Administration & general overheads	(2,953)	(2,942)	(2,030)	(2,023)
Profit from operations	1,106	6,464	1,209	5,967
Finance cost - net	(795)	(416)	(347)	5
Net investment income	82	409	82	344
Other income	568	313	470	210
Profit before tax	961	6,770	1,414	6,526
Share in Profit/(Loss) of subsidiary	-	-	(344)	64
Share in net Profit/(loss) of associates	178	(539)	359	(184)
Net profit before tax	1,139	6,231	1,429	6,406
Tax expense	(283)	(978)	(200)	(928)
Net profit for the year	856	5,253	1,229	5,478
Net profit for the period attributable to:				
Shareholders of the parent company	1,230	5,478	1,229	5,478
Non controlling interest in the subsidiary	(375)	(226)	-	-
Net profit for the period	855	5,252	1,229	5,478
Net profit margin	1.48%	10.81%	2.59%	14.07%

Unaudited group statement of financial position as at 30 June 2022

	Group		Parent Company	
	2022	2021	2022	2021
	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000	RO '000
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	52,717	48,197	11,130	11,731
Investment property	37	37	37	37
Investment in Subsidiaries	-	-	18,774	18,303
Investment in associates	10,084	9,095	1,755	1,632
Intangible assets	31	7	-	-
Biological assets	-	-	-	-
Right to use asset	3,414	3,568	56	65
Investment available for sale, non-current	355	355	355	355
Total non-current assets	66,638	61,259	32,107	32,123
Current assets				
Inventories, net	34,141	15,537	31,516	12,132
Receivables and prepayments, net	29,041	24,789	21,367	18,256
Amounts due from subsidiaries-1	-	-	8,480	6,210
Amounts due from related parties	3,695	3,075	3,679	3,045
Investments available for sale	1,550	1,834	1,550	1,834
Short term deposits	7,500	5,220	7,500	5,000
Cash on hand and at bank	9,296	11,872	7,340	9,751
Total current assets	85,223	62,327	81,432	56,228
Total assets	151,861	123,586	113,539	88,351
Current liabilities				
Payables and accruals	17,657	12,365	14,393	7,608
Payable to related parties	-	120	58	-
Taxation	366	1,052	259	977
Dividend payable	-	-	-	-
Interest bearing loans	34,402	6,459	28,434	3,500
Total current liabilities	52,425	19,996	43,144	12,085
Non-current liabilities				
Interest bearing loans	24,403	22,241	-	-
Lease Liability	3,927	3,953	63	71
End of service benefits	587	541	43	37
Deferred tax	756	851	210	373
Total non-current liabilities	29,673	27,586	316	481
Minority Interest	(297)	241	-	-
Total liabilities	81,801	47,823	43,460	12,566
Net assets	70,060	75,763	70,079	75,785
Shareholders' equity				
Share capital	15,750	15,750	15,750	15,750
Legal reserve	6,626	6,540	5,250	5,250
General reserve	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Fair value reserve	105	105	105	105
Retained earnings	45,079	50,868	46,474	52,180
Total shareholders' equity	70,060	75,763	70,079	75,785

NOTE: The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be sent by mail within 7 days to any shareholder who requests for them.

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Commitment to fiscal plan prompts agencies to upgrade Oman’s rating



MUSCAT: Many international agencies upgraded the Sultanate of Oman’s credit rating with ‘stable’ outlook due to Oman’s commitment to fiscal performance control procedures and initiatives within the context of the Medium Term Fiscal Plan (MTFP), higher oil prices and improved economic and financial indicators.

While Fitch raised Oman’s credit rating to ‘BB’, Standard & Poors amended the country’s credit rating to ‘BB-’, with a stable outlook and so did Moody’s, from ‘negative’ to ‘stable’.

One of the direct factors that prompted Fitch’s action was the performance of the Sultanate of Oman’s general finance, fiscal

control measures undertaken within the context of the Fiscal Balance Plan 2020-2024, an ability to ease external borrowing pressure, sustained efforts to reform general finance, high oil prices’ boosting budgets 2022-2023 and a sharp fall in general debt.

Dr Said bin Mubarak al Mahrami, Member of the State Council and Finance Professor at the Sultan Qaboos University’s College of Economy and Political Sciences, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the reasons behind Oman Fitch’s ameliorating Oman’s credit rating include the government’s sincere desire to cut down the general debt, Oman’s serious abidance by the Fiscal Balance Plan and

The reasons behind Oman Fitch’s ameliorating Oman’s credit rating include the government’s sincere desire to cut down the general debt, Oman’s serious abidance by the Fiscal Balance Plan and high revenues from oil and gas prices

DR SAID AL MAHRAMI
Member of the State Council and Finance Professor at the Sultan Qaboos University’s College of Economy and Political Sciences

high revenues from oil and gas prices.

He hoped that Oman’s next credit rating will be an investment-based one.

Dr Mohammed bin Humaid al Wardi, an academic and economist, echoed a similar view, noting that Oman’s credit rating’s upgrade came as a result of the government’s commitment to the Fiscal Balance Plan (aimed to achieve financial sustainability), Omani economy’s ability to rebound, realise good performance in accelerating the execution of development projects, enhance factors that furnish an attractive investment environment and reassure investors, the country’s ability to stay firm on the general debt rectification course and shrink external borrowing. — ONA

India makes wearing masks mandatory on flights

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in India has asked airlines to strictly enforce Covid-19 protocol, including mask mandate, inside aircraft amid rising infections.

The DGCA asked all Indian carriers to strictly enforce the Covid-19 protocol and added it will be conducting random checks on aircraft across the country to see if the Covid-19 protocol is being enforced or not.

This development comes in view of the rise in the number of Covid cases, the airlines have been advised again on August 16 to strictly comply with Covid-19 protocol inside the aircraft, the report said.

India on Wednesday recorded 9,062 fresh Covid-19 infections, taking its tally to 4,42,86,256, while the number of active cases came down to 1,05,058.

Under the orders issued in June, face masks can be removed only under exceptional circumstances and for permitted reasons.

80% current revenues from four govt bodies

SAMUEL KUTTY
@samkuttyyp

The total current revenues of ministries, government units and public institutions for the past fiscal year amounted to RO 2.87 billion.

According to the final account of the state for the fiscal year 2021, which was published in the Official Gazette, about 80 per cent of these revenues were from four government institutions.

While the Tax Authority topped the list with RO 849 million, it was followed by Oman Investment Authority with RO 800 million, Royal Oman Police with RO 391 million and Ministry of Labour with RO 236 million.

“Although the total current revenues collected by the end of 2021 decreased by 4.2 per cent compared to the approved budget of RO 3 billion, some items of current revenues rose compared to what was approved in the budget,” the account

Tax Authority topped the list with RO 849 million, it was followed by Oman Investment Authority with RO 800 million, Royal Oman Police with RO 391 million and Ministry of Labour with RO 236 million

statement points out.

These included income tax on companies and establishments, which increased by 11.5 per cent and government investment profits by 4.1 per cent.

The actual non-oil revenues at the end of 2021, according to the statement, recorded a drop by 8.3 per cent to stand at RO 2.953 billion compared to the approved budget estimates, representing 26.4 per cent of the total actual revenues by the end of 2021.

Oil revenues increased

by 52.1 per cent at the end of 2021 compared to the approved budget. Oil revenues represent 73.6 per cent of the total actual revenues by the end of 2021.

Net oil revenues reached RO 5.613 billion, while gas revenues reached RO 2.629 billion.

The actual total financing collected by the end of 2021 amounted to RO 1.621 billion, recording a fall by 27.6 per cent compared to the approved budget estimates of RO 2.240 billion.

At the same time, actual public spending by the end of 2021 went up by 14.1 per cent to reach RO 12.418 billion compared to the estimates of the approved public spending of RO 10.880 billion on the back of an increase in investment expenditure by 32.6 per cent.

Contributions and other expenses rose by 9 per cent and the current expenditure of government units by 4.2 per cent.

NOTICE OF ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of **Moon Iron & Steel Company SAOC (Company)** is pleased to invite all shareholders to the Ordinary General Meeting to be held at 3:00 PM on 4th of September 2022, via the electronic platform for convening general meetings which can be accessed through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company website (www.mcd.gov.om), if quorum is not met, a second annual meeting shall be held at 3:00 PM on 11th of September 2022.

For further information please contact Mr. Kumail Ali Moosa on phone number: 24761938

Chairman

Auditors

Legal Advisors

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources
INTERNATIONAL TENDER NOTICE

The tenders committee of Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following International Retender:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
463/2022/MAFWR/HQ-53	Consultancy Services for Feasibility Study and Detailed Design of Recharge Dams in Wilayats Al Sunainah and Dhank – Sultanate of Oman	300/-	First	Tuesday 6/9/2022	Monday 26/9/2022

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No. (26/2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Description	Document Fee	Last Date for Inquires Submission	Last Date for Obtaining Tender Docs.	Last Date for Submission
66/2022/MM/PA-21	Supply of Plumbing Materials	25/- OMR	06/09/2022	22/09/2022	26/09/2022
67/2022/MM/PA-22	Supply of Painting Materials	25/- OMR	06/09/2022	22/09/2022	26/09/2022
68/2022/MM/PA-23	Supply of Electrical Materials	25/- OMR	06/09/2022	22/09/2022	26/09/2022
69/2022/MM/PA-24	Supply Equipment for Food Inspection Sector	25/- OMR	06/09/2022	22/09/2022	26/09/2022

- Specialized Companies with a valid registration certificate from Tender Board can obtain tender documents from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. Starting from the date of this announcement until the end of deadline mentioned above.
- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically through link mentioned above.
- Tender Bonds shall be E-Bond as per details mentioned in E-Tendering and to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality and valid for (90) days starting from the deadline for submission.
- Tender not accompanied by a tender bond will be rejected.**
- Clarifications and support:**
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please contact us through e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system, please send an email to etenderhd@mtc.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).

Website: www.mm.gov.om



China races to alleviate drought and power cuts amid record heatwave

SHANGHAI: China is scrambling to alleviate power shortages and bring more water to the drought-hit basin of the Yangtze river as it battles a record-breaking heatwave by deploying relief funds, seeding clouds and developing new sources of supply.

For more than two months, baking temperatures have disrupted crop growth, threatened livestock and forced industries in the hydropower-dependent regions of the southwest to shut down so as to ensure electricity supplies for homes.

China has repeatedly warned that it faces a proliferation of extreme weather events in coming years as it tries to adapt to climate change and rises in temperature that are likely to be more severe than elsewhere.

The current extreme heat is likely to stem from a “special case” of high pressure from a West Pacific subtropical high extending over much of Asia, said Cai Wenju, a researcher with Australia’s national scientific research institute, CSIRO.

On Wednesday, China’s southwestern province of Sichuan said it would ration power supplies to homes, offices and shopping malls, after having already ordered energy-intensive metals and fertiliser producers to



A woman walks on the exposed riverbed of Yangtze river on a hot day in Chongqing on Wednesday. – Reuters

curb operations.

In what appears to be an official call to cut back use of electricity, government offices were asked to set air conditioners no lower than 26 degrees Celsius and use more staircases instead of lifts, the Sichuan Daily, run by the provincial government, said.

Fountains, light shows and commercial activities after dark are to be suspended, it added.

Power shortages have also

prompted several companies in the sprawling Chongqing region bordering Sichuan to say they would suspend production.

Chinese vice premier Han Zheng visited the State Grid Corporation on Wednesday and said further efforts were needed to ensure power supply for residents and key industries, and to prevent power cuts, according to a state media report.

China should accelerate the

construction of key projects, improve power load management and promote the joint operation of coal power and renewable energy, Han said.

SOARING TEMPERATURES

Hydropower makes up about 80 per cent of Sichuan’s power capacity, but dwindling water flows on the Yangtze and its tributaries led to a struggle to meet mounting demand for air

For more than two months, baking temperatures have disrupted crop growth, threatened livestock and forced industries in the hydropower-dependent regions of the southwest to shut down so as to ensure electricity supplies for homes

conditioning as temperatures soared to 40C(104F) and beyond.

Average precipitation in Sichuan is 51 per cent less than that of previous years, according to state news agency Xinhua, which cited the provincial branch of State Grid.

Some reservoirs have dried up, after water from major rivers reduced by as much as half, it said.

Drought throughout the Yangtze river basin was also “adversely affecting” drinking water for rural people and livestock, as well as the growth of crops, the water resources ministry said in a notice.

— Reuters

Iraqi crisis talks go ahead without Sadr

BAGHDAD: Iraq’s Prime Minister Mustafa al Kadhemi met party and other leaders on Wednesday to discuss the country’s political deadlock, but key player Moqtada Sadr, a firebrand cleric, did not attend.

Ten months after a general election, war-scarred Iraq still has no government, new prime minister or new president, because of disagreement over forming a coalition.

Tensions have been rising since July between the two main factions, one led by Sadr, the other by the Coordination Framework. Mediation bids have so far proved fruitless.

Sadr wants parliament dissolved to pave the way for new elections, but the Coordination Framework wants to set conditions and demands a transitional government before new polls.

A statement from Kadhimis’ office said he had called a meeting on Wednesday “to start a serious dialogue; intending to find solutions to the current political crisis”.

Coordination Framework was represented by two former premiers, Nuri al Maliki and Haider al Abadi. Also present were Hadi al Ameri and Faleh al Fayyad, senior officials in the Hashed al Shaabi network of former paramilitaries. — AFP

Spiralling fuel costs hit Damascus drivers

DAMASCUS: Damascus minibus driver Khaled al Hassi remembers a time when he could fill his tank with cheap fuel to drive passengers across the Syrian capital and take home enough money for food, drink and a comfortable life.

Now spiralling fuel costs and a collapsing currency mean he is left at the end of a busy day with just two or three dollars, assuming there is fuel available so he can work. “Some days the diesel they give us isn’t enough for half a day,” Hassi said, driving passengers along Mazraa street in central Damascus.

He charges passengers 200 pounds, or less than 5 US cents, for each ride and says only 30 per cent of that ends up as earnings. “If I make 40,000 in a day I’m left with 12,000 Syrian pounds - what’s that worth? Nothing.”

After a decade of conflict in Syria, the struggle for taxi and minibus drivers to make a living

has got tougher every year, Hassi says. Russia’s war of Ukraine and the surge in world energy prices have made it even more acute.

Two weeks ago, authorities hiked fuel prices, more than doubling the cost of subsidised petrol to 2,500 pounds a litre. Taxis and minibuses are allocated 30 litres of subsidised fuel per day, with diesel for minibuses in the capital now restricted at weekends. As the drivers struggle to make a living, fewer people can afford the cost of a taxi ride.

Sidra, a 17-year-old high school student, said she walked to school because the 25,000 pound return taxi fare was twice her mother’s daily earnings and no other transport was available.

Exhausted by the long distances in the morning and evening, she failed her class. “One of the main reasons she failed was the transport,” said her mother Umm Mohammed.

— Reuters

North Korea fires two cruise missiles

North Korea’s missiles
An expanding arsenal including

CRUISE MISSILE	INTERMEDIATE-RANGE BALLISTIC MISSILE	INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE	SUBMARINE-LAUNCHED BALLISTIC MISSILE	HYPERSONIC MISSILE
Estimated range: 1,800 km	Estimated range: 3,000 - 5,500 km	Estimated range: 5,500 km	Estimated range: 1,900 km	Estimated range: Various; recent tests: 700 - 1,000 km
Tested: 2022	Tested: 2022	Tested: 2017, 2022	Tested: 2021, 2022	Tested: 2021, 2022
Jet-propelled, low flying with potential array of short-, medium-, and long-range options	The rocket-propelled Hwasong-12 is powerful enough to hit US territory in Guam	Primarily designed for nuclear weapons delivery, Hwasong-15 is believed capable of hitting Alaska	Would allow deployment beyond the Korean peninsula, though exact capabilities unproven	Travel at speeds of at least Mach 5, able to manoeuvre mid-flight to evade tracking

Source: KCNA/CSIS/NTI/JCS/Japan Defence Ministry

AFP

SEOUL: North Korea fired two cruise missiles on Wednesday, Seoul’s defence ministry said, ending a month-long lull in Pyongyang’s record-breaking spate of weapons tests this year.

