

# HM PRESIDES OVER PASSING OUT OF OFFICERS AT SANDHURST

**LONDON:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Saturday presided over the passing out of the 222nd Batch of officers at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS), one of whose alumni was HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said.

Upon the arrival of His Majesty the Sultan at the parade grounds in London, he was received by Maj Gen Duncan Capps, Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst.

As His Majesty the Sultan

ascended the dais, the officers of the parade gave the military salute to His Majesty the Sultan. Then, the commander of the parade requested His Majesty the Sultan to inspect the officers' column. His Majesty the Sultan conversed with the officers, sharing their delight at the completion of the training programme and commending their high level of performance and the skills they gained during their stay at the RMAS.

TURN TO P2



Sincere congratulations and blessings  
to His Highness

Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said

The Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth  
on the occasion of his graduation from



The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst  
in the United Kingdom

which was held  
yesterday, Saturday, 23rd July 2022

May Allah grant him  
all success and prosperity

Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said





# SAYYID THEYAZIN GRADUATES FROM SANDHURST MILITARY ACADEMY



## HM presides over passing out of officers at Sandhurst

### FROM PAGE 1

He urged them to keep up the dedicated sentiment and make more accomplishments in all fields in a manner that elevates the prestige of their respective countries.  
Later, His Majesty the Sultan met Omani officers studying at the Royal

Military Academy Sandhurst. He congratulated them at attaining this stage of training and underscored the significance of pursuing the course of learning and hone their scholarly and military skills. He wished the officers success in their future missions.  
On this auspicious

occasion, His Majesty the Sultan presented a memento to the Commandant of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. His Majesty the Sultan accepted a souvenir from Maj Gen Capps for His Majesty's presiding over the passing out of the officers' batch.  
The ceremony was

attended by Her Highness The Honourable Lady, Spouse of His Majesty the Sultan, Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said and the Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom.  
His Majesty the Sultan signed the Visitors' Book, marking the occasion.  
— ONA



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# Belgium Interior Minister visits Shabab Oman II



**ANTWERP:** The Royal Navy of Oman ship “Shabab Oman II” opened its doors to receive visitors, during its docking at the port of Antwerp in the Kingdom of Belgium.

Annelies Verlinde, Federal Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Belgium, a number of ambassadors of brotherly and friendly countries, diplomats residing in the Kingdom of

Belgium, and a number of businessmen visited the ship