The isolated nation has not tested a cruise missile — which are not banned under United Nations sanctions on Pyongyang — since January, the Yonhap News Agency reported. The last time North Korea conducted a weapons test was July 10, when they fired what appeared to be multiple rocket launchers.

“Early this morning, we detected that North Korea fired two cruise missiles into the West Sea from Onchon, South Pyongan province,” a ministry official said, using an alternative name for the Yellow Sea. “The US and South Korean military authorities are analysing detailed specifications such as flight distance.”

North Korea has conducted a blitz of sanctions-busting tests this year, including firing an intercontinental ballistic missile at

full range for the first time since 2017.

Washington and Seoul officials have also warned that the isolated regime is preparing to carry out what would be its seventh nuclear test.

The cruise missile launch came as South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-Yeol marked 100 days in office on Wednesday, telling reporters at a press conference that he did not support regime change by force in North Korea.

Yoon, who took office vowing to get tough on Pyongyang, earlier this week laid out details of his “audacious plan” to offer massive aid to Pyongyang — if Kim Jong Un will give up his nuclear weapons.

Analysts say the chances of Pyongyang accepting such an offer are vanishingly slim, as North Korea, which invests a vast chunk of its GDP in weapons programmes, has long made clear it will not barter its missiles away.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

NEW DELHI

India backtracks on support for refugees

India’s home ministry said on Wednesday that Rohingya refugees in the capital New Delhi would be held at a detention centre and then deported, contradicting a minister’s earlier statement promising flats and security to members of the Muslim minority.

Hardeep Singh Puri, federal minister for housing and urban affairs, had earlier on Wednesday outlined new provisions for the Rohingya, signalling a potential change in the government’s critical stance



towards the refugee group from Myanmar. Rohingya refugees would be allotted flats in Delhi’s Bakkarwala area, provided basic amenities and police protection, Puri had said on Twitter.

AMMAN

Syria denies kidnapping or holding US scribe

Syria on Wednesday denied kidnapping or holding a US journalist who disappeared a decade ago a week after President Joe Biden demanded that Damascus let him go home.

Austin Tice, a former US Marine, was kidnapped in August 2012 aged 31 while reporting freelance in Damascus on the uprising against Syrian President Bashar al Assad.

His family believes he is alive and still being held in Syria. The identity of Tice’s captors is not



known, and there has been no claim of responsibility for his abduction. The Syrian Foreign Ministry described Tice as a US serviceman and denied the government was holding him.

TEL AVIV

Israel, Turkey to restore full diplomatic ties

Israel and Turkey announced the resumption of full diplomatic ties on Wednesday, following years of strained relations between the Mediterranean nations.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid hailed the diplomatic breakthrough as an “important asset for regional stability and very important economic news for the citizens of Israel”.

Lapid’s office said the diplomatic development will see ambassadors and consuls general posted to the two countries



once more. The announcement follows months of bilateral efforts to mend ties. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the return of envoys “is important to improve bilateral ties”.



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In brief

■ DHAKA



UN RIGHTS CHIEF SAYS ROHINGYA REFUGEES UNABLE TO RETURN

UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said on Wednesday that it remained unsafe for Rohingya refugees to return to their homes in Myanmar, nearly five years after a crackdown there sparked an exodus to neighbouring Bangladesh. Nearly a million members of the minority community live in a sprawling and squalid patchwork of refugee settlements near Bangladesh's southern coast. Most fled their homes after a 2017 Myanmar army offensive that is now subject to a landmark genocide case at the UN's top court. Five years later, the refugees refuse to go back without guarantees for their safety and rights in Myanmar.

■ LONDON



UK CROSSBOW INTRUDER WANTED 'TO KILL QUEEN'; COURT HEARS

A man appeared in court on Wednesday after allegedly entering Windsor Castle grounds armed with a crossbow, declaring he planned to kill Queen Elizabeth II. The 20-year-old man, Jaswant Singh Chail, from Southampton in southern England, appeared at a London court, having been charged with treason earlier this month. He appeared at Westminster Magistrates' Court via video-link from Broadmoor high-security psychiatric hospital, confirming his name and location. The prosecution told the court that Chail was held in the grounds of Windsor Castle, where the monarch was staying, early on Christmas Day last year.

■ LONDON



ELDERLY MAN IN MOBILITY SCOOTER STABBED AND KILLED

An 87-year-old man stabbed to death in his mobility scooter in London has been named by police as Thomas O'Halloran in a crime that has shocked the nation. O'Halloran was killed in a "shocking act" of "unprovoked violence", Metropolitan Police Chief Superintendent Sean Wilson said at the scene in Greenford, west London. Met officers and paramedics were called shortly after 4 pm on Tuesday to Cayton Road, to reports of a stabbing and he was declared dead at the scene. Wilson said: "I understand that our community will quite rightly be shocked and appalled by this incident, as I am too.

Liz Cheney to battle Trump, may run for US presidency

JACKSON, Wyoming: US Republican Representative Liz Cheney vowed to do all she could to keep Donald Trump out of the White House and said she would decide in the coming months whether to run for president herself, after she lost to a Trump-backed primary challenger in Wyoming on Tuesday.

But Senator Lisa Murkowski, another Republican who has defied the former president, cleared a hurdle in Alaska. She was set to face Trump-endorsed challenger Kelly Tshibaka in the Nov. 8 congressional election, as the two candidates advanced in that state's non-partisan primary.

Cheney's defeat, by Trump-endorsed Harriet Hageman, marks a significant victory for the former president in his campaign to oust Republicans who backed impeaching him after a mob of his supporters stormed the Capitol building last year.

In conceding the race, Cheney — a fierce critic of Trump who has played a prominent role in the congressional investigation of the January 6 assault on the Capitol — said she was not willing "go along with President Trump's lie about the 2020 election" to win a primary.

"It would have required that I enable his ongoing efforts to



Republican candidate US Representative Liz Cheney waves during her primary election night party in Jackson, Wyoming, on Tuesday. — Reuters

- * Cheney loses to Trump-backed challenger
- * She sits on Jan 6 panel probing Capitol riot
- * Murkowski clears primary hurdle in Alaska

unravel our democratic system and attack the foundations of our republic. That was a path I could not and would not take," she told supporters.

Cheney told NBC's "Today" show on Wednesday that she "will be doing whatever it takes to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office" and that she was considering running for

president.

"It is something that I am thinking about, and I'll make a decision in the coming months," she told "Today" when asked about a presidential bid, adding she had a lot of work left to do with the Jan. 6 committee probing the January 6 Capitol assault.

"I believe that Donald Trump continues to pose a very grave

threat and risk to our republic. And I think that defeating him is going to require a broad and united front of Republicans, Democrats and independents. And that's what I intend to be part of," Cheney said.

With 99 per cent of expected ballots counted in Wyoming, Hageman led the Republican field with 66.3 per cent of the vote, followed by Cheney with 28.9 per cent, according to Edison Research, an election monitoring firm.

The results were less clear cut in Alaska.

With 72 per cent of expected ballots tallied, Murkowski narrowly led with 42.7 per cent of the vote, followed by Tshibaka at 41.4 per cent and Democrat Patricia Chesbro at 6.2 per cent, according to Edison. The non-partisan primary format in that state weeds out all but the top four vote-getters.

Murkowski, a moderate who is one of the more independent voices in the Senate, has held the seat since 2003.

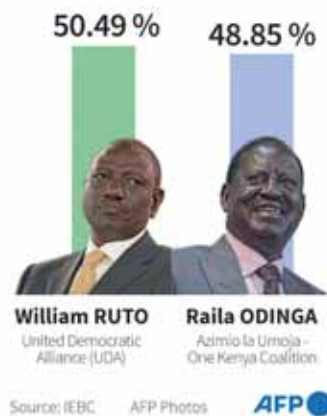
Also in Alaska, Edison predicted that no candidate would emerge as a clear winner in the three-way contest to complete the term of Representative Don Young, who died in March.

— Reuters

Kenya's Ruto says 'no time to waste' after vote win

Kenya presidential election

Results of August 9 vote



NAIROBI: Kenya's president-elect William Ruto vowed on Wednesday that his new administration would be transparent, saying there was no time to waste in meeting the "huge expectations" of Kenyans.

Ruto, who has served as deputy president for the last nine years, was on Monday declared the winner of the August 9 poll in a race against veteran politician Raila Odinga that went down to the wire.

"We will shortly be making steps to run a transparent, democratic but accountable government," Ruto said after meeting with elected leaders from his Kenya Kwanza (Kenya First) alliance.

"The expectations of the people of Kenya are huge and therefore we do not have the luxury of wasting any time," Ruto said.

Kenya is one of the richest economies in Africa but is grappling with the fallout from the Covid pandemic and the war in Ukraine, with surging inflation and high youth unemployment.

"We are going to govern in a manner that no sector of Kenya is left behind," Ruto added, saying no-one would be excluded, regardless of political or ethnic affiliations.

Measures to make his new administration more accountable would include enabling ministers to be questioned in parliament and ensuring that public servants cannot work for political parties. — AFP

Portugal struggles to control blaze in natural park

ORJAIS: More than 1,200 firefighters struggled on Wednesday to control a huge forest fire in Portugal's Serra da Estrela park, which resumed just days after being brought under control.

Strong winds have been hampering attempts to combat the spread of the fire, one of 195 that have ravaged some 92,000 hectares of land across Portugal this year amid record temperatures. The fire in the Unesco-designated park restarted on Tuesday after being brought under control five days earlier, and is estimated to have already consumed around 25,000 hectares (62,000 acres) of land.

It is still posing a sizeable challenge even if "90 per cent of this fire's perimeter is now under control", said civil protection agency head Andre Fernandes.

July proved to be Portugal's hottest in nearly a century, with the country battling its worst forest fires since 2017 when around 100 lives were lost.

Scientists say human-induced climate change is contributing to extreme weather events, including wildfires and heatwaves.

Neighbouring Spain has also been battling a wave of forest fires in recent weeks after also recording soaring temperatures.

The Serra da Estrela fire started on August 6 outside the central town of Covilha and authorities say they have deployed 390 fire engines and 14 planes and helicopters in efforts to control it.

The blaze has left 27 people injured, including three seriously, while 45 people have been evacuated. — AFP



A local reacts to watching a wildfire advancing in Orjaís, Covilha council in central Portugal on Wednesday. — AFP

Russia replaces Black Sea fleet chief after setbacks

KYIV/LONDON: Russia has replaced the commander of its Crimea-based Black Sea Fleet, a state news agency reported on Wednesday, after a series of explosions rocked the peninsula it annexed in 2014 and had previously seen as a secure rear base for its war in Ukraine.

Moscow blamed saboteurs for blasts that engulfed an ammunition depot in northern Crimea on Tuesday.

Plumes of smoke were later seen rising at a second Russian military base in central Crimea, Russia's Kommersant newspaper said.

Ukraine has not officially taken responsibility but has hinted at it.

The apparent Ukrainian capability to strike deeper into Russian-occupied territory, either with some form of weapon



This photograph taken on Wednesday shows the governor building of Mykolaiv Oblast following a strike in Mykolaiv, amid the Russian war of Ukraine. — AFP

or with sabotage, indicates a shift in the conflict. Blasts destroyed

warplanes at a Russian air base in Crimea last week. On Wednesday,

Russia's RIA news agency cited sources as saying the commander of its Black Sea fleet, Igor Osipov, had been replaced with a new chief, Viktor Sokolov.

PROMINENT SACKING

If confirmed, the move would mark one of the most prominent sackings of a military official so far in a war in which Russia has suffered heavy losses in men and equipment.

State-owned RIA cited the sources as saying the new chief was introduced to members of the fleet's military council in the Crimean port of Sevastopol.

The Black Sea Fleet, which has a revered history in Russia, has suffered several humiliations since President Vladimir Putin launched the war of Ukraine - which Moscow terms a "special

military operation" - on February 24.

In April, Ukraine struck its flagship, the Moskva, a huge cruiser, with Neptune missiles.

It became the biggest warship to be sunk in combat for 40 years.

CRUCIAL SUPPLY ROUTE

Crimea, which Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014 and has extensively fortified since then, provides the main supply route for Russian forces in southern Ukraine, where Kyiv is planning a counter-offensive in coming weeks.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged Ukrainians to steer clear of Russian military bases and ammunition stores and said the explosions could have various causes, including incompetence. — Reuters

‘Know thyself’, a maxim as true now as ever before



Dr Anchan C K

The writer is an international adviser on business, economy

The phrase, ‘Know thyself’ was inscribed by the Greeks several thousand years ago. That phrase is as true now as it was back then. Human behaviour has always been complex, especially when it comes to integrating thinking and feeling. Emotion is especially tricky. You develop the ability to suppress your emotions as a child and continue to hide your emotions as an adult.

The result of hiding emotion is that you truly do not know how you feel at any given moment, but you know how you think. You can hear your own self-talk in your mind, including competing thoughts that are very confusing and distressing. Self-reliant people judge the

world around them based on a set of principles that are under continuous review for the truth. Differences are addressed through negotiation and compromise rather than dismissal. They look for the larger truth that enables them to take a piece of each person’s position.

Developing self-reliance is not an easy task. You are born into dependency, reliant on your parents for survival. Standing up to your parents forges your independence and enables you to become self-reliant. You develop pride in your ability to manage life on your own. You don’t depend on them if you can help it. You get your own job

THE RESULT OF HIDING EMOTION IS THAT YOU TRULY DO NOT KNOW HOW YOU FEEL AT ANY GIVEN MOMENT, BUT YOU KNOW HOW YOU THINK. YOU CAN HEAR YOUR OWN SELF-TALK IN YOUR MIND, INCLUDING COMPETING THOUGHTS

and source of money. You make your own decisions about career or interests.

Identifying the emotional root cause for your thoughts is necessary

to discern what emotions reflect the real you and which ones reveal what you have been taught. The risk is that you can’t tell who you are or what you believe.

Self-reliance requires that you make this distinction. You must learn which emotions are telling you the truth that you believe and which emotions tell you the truth according to others, from your parents to your teachers to your leaders. Only you can know your own truth and forge your own beliefs. Insight and introspection bring self-knowledge and enable the birth of your independence.

Self-reliance is the ability to listen to yourself in a crowd,

especially your family. It is the capacity to stand up for what you believe, knowing that it may not be well received, dismissed, or rejected outright. Fear of disconnection or abandonment is never the basis for attachment. You form relationships where the investment in emotional intimacy is mutual and emotional learning takes place.

Self-reliance is the foundation for independence. At first glance, independence may seem at odds with attachment. Self-reliance does not mean that you dismiss everyone else and only listen to yourself. It means that you look for the truth in your own position and in the beliefs of others.

Anger persists for family of US Marine killed in Kabul

IDREES ALI

The last text message Darin Taylor Hoover sent his mother from Kabul’s airport a year ago was short but one she still reads every day.

“Mamma I’m safe, I love you,” the 31-year-old Marine Corps staff sergeant wrote as he worked to keep some semblance of order while thousands of desperate Afghans tried to get on the last few evacuation flights.

Taylor, as he was called by his family, was among the last 13 US troops killed in Afghanistan. An IS bomber blew himself up at an airport gate during the chaotic mission to evacuate Americans and at-risk Afghans before a complete US military withdrawal.

Darin Hoover and Kelly Henson, Taylor’s parents, have spent the past year trying to process the pain of losing their only son, re-reading the letters he left some family members and replaying the last time they saw him.

Their grief is mixed with anger, frustration and unanswered questions about why he was sent on that mission in the first place.

“It just aggravates me to no end that they put them in that situation that they should not have been in,” said Hoover, who is a police officer.

On the first anniversary of the withdrawal this month, some US officials and experts said there has not been public accountability for mistakes in the evacuation, which took place as the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan at the end of the United States’ longest war.

‘IT’S NOT REAL’

A linesman on his high school football team near Salt Lake City, Utah, Taylor was nearly 6 feet tall and had wanted to join the military since age 6. As an infantryman, he deployed to Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012.

Taylor’s mother was used to being worried about her son, but saying goodbye to him in March 2021 before his last deployment felt different.

“I just had a horrible feeling. I hate to say it, but I just knew that was the last time,” Henson said.

His deployment to the Middle East diverted to Afghanistan in August as the US-backed government was crumbling.

About six months after their last meeting in California, Kelly was working from home on August 26, 2021, when she saw news reports that there had been an explosion in Kabul and watched as the death toll ticked up to 13 American troops.

Later that night, as she was walking down to the laundry room, the doorbell rang and she knew it meant her son was among those killed.

“I remember just thinking this isn’t real. This is not real,” she said.— **Reuters**

Killing of ranger protecting rhinos raises fears for conservation efforts



Rachel Nuwer

The writer is a freelance journalist for the New York Times

Anton Mzimba, the lead ranger at a reserve in South Africa, had received multiple death threats. But he tried not to let the warnings of danger get to him, reminding himself that by protecting rhinos, he was working for the greater good, according to an interview he gave last year.

“What I’m doing, I’m not doing for my own sake,” Mzimba said in the 2021 interview. “I’m doing this for the world, for my children’s children, so that one day, when I hang my boots — when I retire, when I die — they are going to enjoy the wildlife.”

Africa’s close-knit conservation community has been reeling since Mzimba was gunned down in front of his family at home on July 26. His wife was also shot but survived. The slaying has stoked concerns that criminal syndicates may be growing more brazen and violent in their efforts to secure illegal wildlife products.

Mzimba, 42, was the head ranger at Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, a 206-square-mile protected area in the Greater Kruger landscape, home to elephants, rhinoceroses, lions, leopards and cheetahs. In an environment plagued by poaching and corruption, Mzimba was known for being incorruptible — a stalwart of conservation.

“If you want to talk front line, you talk Anton Mzimba,” said Ruben de Kock, operations manager for LEAD Ranger, a professional training group. “He was the ultimate ranger.”

Reached by phone, Brig Selvy Mohlala, a spokesperson for the police unit leading the investigation into Mzimba’s killing, said that “we don’t know if the attack had something to do with his work or private life.”

But given the number of serious job-related threats aimed at Mzimba and his efforts to thwart crime syndicates, Andrew Campbell, CEO of the Game Rangers’ Association of Africa, said that would appear to be the most likely motive.

Mzimba’s dedication to defending wildlife “definitely” seems to have been a factor, said Edwin Pierce, Timbavati’s warden.

“Anton was a man of integrity, a man that wouldn’t waver from protection of rhinos,” he said. “For syndicates to have actually gone ahead with this, it means Anton was a significant threat to them.” Rangers around the world



Anton Mzimba, head ranger at the Timbavati nature reserve in South Africa.

AFRICA’S CLOSE-KNIT CONSERVATION COMMUNITY HAS BEEN REELING SINCE MZIMBA WAS GUNNED DOWN IN FRONT OF HIS FAMILY AT HOME ON JULY 26. THE SLAYING HAS STOKED CONCERNS THAT CRIMINAL SYNDICATES MAY BE GROWING MORE BRAZEN AND VIOLENT IN THEIR EFFORTS TO SECURE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS

risk their lives every day, but those in Africa face especially high levels of danger. Elephant and rhino poachers are always armed, and in politically unstable places like the Congo, militia groups frequently clash with rangers.

Of the 565 African rangers known to have died in the line of duty since 2011, 52 per cent of the deaths were homicides, according to Campbell. The number of deaths has also been increasing, he said, with a record high of 92 rangers last year, half of them attributed to homicide.

Mzimba’s death stands out, however,

as “an escalation from the norm,” Campbell said. “Now these syndicates feel comfortable literally coming in and doing mob-style hits.”

It is also probable, Campbell added, that Mzimba was targeted because of his high profile in the conservation and wildlife security community. He was named Field Ranger of the Year and is featured as the protagonist of an upcoming documentary film, “Rhino Man.”

Born in Mozambique, Mzimba and his family moved to South Africa in search of better opportunities. His career in conservation began by chance, when a job removing invasive plants brought him to Timbavati. Mzimba was just 17, but his work ethic caught the eye of the reserve’s warden, who offered him a full-time position.

Within a decade, Mzimba had become head of the ranger corps at Timbavati.

“This was a person who truly made it from the bottom to the top,” de Kock said.

Mzimba often said he viewed wildlife protection as his duty as a Christian, and he was also renowned for his loyalty.

When Mzimba started working at Timbavati in 1998, the poachers he apprehended were mostly poor men who sneaked into the reserve to hunt animals for food. By the 2010s, however, organised criminal syndicates were aggressively pursuing rhino horns, which were in high demand in China, Vietnam and other Asian countries.

— **The New York Times**

Is there a ‘wrong’ place to plant trees?

ATHAR PARVAIZ

As he watches his neighbours watering the tens of thousands of tree saplings they planted in their Himalayan village a few months ago, Gyan Thinlay is excited about turning this patch of bare desert into a lush habitat for insects and birds.

Chushul village sits more than 14,000 feet above sea level in the Ladakh region, a cold desert between India and China where less than 4 inches of annual rainfall and extreme seasonal temperature swings make it difficult for much to grow.

But that didn’t discourage the villagers from planting 150,000 trees - mainly willow, sea buckthorn and tamarisk - in June, in a project they hope will combat air pollution, boost biodiversity and provide a new income source for locals who traditionally rely on livestock.

“All we see around us are barren mountains. We now look forward to seeing greenery, too,” said Thinlay, a Buddhist monk who oversees the effort as the Chushul deputy chairman for Go Green Go Organic, the non-profit organisation behind the project.

“The trees will also provide farmers fodder for their livestock,” he said.

Companies, governments and green groups are promoting and adopting tree-planting in a bid to combat rising temperatures and lessen the impacts of climate change, as forests pull climate-heating carbon from the air, capture and store water in the soil, and provide shade for crops and livestock.

But some ecologists warn that the “mindless” creation of forests in areas where they would not naturally grow can damage fragile and unique ecosystems.

COMPANIES, GOVERNMENTS AND GREEN GROUPS ARE PROMOTING AND ADOPTING TREE-PLANTING IN A BID TO COMBAT RISING TEMPERATURES AND LESSEN THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Native plants and wild animals, such as Ladakh’s famed snow leopards and blue sheep, are not adapted to forested ecosystems, Vanak noted. “Creating plantations, especially in areas where people don’t reside, can harm native habitats and make them unusable for wildlife,” he said.

In India, a massive development push is intensifying deforestation, a major driver of climate change.

Mining, as well as construction of roads, hydroelectric projects and other infrastructure, ate up a total of 554.3 square km of forest in the country in the last three years, according to government data.

In the cold desert of Ladakh and other parts of South Asia, climate shifts are throwing off farming schedules and amplifying flooding risks.

“Glaciers are melting fast while rain and snow patterns have undergone changes, with extreme weather events such as cloudbursts occurring more frequently,” said Mukhtar Ahmad, a scientist with India’s Meteorological Department, adding that it is hard to know how much of that can be attributed to climate change. Tree-planting projects are fairly new to the communities of Ladakh’s cold desert.

It was only six years ago that Tibetan Buddhist leader Drikung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche started encouraging people to create plantations and store water from melting glaciers to help curb the carbon emissions caused by increasing tourism in the area, grow more food and make money by supplying wood to the construction industry, said Chushul councillor Konchok Stanzin.

Villages in other parts of his constituency have also been establishing forests in the desert over the past two or three years, he added. The trees are still young - but once they mature “the villagers are hopeful they are going to be an important source of fodder for sheep, goats and other livestock, besides providing greenery”, Stanzin said. But Vanak at ATREE stressed that growing trees requires a lot of water, so planting them in environments that are unnatural to them can make areas already struggling with low water even drier. “In effect, trees in the wrong places can ‘steal’ water from desert-adapted shrubs and herbs, and out-compete them,” he said.

—Thomson Reuters Foundation



EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Sheep graze on the Guadiana’s dry riverbed as part of the river has dried up and gave way to dry land in Villarta de los Montes, in the central-western Spanish region of Extremadura, on Wednesday. Temperatures in Spain have been very high this summer with several unusual heat waves. Scientists say human-induced climate change is making extreme weather events including heatwaves and droughts more frequent and more intense.

– AFP

Fixing public-health data problem



William A Haseltine

The writer is a scientist, biotech entrepreneur, and infectious disease expert, is Chair and President of the global health think tank ACCESS Health International

With Covid-19 still an ever-present threat and monkeypox cases rising alongside existing chronic health epidemics, building strong, responsive public health systems has never been more important. But it will require developing effective data management, pursuing sustained investment and training, and building trust through clear communication and community engagement. Here, I want to focus on the data problem.

Standardised, comprehensive health data is at the heart of any public-health system, whether the task is conducting infectious-disease surveillance or understanding why some diseases affect certain populations more than others. Easily accessible, accurate health data is necessary to understand clinical information in real time, prevent medical errors, and make decisions about public-health measures before, during, and after times of crisis.

Our response to the Covid-19 pandemic has clearly been hampered by the slow and inconsistent reporting of critical public-health data. In the absence of universal standards, many public-health systems and practitioners rely on outmoded forms of communication such as paper and fax, which do not allow for rapid sharing. More than two years into the pandemic, we still cannot easily draw on the latest data to answer basic questions, such as what Covid-19’s mortality rate is according to patient variables.

In the United States, a recent report from the Commonwealth Fund Commission on a National Public Health System finds that, “Only 3 per cent of local health departments reported that information systems are all interoperable, a limitation that hampers both daily prevention work and coordinated responses.” Because America has a federated model for public health, relying on the efforts of dozens of different state and territorial health departments, it lacks the capabilities of more integrated national systems like those found in England and Israel. Hence, US vaccine regulators have had to rely on Israeli and UK data, rather than data on the US population.

The Commonwealth Fund commission calls for a “truly national public health system that functions day to day, with coordinated leadership at the federal level and with consistent state and local capacity.” But it is careful to acknowledge that, despite the need for better national coordination, local and state health departments should maintain their current level of control, since they ultimately know their own communities best.

One way to achieve this balance is by setting comprehensive and binding national standards for state and local

EASILY ACCESSIBLE, ACCURATE HEALTH DATA IS NECESSARY TO UNDERSTAND CLINICAL INFORMATION IN REAL TIME, PREVENT MEDICAL ERRORS, AND MAKE PUBLIC-HEALTH DECISIONS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER TIMES OF CRISIS. BUT AS COVID-19 AND MONKEYPOX HAVE SHOWN, THE US AND OTHERS ARE FALLING FAR SHORT OF THIS STANDARD

health data, rather than incentivising voluntary, piecemeal forms of data exchange. Though hospitals and other healthcare providers have shared data throughout the pandemic, the information they have reported tends not to be linkable across different systems, owing to the use of different definitions and different methods of collection. This makes it challenging and time-consuming for recipients at either the state or federal level to receive, aggregate, and analyse current data.

Thus, in addition to setting standards for the data, we need to develop and implement national standardised data-collection and data-sharing systems. This would involve universal identifiers for individual patients and end-users, as well as a standardised infrastructure to integrate laboratory results from equivalent tests. We also need to ensure that local, state, and tribal health departments have consistent funding to participate fully in any such initiative.

There is evidence that this approach can work. For example, owing to the

Obama administration’s efforts, the number of hospitals using electronic records grew from 9 per cent in 2008 to 84 per cent in 2015. Unfortunately, his administration underestimated the critical need for standardisation.

The same data-collection issues that hampered the response to Covid-19 are also occurring with monkeypox, further highlighting the urgent need for reforms. While the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently shared a first public look at monkeypox case demographics, the agency has detailed information on only about half of reported cases, because deciding whether to share the data is completely up to state-level authorities.

But even for states that are motivated to share data with the CDC, the current infrastructure is flawed. While the CDC does have data on how monkeypox vaccines have been distributed among the states, it has no data on who has been vaccinated, and it does not yet have the authority to collect such data. This lack of local data makes it difficult to forecast the trajectory of the disease or to make public-health recommendations based on the efficacy of the vaccines.

Moreover, while the CDC is focused on modernising access to reportable disease data and laboratory test results, it is under-utilising other rich data sources.

These include records on visits, hospitalisations, medications, and outcomes from payers (including the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), and figures from electronic health-records systems and health information exchanges.

While ensuring patient privacy is paramount, these data can be anonymised to highlight trends and provide valuable insights into public-health issues beyond infectious-disease surveillance.

For example, Indiana’s health system exchange has made it possible to monitor not just statewide paediatric asthma trends but also surges in teen lung injuries from vaping. ©Project Syndicate, 2022





Italy's Lamont Marcell Jacobs (C) wins the men's 100m final during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Munich, southern Germany. Jacobs won gold ahead of Britain's Zhanel Hughes and Britain's Jeremiah Azu. – AFP

Jacobs storms to Euro 100m crown

GINA TAKES WOMEN'S 100M GOLD; INGEBRIGTSEN AND PERKOVIC SHINE

MUNICH: Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs put an injury-ravaged season behind him to storm to gold in the 100m gold in the European Athletics Championships in Munich on Tuesday.

Jacobs, who was world indoor 60m champion in Belgrade in March, but withdrew before the semifinals of the 100m at last month's world championships in Oregon, clocked a championship record-equalling time of 9.95 seconds.

Defending champion Zhanel Hughes claimed silver in 9.99sec with another Briton, Jeremiah Azu, taking bronze in 10.13.

"This was a difficult season with problems, with injury," said the 27-year-old Italian, who has been beset by leg injuries and who competed with a heavily-strapped left calf in Munich.

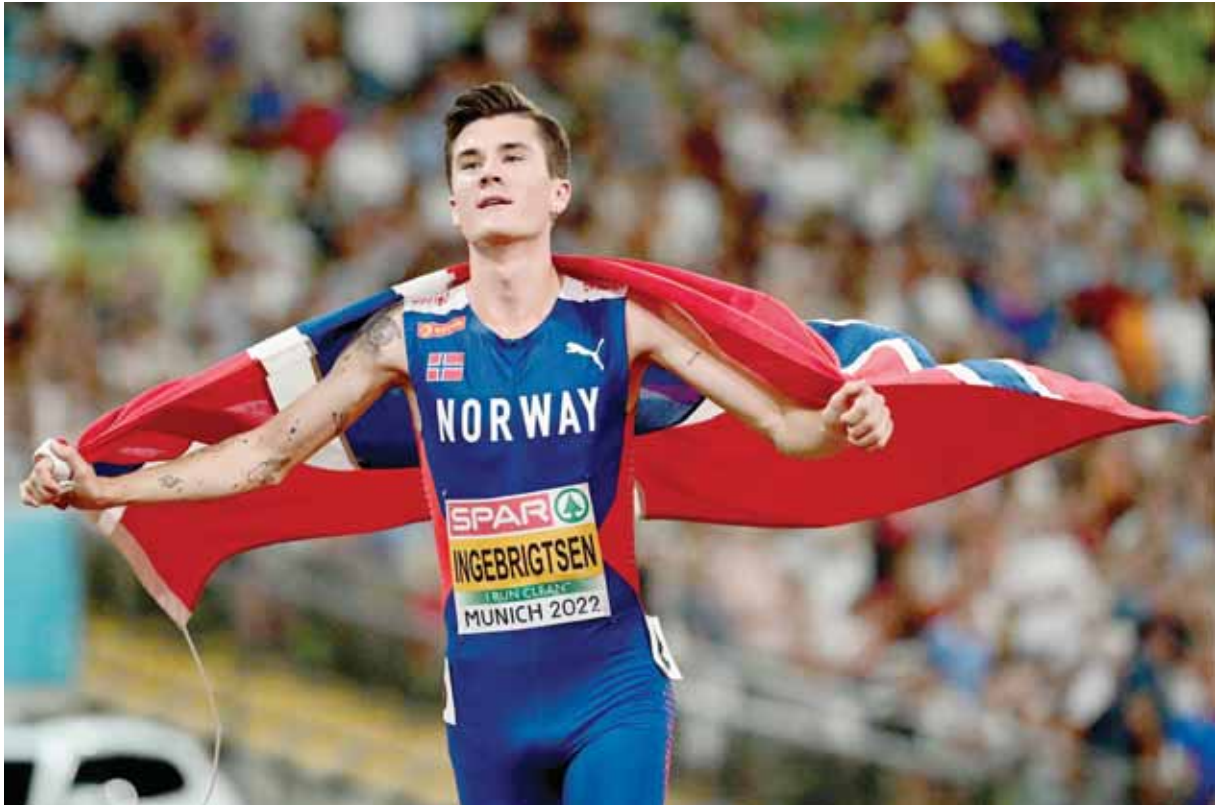
"My leg is not good and I am not happy about how the race went technically, there were some problems.

"But I am over the moon with the gold medal. After Olympic gold, I've now got the European gold. I've got to get the world championship gold now."

In a heady night of track and field at a packed Olympic Stadium, the raucous crowd went wild as unheralded home favourite Gina Lueckenkemper pulled off a shock by winning the women's blue riband sprint.

The 25-year-old, who won 100m silver in the last European champs in Berlin in 2018 and 200m bronze in 2016, threw herself at the line to clock 10.99sec for a photo-finish victory over Switzerland's Muinga Kambundji.

Britain's Daryll Neita took bronze with 11.00sec, while her teammate, defending champion Dina Asher-Smith, pulled up with injury halfway through the race and finished last.



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen celebrates winning the men's 5000m final. Ingebrigtsen won gold ahead of Spain's Mohamed Katir and Italy's Yemaneberhan Crippa. – AFP



Croatia's Sandra Perkovic celebrates winning gold in the women's discus throw final during the European Athletics Championships at the Olympic Stadium in Munich. – AFP



Germany's Gina Luckenkemper celebrates winning the gold in the women's 100m final during the European Athletics Championships. – AFP

**PROVEN TRIO
PRODUCE GOODS**

A trio of proven performers had earlier showed off their prowess in perfect, balmy conditions, retaining their titles in no little style.

First up was Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen, who dominated the 5,000m to keep a repeat double bid on track.

The 21-year-old, crowned world champion over the distance at last month's worlds in Eugene, timed 13min 21.13sec.

"I believe in myself and I believe in the things I have done before. It was amazing here today, it was a great race to be a part of," said Ingebrigtsen.

"It feels great to be back and win, it is special."

Greece's defending long jump champion Miltiadis Tentoglou, the reigning Olympic and world indoor champion who won world silver in Eugene, then set a championship record to retain his Euro title.

The Greek soared out to 8.52m on his fourth attempt, bettering the previous best of 8.47m set by Germany's Christian Reif in Barcelona in 2010.

Then came the turn of the doyenne of the women's discus, Croatia's Sandra Perkovic.

The 32-year-old Croat left it late, going out to a winning 67.95 metres on her fifth attempt for gold.

It was a record sixth successive European title, the two-time Olympic and world champion having first won the continental competition in Barcelona in 2010.

"I just won my sixth European title here at this beautiful stadium in front of this amazing crowds, so I am so happy and proud tonight," said Perkovic.

"I knew I was ready to do it and I think the fight was nice."

There was also drama in the decathlon as Germany's Niklas Kaul snatched gold from Swiss rival Simon Ehammer on the back of a monstrous 76.05m in the javelin and a personal best of 4:10.04 in the strength-sapping final 1500m.

After also registering 11.16sec in the 100m, 7.10m in the long jump, 14.90m in the shot put, 2.02m in the high jump, 47.87sec in the 400m, 14.45sec in the 110m hurdles and 41.80m in the discus, Kaul was left with 8,545 points.

Ehammer had to be happy with silver, just 77pts behind, while Estonia's Janek Oiglane claimed bronze (8,346). — AFP



South Africa's Anrich Nortje celebrates after taking the wicket of England's Jonny Bairstow during the first Test at Lord's Cricket Ground, London. – Reuters

Nortje takes three wickets as England falter at Lord's

LONDON: 'Bazball' was put on the backburner as South Africa's seamers removed England's top order cheaply and despite a half-century for Ollie Pope reduced them to 116 for six before rain forced an early tea on day one of the first Test at Lord's on Wednesday.

Pope is unbeaten on 61 and will resume the innings with Stuart Broad (0 not out) when the weather allows after the afternoon session was limited to six overs.

The tourists managed to take the wicket of Ben Foakes in that time as he was bowled by the fiery Anrich Nortje (3-43), who topped 150-kilometres per hour with some of his deliveries.

The tale of the first day has been South Africa's aggressive and accurate fast bowling rather than England's swashbuckling style that had brought the home side four excellent test wins in a row earlier in the summer.

According to CricViz, 34 per

cent of deliveries so far on day one resulted in a false shot, the second highest percentage at this point in a test innings for England since in 2006.

South Africa won the toss and elected to bowl under overcast skies, with England captain Ben Stokes conceding he would have done the same.

Kagiso Rabada (2-36), who was an injury doubt going into the game, made an excellent start, dismissing both England openers cheaply to catches behind the wicket.

Alex Lees (5) went too hard at a delivery just outside his off-stump and was caught comfortably by wicketkeeper Kyle Verreynne, while Zak Crawley (9) edged to a diving Aiden Markram at second slip.

Crawley now has single figures in eight of his last 11 test innings, with former England batsman Mark Butcher suggesting in Sky Sports coverage of the test that

the selectors were "cruel" to keep playing him.

Joe Root (8) scored a superb unbeaten century at Lord's earlier this summer but could not replicate that as he was trapped leg before wicket by left-arm seamer Marco Jansen, the in-swinging ball shown to be clipping the leg stump.

Jonny Bairstow has also had a golden summer but he produced a shot to forget when he missed a rapid straight delivery from Nortje and was bowled for a duck, beaten for sheer pace.

Stokes had looked to attack the bowling and reached 20 from 30 balls before he was caught by third slip Keegan Petersen off seamer Nortje, the last ball before lunch to compound a miserable morning for the hosts.

The match is the first of three Tests in the series, with fixtures also to be played at Old Trafford (August 25-29) and The Oval (September 8-12). — Reuters

Romanchuk overhauls Paltrinieri to grab 1,500m swim gold

ROME: As a string of world champions added European titles on Tuesday, Ukrainian Mykhailo Romanchuk provided an upset in Rome by toppling Gregorio Paltrinieri in the men's 1,500m.

The Italian set out quickly, as he did on his way to the world title in Budapest in June, building a lead of more than a second by halfway, but Romanchuk, the reigning European champion, surged past in the 19th of the 30 lengths and pulled away.

He beat Paltrinieri by 3.69sec and, as the Italian crowd, which had fallen silent, applauded a Ukrainian victory, the winner balanced on the lane rope at the Foro Italico pool and beat his chest with his fist.

It was Ukraine's first medal in the swimming in Rome.

"These are hard times for me, especially mentally," said Romanchuk, adding that he had been disappointed with his world championship and earlier 800m races in Rome. "I was mad at myself."

On the eve of her 29th birthday, Swede Sarah Sjoestroem won the 50m freestyle for her 45th major championship gold medal.

Sjoestroem cruised to her second gold of the championships in 23.91sec. Pole Katarzyna Wasick was second at 0.29sec.

Sjoestroem won both events at the world championships in Budapest in June.

It was her 27th European long-course medal, breaking a tie with Russian Alexander Popov for most by a single swimmer.

"I think my number of medals continue going up and I'm really enjoying myself here," said the Swede. "Now when I look up the stands and I feel the support and energy, I know why I'm doing this and why I want to go on."

Hungarian Kristof Milak



Ukraine's Mykhailo Romanchuk celebrates on the podium after winning gold in the men's 1,500m freestyle in the European Aquatics Championships. – Reuters



Sweden's Sarah Sjoestroem reacts after winning the women's 50m freestyle final event during the LEN European Aquatics Championships in Rome. – AFP

also duplicated his double at the worlds when he opened the evening by winning the 200m butterfly. He had already collected the 100m butterfly gold in Rome.

'WHO CARES?'

The 22-year-old Milak won in 1min 52.01sec, 1.67sec outside the world record he set in Budapest but good enough to leave compatriot Richard Marton trailing in his wake, 2.77sec behind.

"My swim? Who cares?" said Milak. "The big story here is Richard's silver. That's something

I'm really crazy about. We've been training together for years, before Tokyo he almost quit and stayed only to support my preps for the Games. But we convinced him he had a lot more in him."

Italian Nicolo Martinenghi improved on his world championship performance as he won the men's breaststroke sprint in 26.33 ahead of compatriot Simone Cerasuolo with German Lucas Matzerath third. "It was a great race, it felt fantastic to be able to offer this race and this win to the best crowd in the world," he said. — AFP

India, Australia to clash in two five-Test series

MUMBAI: India and Australia will clash in five-Test series twice during the next four-year calendar, which will feature more international matches across the game's three formats.

The Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia will feature a Test more and will be contested over five matches, according to the Future Tours Programme (FTP) for 2023-27 released by the International Cricket Council on Wednesday.

Rohit Sharma's men are scheduled to tour Down Under at the end of 2024 while Australia will play their away series in India at the start of 2027, the FTP showed.

"The increase to a reciprocal five Test Border-Gavaskar series is a significant milestone and will greatly enhance the enduring rivalry and respect that exists between the Australian and Indian men's teams," said Peter Roach, Cricket Australia's head of cricket operations and scheduling.

India, who finished runner-up behind New Zealand in the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC), will also host England for a five-Test



Indian cricket captain Rohit Sharma poses during the launch of his limited edition sportswear line of sustainable apparel range in collaboration with Adidas, themed with a message to end plastic waste, in Mumbai. – AFP

series at the start of 2024 before travelling to meet Ben Stokes' side the following year for five Tests.

Pakistan, which has seen international cricket return home in recent years following a lengthy absence due to security concerns, will play host to England, South Africa and New Zealand in Tests among others.

Outside bilateral cricket, the next four-year cycle will see one edition each of the 50-over Cricket World Cup (2023) and Champions Trophy (2025), two editions each of the Twenty20 World Cup (2024, 2026) and the

WTC Finals (2025).

The proliferation of lucrative domestic T20 leagues have cramped up cricket's already-strained calendar but despite that the 12 Full Members will play a total of 777 international matches compared to the 694 in the current cycle.

As promised by the powerful Indian cricket board, the Indian Premier League has an extended 10-week window from mid-March to end May, during which very little international cricket has been scheduled in the next calendar. — Reuters



Three fixtures to commence new season of Omantel League

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

The new footballing season 2022-23 will commence on Thursday with three fixtures to take place in the opening round. Defending champions Seeb, who were recently crowned champions of Super Cup, will begin their campaign in defending league title with a match against new arrivals Al Bashayer club at Seeb Sports Stadium. The match will start at 17:55.

The new arrival to the top-tier league, Sur, will meet Al Musannah. The match will kick off at 17:45 at Sur Sports Complex. In the same venue, the First Division league champions Al Oruba will meet Al Suwaiq. The match will begin at 20:30.

Seeb are expected to begin the league matches in style as they powered with the triumph of maiden Super Cup. The team is under new coaching staff led by Romanian Ilie Stan. Abdulaziz al Maqbali and his team-mates are in good shape after they went through good preparation for the new season.

The opponents Al Bashayer, who will made their debut at the top-flight league, will try not be an easy guests this season. The Al Dakhiliyah Governorate club aims for a different show in this season despite their tough clash against Seeb in the opener.

Al Oruba will be seeking for the first victory as they will meet a tough guests represented by Al Suwaiq.

Sur-based team will look for recording a strong start as the team was away from Omantel League during couple of years. Ahmed Kanu, Serbian striker Ivan Subert and Manuchho from Ivory Coast are the key players for Croatian coach Moryan Zefokovetc. Al Suwaiq, on the other hand, will target for the desired three points in the opener and eye on delivering a better show than the previous season as they had ended in ninth place with 31 points.

Sur will chase for a positive start in the league after their absence in top-tier league for few seasons. Nigerian player Etor will be one of the key player for the team in their game against Al Musannah. The Southern Batinah team will look for a better performance this season and will target to snatch the winning points from Sur in the initial round. The remaining encounters of the first round will continue on Friday and Saturday. The runners-up Al Nahdha will have a strong clash against Dhofar on Friday at the former's home in Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

Bahla will chase a strong start as well as Al Rustaq when they face off each other in a tight game at Nizwa Sports Complex. Muscat-based Oman club and Al Ittihad will eye for a positive beginning in the league as they will meet on Saturday at Al Saada Sports Complex. Sohar Sports Complex will host the clash between Al Nasr and Sohar.



Serena bows out on first hurdle

RADUCANU TROUNCES VETERAN IN CINCINNATI OPENER

CINCINNATI: Serena Williams bowed out of the WTA/ATP Cincinnati Masters at the first hurdle on Tuesday, losing in straight sets to US Open champion Emma Raducanu as the end of her glittering career looms ever closer.

Williams, who last week indicated that she is planning to retire after this month's US Open, was no match for British teenager Raducanu, who romped to a 6-4, 6-0 win.

The 40-year-old Williams left the court swiftly after the defeat without speaking to television reporters and did not hold a press conference.

Raducanu broke Williams at the start of both sets to claim victory in what was her first and likely last meeting with the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion.

"I was nervous from the first point to the last," Raducanu said. "Serena is dangerous and can come back from any situation."

"I had to stay focused. I'm so pleased I managed to keep my composure."

Williams, winner of titles here in 2014 and 2015, was competing in only her fourth match of 2022 after starting her season at Wimbledon due to injury.

Raducanu announced her intentions from the start with a break to love of Williams and never let up. The young Briton improved to 14 wins, 17 defeats since winning the Open last September from a qualifying start. Raducanu meanwhile said she was honoured to be part of the spectacle on Tuesday in what was one of Williams' final games as a professional.

HONOUR SERENA

"We all need to honour Serena and her amazing career," she said. "I'm so grateful for the experience of playing her and for the fact that our careers have crossed."

"All she has achieved is inspirational. It's a true honour to share the court with her."

Raducanu never let Williams into the match.

The young Londoner seeded 10th took a 4-1 lead in the opening set and completely swept the second, advancing on her first



Serena Williams (USA) plays a return against Emma Raducanu (GBR) at the Western & Southern Open. – USA Today Sports



Emma Raducanu (GBR) reacts to a point. – USA Today Sports

match point, an unreturnable serve.

Raducanu committed a single unforced error in the opening set compared to a dozen for Williams.

Williams' elder sister Venus took a 7-5, 6-1 loss earlier in the day, losing to 2016 champion Karolina Pliskova.

In the men's draw of the joint event, Nick Kyrgios began the last major US Open tune-up with a 7-5, 6-4 win over Alejandro Davidovich Fokina.

The Australian marched through with 29 winners — including 10 aces — and three breaks of the Spaniard's serve to reach the second round.

The 28th-ranked Kyrgios has won all 11 of his first-round matches this season and won his 22nd match since returning to the ATP in June after skipping the clay season.

He now faces good friend Taylor Fritz after the American

crushed Sebastian Baez 6-1, 6-1.

"Physically, I didn't feel the best, but you have to keep pushing, keep trying," Kyrgios said.

"Alejandro's a hell of a player, he's got a lot of shots at his disposal. I had to serve well and dictate," the Montreal quarterfinalist added. It marked a happy return to Cincinnati for Kyrgios, who was fined a record \$113,000 during a spectacular meltdown at the tournament in 2019.

"I've played some amazing tennis here and had some crazy outbursts," he said. "It's a flip of the coin as to which Kyrgios shows up here."

Elsewhere, Spanish third seed Carlos Alcaraz advanced in his tournament debut, defeating American Mackenzie McDonald 6-3, 6-2.

Italian 10th seed Jannik Sinner celebrated his 21st birthday by beating Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-7 (9/11), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6). — AFP

CINCINNATI OPEN RESULTS

MEN (FIRST ROUND):

Tommy Paul (USA) bt Jenson Brooksby (USA) 6-3, 6-2; Taylor Fritz (USA x11) bt Sebastian Baez (ARG) 6-1, 6-1; Nick Kyrgios (AUS) bt Alejandro Davidovich Fokina (ESP) 7-5, 6-4; Fabio Fognini (ITA) bt Albert Ramos (ESP) 6-2, 6-3; Filip Krajinovic (SRB) bt Daniel Evans (GBR) 6-3, 6-4; Ben Shelton (USA) bt Lorenzo Sonogo (ITA) 7-6 (7/5), 3-6, 7-5; Alex De Minaur (AUS) bt Henri Laaksonen (SUI) 6-2, 6-2; Jannik Sinner (ITA x10) bt Thanasi Kokkinakis (AUS) 6-7 (9/11), 6-4, 7-6 (8/6); Borna Coric (CRO) bt Lorenzo Musetti (ITA) 7-6 (7/2), 6-3; Miomir Kecmanovic (SRB) bt Pablo Carreno Busta (ESP) 1-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/4)

Second round: Carlos Alcaraz (ESP x3) bt Mackenzie McDonald (USA) 6-3, 6-2; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x1) bt Botic van de Zandschulp (NED) 6-4, 7-5

WOMEN

(FIRST ROUND):

Jelena Ostapenko (LAT x16) bt Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA) 6-4, 6-4; Marie Bouzkova (CZE) bt Cori Gauff (USA x11) 7-5, 1-0 abandon; Simona Halep (ROM x15) bt Anastasia Potapova (RUS) 6-4, 3-6, 6-3; Sorana Cirstea (ROM) bt Belinda Bencic (SUI x12) 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 6-4; Marta Kostyuk (UKR) bt Camila Giorgi (ITA) 6-4, 5-7, 6-4; Emma Raducanu (GBR x10) bt Serena Williams (USA) 6-4, 6-0; Karolina Pliskova (CZE x14) bt Venus Williams (USA) 7-5, 6-1; Elise Mertens (BEL) bt Anhelina Kalinina (UKR) 6-1, 6-1; Anna Kalinskaya (RUS) bt Martina Trevisan (ITA) 7-6 (7/2), 7-5; Shelby Rogers (USA) bt Sofia Kenin (USA) 6-2, 6-1; Zhang Shuai (CHN) bt Naomi Osaka (JPN) 6-4, 7-5

Second round: Anett Kontaveit (EST x2) bt Tereza Martincova (CZE) 3-6, 7-5, 6-4

Ronaldo to reveal about Man Utd future soon

LONDON: Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo says he will reveal the truth in a couple of weeks after constant speculation about his future at the club.

The Portuguese is reported to want to leave Old Trafford despite new manager Erik ten Hag insisting he is "not for sale".

"They (will) know the truth when they interview in a couple weeks," the 37-year-old said on Instagram.

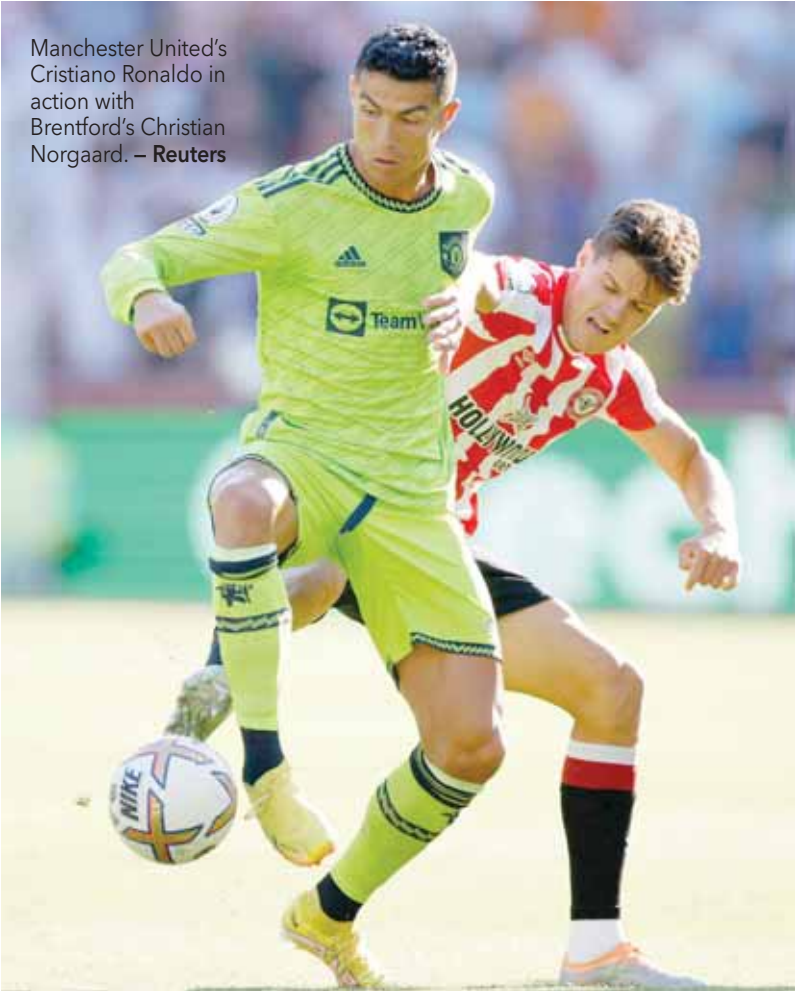
Ronaldo also liked a post from a fan saying that Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone wanted to sign him.

Replying to the post, Ronaldo said: "The media is telling lies. I have a notebook and in the last few months of the 100 news (stories) I made, only five were right."

"Imagine how it is. Stick with that tip."

Ronaldo, who rejoined United a year ago from Juventus, has a year left on his contract.

He was their top scorer last season with 24 goals in all



Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo in action with Brentford's Christian Norgaard. – Reuters

competitions but was criticised by Ten Hag after leaving a pre-season match against Rayo Vallecano early after being substituted at half-time.

United missed out on the Champions League last season, finishing sixth in the Premier League, and have suffered a dreadful start to the new campaign, losing both their opening games and sitting bottom of the table.

They host Liverpool on Monday.

Former United player Gary Neville was fiercely critical of the club after Saturday's 4-0 defeat by Brentford and called on Ronaldo to be clear about his situation.

"Why does the greatest player of all time (in my opinion) have to wait two weeks to tell Manchester United fans the truth?," Neville said in a Twitter post.

"Stand up now and speak. The club is in crisis and it needs leaders to lead. He's the only one who can grab this situation by the scruff of the neck!" — Reuters



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Oman secures favourable ruling in CVD case



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

The US Department of Commerce on Tuesday, August 16, issued its final determination in its countervailing duty (CVD) investigation of steel nails from the Sultanate of Oman. A Curtis team led by partner Matt McCullough helped secure a favourable final result for the Government of the Sultanate of Oman (GSO), including a first-ever finding by the Commerce Department in an Oman CVD case that the provision of electricity conferred no subsidy benefit on the company respondent. Relying on a team drawn from Washington, DC, Paris, Geneva, and on the ground in its Muscat office, Curtis delivered a victory for Oman, with the final CVD margin for the lone Omani company respondent, Oman Fasteners, set at just 2.49 per cent. The low margin will help Oman to retain its competitive edge. The result follows two earlier Curtis wins for Oman. A year ago, the same Curtis team secured a huge victory for the GSO in a case involving aluminium foil, where Oman successfully beat back allegations of government-directed lending to the respondent in that case. In 2016, another Curtis

team also led by partner Matt McCullough delivered a de minimis CVD outcome, resulting in no CVD order on exports of PET resin from Oman. “We are proud of what we have achieved for the GSO,” said partner Matt McCullough. “These are complex cases and the US Department of Commerce investigation process requires careful attention under incredibly tight deadlines. I firmly believe that no other firm can deliver both the expertise and the commitment that Curtis brings to the table in Oman and elsewhere.” “Today’s result reflects Curtis’ position as market-leading counsel to sovereign clients in complex disputes,” said Muscat Managing Partner Simon Ward. “Our platform delivers high level substantive experience, a deep understanding of the GCC region, and a committed team of experienced lawyers that can be called upon across our numerous global offices,” Ward added. McCullough’s team included Geneva and Paris associates Arthad Kurlekar and Amrane Medjani, as well as Muscat associate Budoor al Zadjali. Muscat partners Simon Ward and Mehdi al Lawati were also instrumental in the defence.

Oman eyes 3,350 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2027

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

The Sultanate of Oman aims to enhance energy security for a sustainable future and balance the requirements of sustainable development with the optimal use of natural resources to grow the national economy and reduce the effects of climate change. Electricity production from renewable energy sources this year reached about 650 MWh. The goal is to reach 3,350 MW by 2027. The Sultanate of Oman is working on an ambitious plan to promote the orientation towards renewable energy sources through many diverse projects that translate the priority of the environment and natural resources in Oman Vision 2040 through a strategic direction based on the creation of effective, balanced and flexible ecosystems to protect the environment and sustain its natural resources in support of the national economy. This transformation is achieved by raising the proportion of renewable energy consumption and reducing the dependence on natural gas in the production and exploitation of electricity in other areas such as industry, as well as raising the proportion of renewable energy consumption of the total energy consumption in the main grid by 20 per cent by 2030, in addition to strengthening the environmental performance index to be among the top 40 countries around the world. The Sultanate of Oman began operating the first renewable energy project for the Dhofar Wind Power Plant in Dhofar Governorate in 2019 with a production capacity of 50 MW



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN IS WORKING ON AN AMBITIOUS PLAN TO PROMOTE THE ORIENTATION TOWARDS RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES THROUGH MANY DIVERSE PROJECTS THAT TRANSLATE THE PRIORITY OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN OMAN VISION 2040 THROUGH A STRATEGIC DIRECTION BASED ON THE CREATION OF EFFECTIVE, BALANCED AND FLEXIBLE ECOSYSTEMS TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAIN ITS NATURAL RESOURCES IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY.

sufficient to cover 16,000 homes and contribute to reducing 116,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. In 2020, the Amin Solar Power Plant project was inaugurated with a production capacity of 100 MW sufficient to cover 15,000 homes and contribute to reducing 225,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. The biggest renewable energy project to day is the Ibri Solar Power Plant, with its 1.005 million bifacial solar panels. Built on an area of 13 million square metres, it was inaugurated earlier this year with a production capacity of 500 MW sufficient to cover 50,000 homes and contribute to a reduction of 340,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually. One of the most important projects planned to be established in the renewable energy sector is Manah 1 and 2 solar power plants with an estimated production capacity of 1000 MW for the two plants. Together, they will help

680,000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually when they start commercial operation by the end of 2024. Also envisaged is a Concentrated Solar Power project with thermal storage near the Special Economic Zone of Duqm and the establishment of a wind farm with a production capacity of about 100 MW in the state of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah. Furthermore, at least two wind power projects with capacities ranging from 160-200 MW are planned in Duqm. In Dhofar Governorate, there are plans to establish a Dhofar-2 wind farm development project with a production capacity of about 100 MW, alongside Dhofar Wind Power Plant. In January this year, Oman inaugurated the Middle East’s first Spot Market, in a move aimed at liberalising the electricity market and attracting more investment in renewable energy. — ONA

Smart meters to cover Oman’s power sector by 2025

DIGITAL EFFICIENCY: As of end-2021, around 145,000 smart meters were installed across the country, according to the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR)

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

A National Smart Meter Programme launched by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APRS), in coordination with other sector stakeholders, envisages the installation of an estimated 1.2 million smart meters covering all electricity consumers by 2025. The initiative – launched as

part of the government’s digital transformation drive – is expected to deliver a number of far-reaching benefits to consumers, as well as the broader electricity sector. For one, it will do away with physical meter reading – a practice long associated with faulty readings and inaccurate billings. As smart meters allow remote reading, consumer complaints related to erroneous billings are expected to be dramatically reduced, thereby contributing to a more efficient billing and collection system in the country. As of end-2021, around 145,000 smart meters were installed across the Sultanate of Oman, according to the regulator. Included thus far in the coverage have been large customers, as well as new



customers. As for existing customers, their old meters will be progressively replaced over the ensuing three years through to 2025, it said. Responsibility for the installation of smart meters across their respective license areas is in the hands of the country’s five

electricity distribution and supply companies - Muscat Electricity Distribution Company (MEDC), Mazoon Electricity Company, Majan Electricity Company, Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer) and Dhofar Integrated Services Company (DISC) – all subsidiaries of Nama Group.

Significantly, smart meters helped measure half of all electricity consumed in 2021, said Nama Group in a report. Complementing this effort is the deployment of prepaid meters, around 126,000 of which have been installed at customer sites around the country as of end-2021. Together with other digital technologies deployed by Nama Group companies across their networks, smart and prepaid meters are helping boost efficiency across the wider sector, Nama Group stated. “The year 2021 witnessed higher reliance on the technologies of billing & payment activities, which has made it easier for customers to receive and pay their bills

electronically. In 2021, more than 88 per cent of all bills were sent to the customers by email or by SMS, which represents a more than 18 per cent increase from 2020,” said the state-owned holding group of power, water and wastewater service providers. “In addition, the improvement of collection channels and electronic communication with customers combined with the prevailing movement restriction, lead customers to increase their utilisation of e-payment channels. As a result, more than 63 per cent of all collected payments from customers by the distribution companies happened via electronic channels like websites, mobile, payment machines, and banks,” it further added.

Tasees Khimji spurs entrepreneurial ecosystem

MUSCAT: Building on its role as a facilitator for start-ups and SMEs, ‘Tasees’(formerly Eshraqa Entrepreneurship Academy) is on a mission to shape and mould the fortunes of aspiring Omani entrepreneurs with a proven methodology of skill-building exercises, combined with consultancy and infrastructural support.

Today, ‘Tasees’ has earned a credible reputation as a reliable mentor and guide; it continues to enlist entrepreneurs to its fold, empowering and inspiring them to build, develop and enhance their business opportunities by adopting a grassroots strategy.

As a coach and patron with the potential to fulfill dreams

of start-ups, it has supported 24 business ventures from various sectors, including construction, e-commerce, food and beverage, training and management consultancy, cosmetics, and IT solutions, among others.

Urging small businesses to dream big, ‘Tasees’ continues to foster an entrepreneurial mindset through educational and training resources that are specifically designed to provide a boost to initiate the business project.

Starting from the pre-incubation stage, ‘Tasees’ shares the large task of ‘incubation,’ followed by ‘acceleration’ and ‘Funding and Guidance’ to bring the project to fruition with a strong base to expand and grow.



It is this direct engagement with new start-ups that makes ‘Tasees’ approach and method unique; it has supported business ideas from every sector, both traditional and modern.

Thanks to its training and involvement in the various stages

of development, a couple of businesses in the country have already found success and have reached newer levels.

What has also been a major spur in bolstering ‘Tasees’ ambitious entrepreneur support system is its resolve to partner with the government in realising the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Highlighting the same, Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas Group, said, “We aim to enable aspiring and established entrepreneurs to dream big and achieve their true potential. In line with Oman Vision 2040, under the visionary guidance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, we have been able to nurture and mentor a diverse range of Omani businesses to excel in their respective fields.”

“It is our desire to target the potentials of young entrepreneurs in achieving the main theme of ‘economy and development, as inscribed in the Vision manifesto.

The ambit of our training module is based on the sound

belief that effective leadership or entrepreneurship should begin early. That belief puts the onus on major corporations like us, who have a responsibility to their community and have the resources and capabilities to champion the cause of aspiring entrepreneurs.

Through Eshraqa, we have implemented several social impact projects, and through ‘Tasees’ we have kept our focus on empowering young Omanis who dare to dream and are willing to take the leap of faith with us. We have honed our training operations to suit the market requirements and have the requisite expertise to assess and analyse businesses that need that extra push to savour newfound success,” he added.

MALABAR
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Malabar Gold & Diamonds offers free jewellery maintenance

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the leading jewellery retailers globally with over 285 outlets across 10 countries, has launched an exclusive & unique campaign – ‘Free Jewellery Maintenance’, giving customers a golden opportunity to repair, polish and resize their jewellery possessions for free.

Running until September 17, the free maintenance offer can be availed for jewellery purchased from anywhere. In addition to this, customers can exchange their old gold jewellery purchased from anywhere at Malabar Gold & Diamonds showrooms to buy the latest and trendy collections at the best exchange value.

‘Rather than merely being a commercial asset, each piece of jewellery we hold posses a sentimental value. At Malabar

Gold & Diamonds, we value and cherish what your jewellery means to you and being a product that requires delicate care and maintenance, we are delighted to provide our customers with this once-a-year opportunity to dust off their old jewellery and make it as good as new”, said Najeeb K, Regional Head – Oman, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

As part of the Malabar Promise, jewellery purchased from Malabar Gold & Diamonds comes with the assurance of free lifetime maintenance.

For a limited period, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is extending this offer to jewellery purchased from all other retailers. However, if repair requires additional precious gems or other metals, they will be charged at preferential rates.

Sohar International sponsors Data Academy Programme for children

MUSCAT: With an inherent zeal to contribute meaningfully and enhance the lives of individuals from different sections of society, Sohar International has been at the forefront of spearheading several thoughtful corporate social responsibility campaigns with an underlying objective of supporting platforms to share knowledge.

Reaffirming its role as a facilitator of socio-economic progress, the bank recently signed an agreement to sponsor the Data Academy Training Programme for children at the Child Care Centre. The sponsorship, which will cover the training of 40 children at the centre for a period of 10 days.

Under the programme , Sohar International’s sponsorship will enable the centre to arrange materials needed to ensure the programme is conducted seamlessly and the training remains uncompromised.

The training programme will focus on core subjects like Programming, Arts, Science, and Math. Dedicated to providing the necessary intervention at every stage of a child’s educational journey, the programme will have two distinct categories to better address their varying needs. While the first category is for children in the age group of 5 to 10 years old, the second targets those from 11 to 15 years of age.

Ahmed al Musalmi, CEO of Sohar International said, “The



ability to impart quality education for the masses is one of the key pillars to promote sustainable development. Having timely access to the right learning modules goes a long way in helping them develop their personality, explore and excel in their interest areas for sustainable growth and development. The educational sector has also been identified as one of the vital focus areas under Oman Vision 2040.

At Sohar International, we exercise increased emphasis on supporting educational programmes through various knowledge-sharing initiatives. As a socially responsible bank, Sohar International has invested in the long-term prosperity of the nation and will continue to lead efforts to promote an inclusive and progressive society.”

Placing immense importance on creativity, innovation, and the ability to think out of the box, the training programme delivered by

The Data Academy is in line with the bank’s fundamental principles.

The training will be instrumental in helping instil critical thinking amongst children from an early age while improving their analytical, logical, and problem-solving skills. This will also help boost performance in other areas of learning and development while better preparing them to tackle complex real-world challenges in a data-driven future.

Dr Abdullah al Muniri, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The Data Academy, said, “We appreciate Sohar International’s efforts, its ongoing commitment to support its relationship with the society, and its interest to sponsor our training programme. We look forward to continuing to cooperate with the Bank to achieve the training programme objectives and create a greater impact and contribution to the socio-economic progress of the country,”

Alizz Islamic Bank offers convenience of banking from homes



MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank’s digital banking services offer its customers the convenience of banking from the comfort of their homes. The bank’s digital channels have seen a significant increase in the number of users due to the seamless user interface and user experience that offers flexibility and ease in conducting and executing banking transactions without the need to visit the branches.

The digital channels provided by Alizz Islamic Bank include the mobile banking application, the Internet banking platform, interactive teller machines and automated teller machines, in addition to contactless card payments that offer customers the ability to conduct a maximum of 10 transactions per day with the need to use the chip and PIN method.

Alizz Islamic Bank recently launched an internal award for the ‘Digital Banking Champions’ which is given to the branch that records the highest percentage of onboarding customers to the mobile banking application. Moreover, the bank continues to invest in the new digital technologies that enhance the customer experience.

The bank also utilises fintech based solutions, and works on building the basic foundations that meet the needs of customers while adopting a culture of innovation within the institution.

Alizz Islamic Bank was also recently awarded with the ‘Best Rated Mobile Banking App in Oman’ as per the reviews of users who downloaded the application from the Apple Store, Android GooglePlay store and Huawei Gallery store, evaluating the application on the user experience and the ease of completion of banking transactions.

Bank Nizwa holds multiple Islamic finance sessions

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading and the most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, organised induction sessions on Islamic Finance, which falls under the umbrella of the bank’s renowned “Islamic Finance Knowledge Series (IFKS)” in several governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The sessions witnessed a fruitful engagement amongst attendees. The Bank organised the first session on Islamic Finance for the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs staff in Salalah, under the auspices of Firas al Naqbi, Director General of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in the Governorate of Dhofar, in the presence of a number of officials and employees of the Ministry. Shaikh Dr Majid



al Kindi, Chairman of the Shari’ah Board at the Bank presented the programme to a large audience, highlighting the benefits of Shari’ah-compliant financial tools and services to the attendees.

The bank held as well two parallel sessions in the governorate of South Al Sharqiyah; at Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, which were delivered by Mustafa al Naabi, Shari’a Training

Assistant Manager at Bank Nizwa.

“The bank has been able to educate communities about the values, options and advantages provided by the financial industry through IFKS, equipping them with the knowledge they need to make wise decisions. Financial inclusion lays the groundwork for a sound financial infrastructure in addition to promoting a nation’s economic growth and development,” said Khaled al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa.

“As a consequence, these sessions exemplify our persistent commitment to equipping local communities with unrivalled Islamic banking and finance options that comply with today’s changing financial demands,” he

added.

The first Islamic bank in Oman, Bank Nizwa, has long been committed to spreading awareness of Islamic finance’s concepts and tenets as well as its many benefits amongst the people of the Sultanate of Oman.

Making wise financial decisions is essential as more people join the workforce on a daily. Although many people were unaware of Oman’s solid Islamic Finance foundation, the development potential of Islamic finance is still quite significant.

Bank Nizwa sought to remedy the under-representation of products that adhere to Shari’ah. As a result, Bank Nizwa, the industry pioneer in Islamic banking, devised IFKS.



Biden signs major climate change, health care spending and tax law

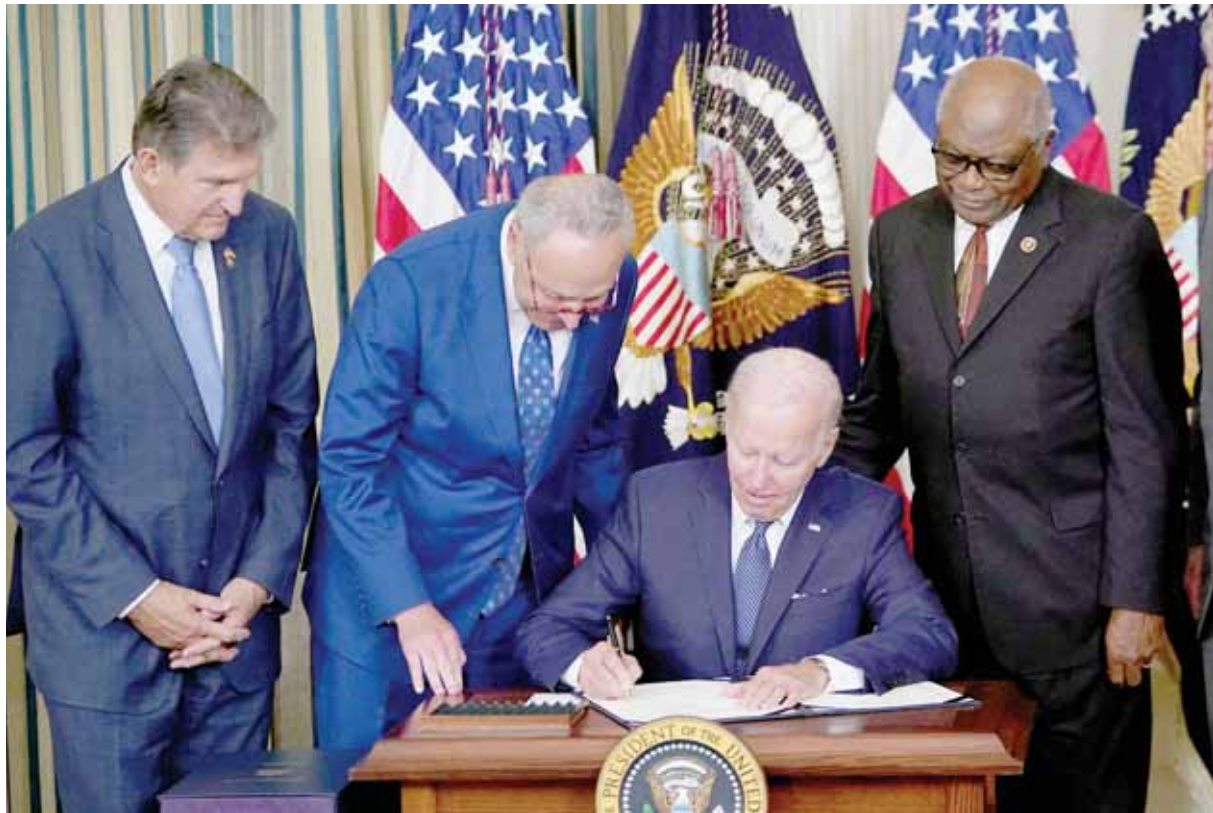
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Tuesday signed into law a big climate change and health care spending bill, giving Democrats another boost ahead of midterm elections in which Republicans are suddenly less certain of their predicted crushing victory.

The law, dubbed the Inflation Reduction Act, was touted by the White House as the biggest commitment to mitigating climate change in US history, as well as targeting long sought changes in the way medicines are priced, while adding fairness to the tax system, with a minimum 15 per cent tax for corporations.

"A nation can be transformed. That's what's happening now," Biden said in a White House speech likely to form the basis of his campaign ahead of the November polls, where Republicans have hoped to end Democrats' narrow control of Congress. "It's about tomorrow," Biden said.

"It's about delivering progress and prosperity to American families. It's about showing America and the American people that democracy still works in America." While the sprawling bill is a fraction of the gargantuan package Biden originally tried and failed to get through Congress, the fact he was able to sign even the scaled-back version marked a political resurrection — a success Democrats now hope might fuel a comeback at the ballot box later this year.

Under the plan, the government will spend about \$370 billion on green energy initiatives while also allowing the state-run Medicare system to negotiate prices for prescription drugs,



US Senator Joe Manchin (L), US Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (2L) and House Majority Whip James Clyburn (D-SC) watch US President Joe Biden sign the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 into law during a ceremony in the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP

a popular measure designed to cut the often ruinous prices Americans are forced to pay. Although the Republican National Committee called a provision to subsidise electric vehicle purchases a "scam," the Sierra Club, an environmental lobbying group, praised what it called a bold step in the struggle against an overheating planet.

"This day will be remembered by future generations as the turning of the tide against the fossil fuel industry and toward a healthier, cleaner, and more just future for all people across this country," Sierra Club president Ramon Cruz said.

The law's massive cost will be

covered in large part by closing numerous tax loopholes and enforcing a new 15 per cent minimum tax on corporations — a measure Biden has long promised to his base as a way to get the wealthy to "pay part of their fair share."

Battered by outrage over the chaotic final exit of US troops from Afghanistan, stubborn Covid waves, and the highest inflation in 40 years, the Biden administration has had a rough last 12 months.

Adding to the left's gloom, opposition from just two centre-right Democratic senators has repeatedly doomed party attempts to make use of a razor

thin advantage in the Senate. Opinion polls show Republicans likely to get a healthy majority in the House of Representatives and possibly also win the Senate.

This could effectively turn Biden into a lame duck for the rest of his first term, with Republicans shutting down his legislative agenda and subjecting government officials to aggressive probes by congressional committees.

The last few weeks, however, have seen a momentum shift. Republicans are embroiled in the scandal over former president Donald Trump's alleged illegal hoarding of top secret documents at his Florida golf club. — Reuters

Fish farming can have beneficial impacts for the Omani economy



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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI.

The Omani government continues to prioritise fisheries and aquaculture development. Fishing has been an important source of livelihood for thousands of Omani citizens since ancient times.

This sector is among the most important fields of the Omani economy with social significance as well. About 80 per cent of Omanis were employed in this sector before the discovery of oil at the end of the sixties of the last century.

Accordingly, the government and private sectors have, over the past years, developed several fisheries projects, including the farming of a number of important fish species that are in great demand from inside and outside the Sultanate.

A few days ago, the first Omani abalone farming project was launched in the Wilayat of Mirbat in Dhofar Governorate, where this type of seafood is very popular in some Asian countries such as Japan and China, as well as various European countries. It is an important meal in hotels and large resorts.

This modern project is affiliated with the Oman Aquaculture Company and costs around RO 10 million (\$26 million).

Over the past years, the government has introduced a number of improvements to the fisheries sector, so that fishermen can obtain a profitable return from the fishing process, which helps this sector in providing job

opportunities for citizens.

The concerned authority recognises that there is an urgent need to improve the economic management of the fisheries sector and to create sustainable job opportunities that are viable for economic growth, because of their importance in adding value.

In this context, Oman had engaged the World Bank over the past years to assist in efforts to improve and reform the fisheries sector, and to assist in developing a plan to increase the contribution of this sector to the Omani economy and to develop and implement the 2040 Vision for fisheries and aquaculture.

The strategy document for this project for the next phase includes the implementation of the investment aspect and the provision of technical support, in addition to business development and management training.

Today, the fisheries sector is one of the fastest growing food-producing sectors in the world, in light of the steady increase in the world's population.

Global forecasts indicate that an additional 40 million tons of aquatic food is needed during 2025 to meet the current per capita consumption due to the importance of fish products as a source of animal protein, and to enhance the productivity of traditional fisheries.

Everyone is aware that the development of fish farming activity in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to improving the conditions of fishermen and their fishing methods will contribute to diversifying the sources of national income, employing more national labour, and exploiting unused coastal lands to establish fish farming projects that need large quantities of water.

Besides, this initiative will help to establish and develop a number of ancillary commercial and economic activities focusing on the processing, sale and exports of fish products.

Oxy Oman to sponsor Oman Science Festival

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 17

In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Oxy Oman representatives recently attended the sponsorship signing ceremony for the Oman Science Festival, which the company will support as a Gold Sponsor. The Oman Science Festival is a biennial six-day exhibition that will be held in October 2022, and targets over 200,000 school students and other community members from all over the Sultanate of Oman.

The Festival will host scientific workshops, lectures, interactive corners, and showcases for all age groups, under the organisation of the Ministry of Education.



The signing event was held at the Ministry of Education, under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager

of Oxy Oman, and Dr Ambusaidi signed the sponsorship agreement on behalf of their respective organisations.

The Oman Science Festival will be held at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Center, and is expected to host booths and activities from over 80 government and private sector organisations.

Festival visitors and participants will have the opportunity to join competitions and interactive events on programming, robotics, hackathons, drone technology, and other emerging technologies. Oxy Oman will also host a company booth showcasing company achievements in technology and energy, with interactive educational experiences for youth.

UK inflation hits new 40-year high as food prices rocket

LONDON: British inflation surged to a new 40-year high in July on soaring food prices, official data showed on Wednesday, adding to a cost-of-living crisis as the country faces the prospect of recession.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) accelerated to 10.1 per cent last month from 9.4 per cent in June — itself a four-decade high — the Office for National Statistics said. The Bank of England warned earlier this month that UK inflation would climb to just above 13 per cent this year, which would be the highest level since 1980.

It also projected that the country would enter a recession near the end of the year that the BoE expects to last until late 2023.

Official data last week showed Britain's economy shrank in the second quarter. "I understand that times are tough, and people are worried about increases in prices that countries around the world are facing," finance minister Nadhim Zahawi said following the latest data.

"Getting inflation under control is my top priority," he said, as Britons face also rocketing energy bills. While the government of



A man purchases fruit on a market stall in London. — AFP

outgoing Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged to help

reduce fuel costs for millions of Britons this coming winter,

consumer groups are demanding far more state support.

It comes as Britain endures a cost-of-living crisis, with wage values falling at a record pace.

The deteriorating economy will be inherited by Johnson's successor after he leaves office next month, with Foreign Secretary Liz Truss and former finance minister Rishi Sunak vying to take the reins of the Conservatives.

In a bid to bring down inflation, the Bank of England has hiked its key interest rate several times since the end of last year.

The most recent increase was by 0.5 percentage points, the

biggest hike since 1995 and which leaves borrowing costs at 1.75 per cent — driving up mortgage repayments for households but boosting savers.

"Today's data leaves the Bank of England stuck in a bit of a quandary, with multi-decade high inflation accompanied by an economy expected to enter into a deep recession in 2023," noted Matthew Ryan, head of market strategy at global financial services firm Ebury. He added that "another 50 basis-point interest rate hike is effectively guaranteed at the bank's next meeting in September".

—AFP

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With khareef here, Dhofar people are preparing for rain-fed farming

By Arwa Al Hashimi
Photos by Adnan Daheesh

Farming is not only a lifestyle but a way of living for many Omani people. With Oman having one of the most diverse landscapes in the Middle East and some areas with fertile soil ideal for farming, raising crops for food and business has become a source of income for many. Omanis brilliantly developed various ways and methods to make

farming easier. They heavily rely on aflaj as well as rain-fed farming to grow these crops. Due to that, they were able to plant different kinds of fruit and vegetables and even sell them locally and internationally. With its wonderful weather and exceptional khareef season, Dhofar turns green for three months. Dhofaris take advantage of this weather by preparing for rain-fed farming which is locally called Al Meshadeed.

Al Meshadeed is a plot of arable

land that is prepared, levelled and then fenced with thorny trees such as Sidr and others to protect the cultivation of crops from the animals that attack them. They cultivate various crops such as legume beans and corn and many farmers grow cucumbers and produce large quantities of them through the season. To this day, some citizens, farmers and young people are still working in this type of farming. Some even depend on it as the main



source of their annual income. Many of them think that if this type of farming is used and expanded by adding more crops that can be brought during the period of its growth, it will certainly contribute to self-sufficiency and food security. Preparing Al Meshadeed is built upon several phases until the plot is ready for cultivation. The first step begins by cleaning the plot of land from any rubbish to be planted, after fencing it using thorny trees and wood. The second step is digging with a sharp tool like a sickle to prepare for seeds, then placing the seeds inside and covering them with a thin layer of soil. The third step is planting another amount of seeds together in a close corner so that they will be placed in the areas where seeds did not sprout or damage. This is an important way of trying to make use of every piece of the plot. The fourth step starts by removing the grass that sprouts with the

seeds or that sprout between them again, so that they do not grow and replicate, causing the presence of insects, and also disturbing the growth of the planted seeds. Additionally, Before the end of the rainy season, the grass must be removed again. The fifth step is waiting for the rain until it stops and the sun rises where after that they can start harvesting the crops. Finally, they hit the crops with sticks, harvesting the grains and separating them from their husk. And then taking the grains to a dry place, packing, storing and using it throughout the year. It is important to mention that the amount of the crop depends on the land area and how the plantings are taken care of because such farming way needs a lot of monitoring and fostering.

READ

SKANDAR AND THE UNICORN THIEF

BY A F STEADMAN

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



DAYS OF TERROR

White carnations are placed during a memorial along the Las Ramblas Boulevard in Barcelona to mark the fifth anniversary of the 2017 terror attacks in Barcelona and Cambrils that left 16 people dead. A van rammed into crowds on Las Ramblas Boulevard in the heart of Barcelona on August 17, 2017, igniting four days of terror. — AFP



EXHUMED BODIES

A family member of the Toraja ethnic group prepares the bodies of exhumed relatives from a community burial site to be cleaned and dressed in a series of traditional ceremonies honouring the dead known as Manene at Torea village, in North Toraja, Indonesia's South Sulawesi. — AFP





Slow-cooked lamb that can stand the heat

SPEAKING OF SUMMER weather, or weren't we? I pronounce it "exceedingly hot and humid." While that's not true of everywhere, of course, I know many people who would emphatically answer yes when asked, "Hot enough for you?" And emphatically no when asked, "Are you going to cook?" Some won't even turn on the oven or boil a pot of water from June to October.

My friends, cooking in the heat, summertime or not, is part of being a cook. Embrace it. People the world around routinely cook in hot climates every day. Even if you do all your cooking outdoors, you won't escape without breaking a sweat.

There are strategies to summer cooking. Early morning, before the day heats up, is a good time to get a head start on dinner. And if you can cook today for tomorrow — in the cool of the evening, perhaps? — so much the better. The recipes in this month's menu can all be prepared a day in advance, though it is certainly not required.

It's hard not to wax prosaic when you hit the farmers market right now. Drop-dead gorgeous fruits and vegetables, bursting forth in every colour — be still my heart. Fine, fat and glistening eggplants, check! Ripe tomatoes in every size — to cry for! Runner beans and green beans and fresh shell beans. Peak berries and particularly swoonworthy stone fruit. I'm breathless. Make dinner with that kind of flavourful haul, indoors or out, today or tomorrow, and how can you lose?

With the eggplant, make a smoky spread, flecked with cumin, to smear on flatbread. The first step of the process is fun: You get to burn the heck out of the eggplant. Place them directly on hot coals or in the flames of a gas burner, turning, until they are completely blackened. The inside flesh will have steamed to softness, then it's just a matter of scraping away the charred skin and mashing the tender, smoke-tinged innards with aromatics, garlic, tahini, lemon and olive oil.

Serve a bright tomato salad to serve alongside. As I learned from a friend in Istanbul, pomegranate molasses, sumac and toasted walnuts really lend spark to the tomatoes. Or spread shards of warm pita or lavash with the smoky eggplant and top with tomato, if you wish. It's casual.

At the Santa Monica farmers market, several stands sell farm-raised meat as a small sideline. From one, I picked up a boneless lamb shoulder, which I knew would braise to succulence if cooked slowly for three hours or so. I would do it either in a covered grill over indirect heat or inside in a slow oven.

Then, the plan was to tear the meat into strips and combine it with beautiful green and yellow runner beans and some of the braising liquor. And to shower it all with lots of refreshing chopped dill, mint and parsley. It's a combination so winning that I chopped the same herbs to garnish the eggplant and tomatoes, too, and served everything together.

Dessert for this meal is all about stone fruit, melon and berries. A chopped fruit salad, if you will, or a compote. (In times past, a dish like this was called a Macedonia.) The trick is to do a little more than just macerate the fruits. Instead, dilute a little homemade jam with a splash of wine or liqueur for them to sit in. You'll add very little sugar, if you use it all. Serve chilled. It's just the thing on a hot summer

day or evening, especially if there's a breeze. That, and another glass of rosé.

TOMATO SALAD WITH SMOKY EGGPLANT FLATBREAD

Buy lavash or pita at a local Middle Eastern market, heat the flatbreads in a skillet or toaster oven, and smear them



with this delicious eggplant spread, enriched with spices and tahini and pleasantly smoky from a cook over an open flame. Serve the flatbreads with this Turkish-style tomato salad, a variation on one I learned in Istanbul from Turkish chef Gamze Ineceli. Hers is more traditional — finely chopped tomato is customary — but you can also choose the colourful cherry tomatoes at the market and cut them in halves or quarters.

By David Tanis
Yield: 4 to 6 servings
Total time: 30 to 40 minutes

INGREDIENTS:
1 large eggplant (about 1 pound)
4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon lemon juice
2 tablespoons tahini
2 small garlic cloves, grated
2 tablespoons plain whole-milk yogurt
1/2 teaspoon toasted ground cumin
Pinch of ground cayenne
Pinch of ground cinnamon
Salt and pepper
1 small red onion, finely diced
2 tablespoons pomegranate molasses
1/2 teaspoon sumac
3 cups chopped tomatoes, preferably a mix of larger multicoloured tomatoes and cherry tomatoes (about 1 pound)
1/2 cup chopped toasted walnuts
Warm lavash or pita bread, for serving
3 tablespoons chopped dill, for garnish
3 tablespoons parsley, for garnish
3 tablespoons chopped mint leaves, for garnish

METHOD:
1. Set the whole, unpeeled eggplant directly over a bed of hot coals, over the open flame of a gas burner at full blast or under the broiler. With a paring knife or skewer, poke a few holes into the eggplant to allow steam to escape. Let the skin of the egg-

plant blacken and blister, turning the eggplant continuously until it is soft, collapsed and completely charred, about 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Set the cooked eggplant on a chopping board, and, when cool enough to handle, cut in half from top to bottom. Let cool to room temperature (about 15 minutes), then scoop out flesh with a spoon, discarding any large seed pockets. Tear or roughly chop eggplant flesh and put in a medium bowl.

3. Add 2 tablespoons olive oil, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, tahini, garlic, yogurt, cumin, cayenne, cinnamon, and salt and pepper. Beat mixture with a fork, leaving it somewhat rough. Set aside to let flavours meld at room temperature, then taste and adjust seasoning. Transfer to a serving dish.

4. Put diced onion in a medium bowl and season with salt and pepper. Add pome-

granate molasses, sumac and 1 teaspoon lemon juice. Stir in 2 tablespoons olive oil.

5. Add chopped tomatoes and fold into onion mixture, sprinkling with a bit more salt, if necessary. Transfer to a serving dish and top with walnuts.

6. Spread eggplant mixture on pieces of warm lavash or pita, keeping the edges clear, and arrange on a platter. Spoon some of the tomato mixture onto each piece. Sprinkle dill, parsley and mint liberally over it all.



SLOW-COOKED LAMB SHOULDER WITH GREEN BEANS

There are many ways to achieve a succulent braised lamb shoulder. In a covered grill over indirect heat or in a low oven, it will take about 3 hours, but you could also use a countertop slow cooker. It'll take longer but you'll know the meat is ready when it's well seasoned and nearly falling apart. For convenience, you may prepare the braise a day or two in advance. Then finish it, cooking it with green beans (or a mixture of various summer beans) and hot pepper, then showering it with chopped parsley, dill

and mint.

By David Tanis
Yield: 4 to 6 servings
Total time: 3 1/2 to 4 hours

INGREDIENTS:
1 (3-pound) boneless lamb shoulder roast
Salt and pepper
1 tablespoon roughly chopped garlic
4 rosemary sprigs
6 bay leaves
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1 pound green beans, preferably a mix of green beans, romano beans and yellow wax beans
Red-pepper flakes
2 tablespoons chopped parsley, for garnish
2 tablespoons chopped dill, for garnish
2 tablespoons chopped mint, for garnish

METHOD:
1. Prepare a covered gas or charcoal grill for medium indirect heat, or heat an oven to 325 degrees.

2. If the roast is tied, remove netting or string. Lay the roast on a work surface and open it flat. Sprinkle the insides with salt, pepper and chopped garlic. Reroll the roast, leaving the garlic inside. Place the roast seam side down in a small roasting pan or 9-by-13-inch baking dish just big enough to hold it.

3. Tuck rosemary and bay leaves under the meat. Season the top with salt and pepper, allspice and cloves. Drizzle with olive oil and smear the oil over the surface. Add 2 cups water to the pan.

4. Cover the pan tightly with aluminium foil and place in a covered gas or charcoal grill, on set up for medium indirect

heat, or in a 325-degree oven. Cook until the meat is fork-tender, 3 to 3 1/2 hours. (Be sure to remove the foil about 30 minutes before the end of cooking so that the meat browns.) From time to time, check that there's sufficient liquid in the roasting pan, adding more water as necessary. When the meat is done, set aside until cool enough to handle, then tear into large shreds, reserving any remaining pan juices.

5. Meanwhile, bring a pot of water to the boil and add salt. Blanch beans for about 1 minute, then remove spread out on a baking sheet to cool.

6. When ready to serve, heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a wide skillet over medium heat. Add blanched beans and stir-fry for 1 minute, then add a pinch of red-pepper flakes. Cook just a bit longer, until the pan juices and shredded meat are warmed through, tossing well. Transfer to a serving dish. Sprinkle with parsley, dill and mint. — **NYT**

DISCOVERY

Ice-age footprints shed light on North America's early humans



FOOTPRINTS LAID DOWN by Ice-Age hunter-gatherers and recently discovered in a US desert are shedding new light on North America's earliest human inhabitants.

Dozens of fossilized prints found in dried-up riverbeds in the western state of Utah reveal more details about how the continent's original occupants lived more than 12,000 years ago -- just as the frozen planet was starting to thaw.

The fossils could have remained unnoticed if not for a chance glance out of a moving car as researchers Daron Duke and Thomas Urban drove through Hill Air Force Base chatting about footprints.

"We were talking about 'what would they look like?'," Duke told AFP. "And he said: Kind of like that out the window."

What the two men had found turned out to be 88 distinct prints left by a mixture of adults and children.

"They vary between just looking like discoloured patches on the ground and... little pop ups, little pieces of dirt around them or on them. But they look like footprints," Duke said.



What came next was a painstaking few days of very careful digging -- sometimes lying on his belly -- to ensure that what they were looking at was as old as it appeared.

"What I found was bare feet of people... that had stepped in what looks to be shallow water where there was a mud sub layer," Duke explained.

"The minute they pulled their foot out, the sand infilled that and has preserved it perfectly."

Duke, of the Nevada-based Far Western Anthropological Research Group, had been in the area looking for evidence of prehistoric campfires built by the Shoshone, a people whose descendants still live in the western United States.

He had brought Urban over from Cornell University because of his expertise in uncovering evidence of ancient humans -- including the discovery of human tracks in New Mexico's White Sands National Park that are thought to be up to 23,000 years old.

AWESTRUCK

The new fossils add to a wealth of other finds from the area, including stone tools, evidence of tobacco use, bird bones and campfire remains, that are starting to provide a more complete record of the Shoshone and their continuous presence in the region beginning 13,000 years ago.

"These are the resident indigenous people of North America, this is where they lived, and this is where they still live today," Urban said.

For him personally, finding the footprints has been a professional high point.

"Once I... realised I was digging a human footprint, I was seeing toes, I was seeing the thing in immaculate condition... I was just kind of awe-struck by it," he said.

"Nothing beats the sense of discovery and awe that maybe as an archaeologist, you are actually chasing your whole career."

And sharing the discovery with the distant descendants of the people who made the prints was immensely rewarding, Urban said.

"You realize the same thing is happening -- what the connection is to such a distant past and to something so human, I think it gets to everybody in one way or another eventually." — **AFP**



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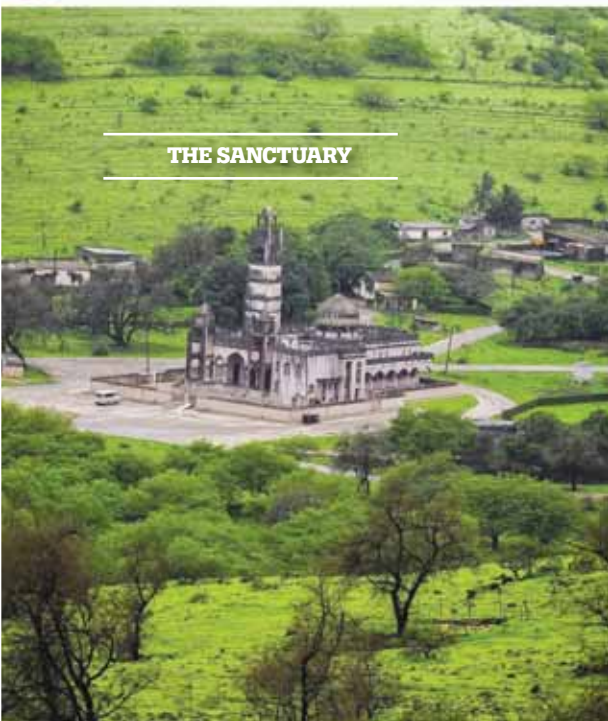
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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Remains of small armour-plated dinosaur unearthed in Argentina



PALEONTOLOGISTS ON Thursday heralded the discovery of a previously unknown small armoured dinosaur in southern Argentina, a creature that likely walked upright on its back legs roaming a then-steamy landscape about 100 million years ago. The Cretaceous Period dinosaur, named Jakapil kaniukura, would have been well-protected with rows of bony disk-shaped armour along its neck and back and down to its tail, they said. It measured about 5 feet (1.5 metres) long and weighed only 9 to 15 pounds (4-7 kg), similar to an average house cat.



Its fossilised remains were dug up over the past decade near a dam in Patagonia in Rio Negro province's La Buitrera paleontological zone. The scientists described Jakapil in a study published in the journal Scientific Reports. The scientists said Jakapil marks a first-of-its-kind discovery of an armoured dinosaur from the Cretaceous in South America. It is part of the thyreophoran dinosaur group that includes the likes of Stegosaurus, known for its bony back plates and spiky tail, and tank-like Ankylosaurus, covered in armour and wielding a club-like tail. Lead paleontologist Sebastian Apesteguia and his colleagues found a partial skeleton of Jakapil along with 15 tooth fragments featuring a leaf-like shape, similar to iguana teeth. Jakapil resembles a primitive form of thyreophoran that lived much earlier, making it a surprise that it dated from the Cretaceous. Apesteguia said never before has such a thyreophoran been dug up anywhere in the southern hemisphere. — **Reuters**

CHANGING WORLD

Murals bring hope in Ukrainian city under Russian attack



PENSIONER MYKHAILO sits on a park bench in the east Ukrainian city of Bakhmut admiring two huge murals painted on the sides of adjacent apartment blocs. One depicts a mother holding aloft a child. The other shows a man with a boy on his shoulders playing with a toy plane. The murals, gifted to the city by Ukrainian artists in 2020, offer hope and solace for Mykhailo, 79, as Bakhmut is pounded by almost constant Russian bombardment. "I come here, just to sit and breathe and think about life," he said, sitting in a peaked cap under a leafy tree. "(This mural) is all about freedom, and so calming at the same time, yes." Many residents have left Bakhmut as Russian forces advanced. The city is one of the last Ukrainian strongholds in eastern Ukraine, and its fall would take Russia a step closer to establishing control over the entire Donbas area. But Mykhailo, who declined to give his full name, has opted to stay in the city that was home to around 70,000 people before Russia invaded on February 24. "If you're scared, you shouldn't be here. Of what should I be afraid? I'm 79 years old. Guys, if we die, then that's how it is," he said. Asked how long he

would stay, he replied: "Until the victory... until the victory!" Ukraine hopes to evacuate many more civilians from Donbas before winter, but residents can opt to stay by filling in a form stay here have no money. To leave and settle in a new place, to rent a house there." Viktoria Bulavintseva muses over the future as she sweeps leaves from the pavement in the deserted city centre. She said Ukrainian soldiers had reassured her they would not let Russian forces into the city and is waiting for a Ukrainian counteroffensive. "To be honest, I'm so badly waiting for the victory. I'm waiting for the counterattack. It was supposed to start in August," she said. "We can manage, just let the counterattack start as soon as possible. Kick them (the Russians) out from here, just kick them out already." — **Reuters**



CLIMATE CHANGE

'We need rain': Mexican farmers ravaged by northern drought



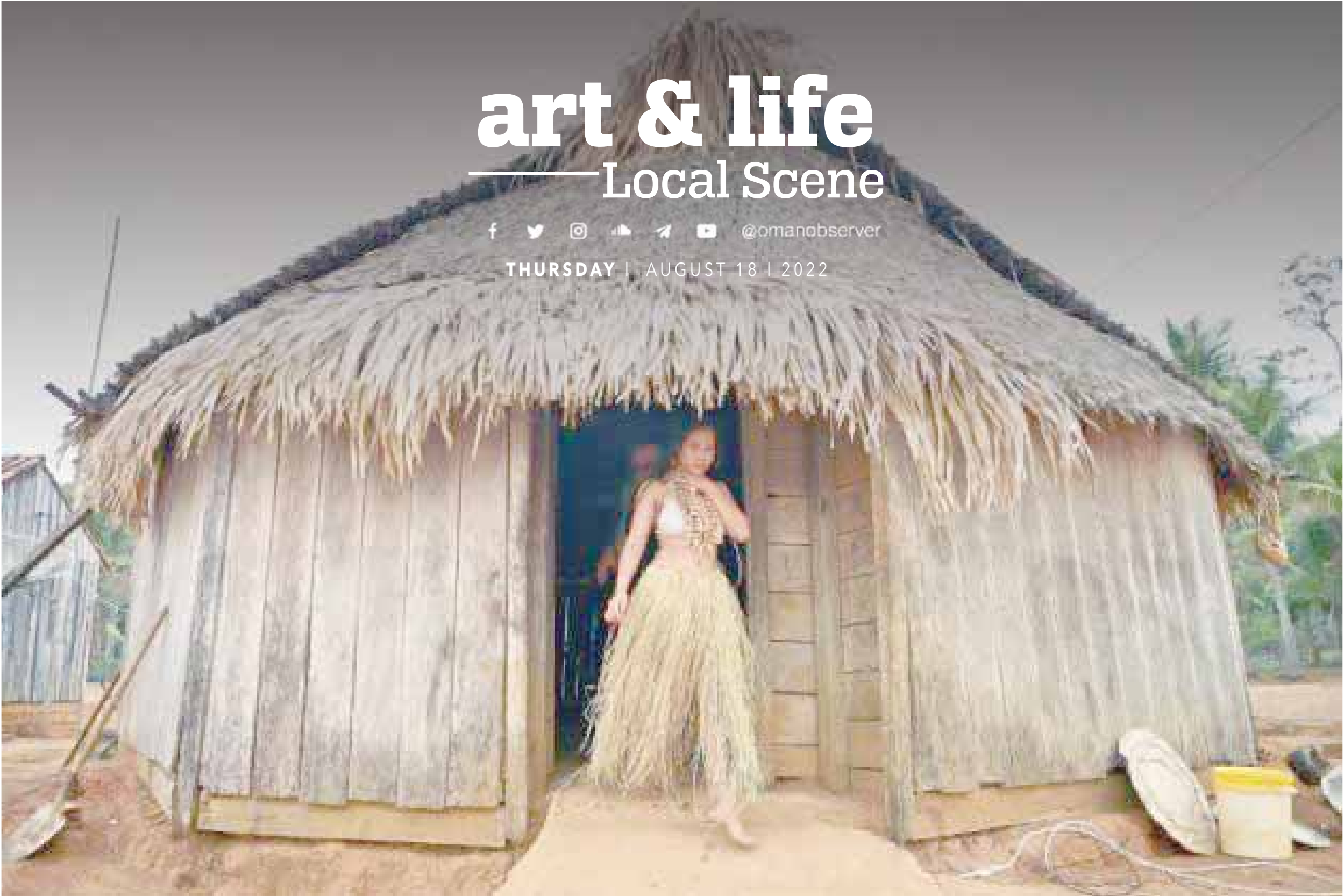
HICTERIO TORRES Franco's animals are dying; deprived of water in one of the worst droughts Mexico has seen for 30 years. In the distance lies one of his donkeys, its carcass eyed by vultures. Some 19 cows have perished too. "It's been a big loss," laments Torres, whose farm sits alongside the El Granero dam in the northern state of Chihuahua. Just 10 per cent of Mexico's dams are now full, with many seeing levels drop below half or lower, according to official data. July was the second hottest month in Mexico since 1953, according to the national weather service, with temperatures reaching 45 degrees Celsius (113 F) last

so much water in the north. There have also been water caps on households in the northern industrial city of Monterrey. The crisis has persisted, and has sparked protests and roadblocks around Monterrey. **'ABANDONED'** Water experts like Rafael Sanchez, who works at the Autonomous University of Chapingo, have been increasingly vocal about the risks to remote farming areas. "In some states, irrigation is practically disappearing due to lack of precipitation," he said last year, noting low reservoirs and reduced water transfers to farms. Chihuahua locals say they



month in some areas. Agricultural towns like Coyame, which do not have access to groundwater and are almost entirely dependent on the region's shrinking dam, have been devastated. The town's cattle have been depleted, harvests disrupted, and fisheries culled, forcing some workers to move to cities. In recent weeks, rainfall from the American monsoon has provided some relief in Chihuahua, but farmers say it is not enough. "Things were good before... but only half of us (fishermen) are left here now," says Jesus Gerardo, who has been fishing in the area for 15 years. "It's not the first time I've seen the dam sink, but never to this level." In mid-July, the Mexican government declared a national emergency, and announced initiatives to prevent companies like Coca Cola and Heineken extracting

need more help, including an economic fund that puts the state of emergency into practice. Gerardo, the fisherman, said pleas for authorities to invest in new pipes to ensure better water storage and transportation from the dam have gone ignored. "The federal government should show more interest in this area, we're totally abandoned," he said. The economic devastation in Coyame could be felt for a long time still, with only 30 per cent of its next harvest planted. Rivers have dried up to reveal cracked beds. Fields that should be teeming are bare. The earth is so dry that young crops are wilting. Surviving cattle are bony, their ribs protruding. Rancher Julio Cesar Arzola says there is one simple answer: "We need rain." — **Reuters**



art & life

Local Scene

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THURSDAY | AUGUST 18 | 2022

Amazon tribe go behind the camera in Nat Geo film ‘The Territory’

WHEN COVID-19 reached Brazil's Amazon, and an indigenous tribe sealed off its borders, director Alex Pritz found an innovative way to finish his documentary — he handed the cameras over to the Uru-eu-wau-wau themselves.

"The Territory," to be released by National Geographic on Friday, follows the plight of some 200 hunter-gatherers who live in a protected area of rainforest, surrounded and encroached upon by aggressive and illegal settlers, farmers and loggers.

While shown in the movie dressed in traditional garb and honouring ancient customs, the Uru-eu-wau-wau and their young leader Bitate — the film's main subject — were more than happy to use modern technology to fight back.

"When Covid happened, Bitate made the really bold decision to say 'Okay, no more journalists coming into our territory, no more film-makers, no more Alex, no more documentary crew, nobody,'" said Pritz.

"We had to have a conversation with him like, 'Okay, are we done with the film? Do we have everything we need? Is there more? Should we start editing?'"

"Bitate was really clear: 'No, we're not done. We still have a lot left to do. You guys weren't done before, why should you be done now?'"

"Just send us better cameras, send us audio equipment, and we'll shoot and produce the last part of the movie."

The result was a "co-production model" in which an Uru-eu-wau-wau film-maker is credited as cinematographer, and the community more broadly

acted as producers with a share of profits and a say in business decisions about the film's distribution.

Besides enabling filming to continue into the pandemic, Pritz believes the decision to provide equipment and training directly to the Uru-eu-wau-wau benefited the film by adding a "firsthand perspective" on the group's activities, which include patrolling the land to arrest interlopers.

"I shot a bunch of surveillance missions myself. None of them made the cut!" said Pritz.

"Not because we wanted to transfer the film-making... it was more raw, it was more urgent."

DIGITAL CHILDREN

Even before Pritz's crew arrived, the Uru-eu-wau-wau had become adept at using the power of modern technology and media to champion their cause, positioning themselves on the global stage as guardians of a forest whose survival is bound up in issues of climate change and biodiversity.

"Bitate and this younger generation within the Uru-eu-wau-wau are digital children. He's born in the late 90s. He's on Instagram. And that's part of how he engages with the world," said Pritz.

When drones capturing stunning and harrowing footage of vast deforestation appear early in the documentary, many audiences assume they belong to the film-makers, said Pritz. But in fact, the flying cameras were bought and are operated by the Uru-eu-wau-wau themselves.

"Whereas it would have taken four days to walk over a mountain range of thick, dense, old-growth rainforest... with the drone, you're there in 30 minutes, you have images tagged with metadata," said Pritz.

"People can't argue with that."

It is a stark contrast to the farmers and settlers, who are also central subjects of the film.

In astonishing footage, the documentary follows one group as they brazenly chain-saw and set ablaze protected forest, illegally clearing space for roads to territory they one day wish to settle and claim as their own.

Access was possible because many settlers see themselves as heroic pioneers, speaking in interviews to Pritz about opening up the rainforest for the good of their nation — a heady mix of "Wild West" cowboy culture borrowed from American movies, and nationalist propaganda stoked by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

"The settlers were these naive people who had no understanding of the historical context of their actions, the ecological consequences, what they were doing for the rest of the planet," said Pritz.

For the settlers, many of whom lack education or any other economic opportunities, "it was just about 'me and mine,' 'just this one little plot,' 'if only I can get this.'"

"Whereas Bitate has this expansive outlook. He's thinking about climate change. He's thinking about the planet. He's politically savvy, media-oriented." — AFP

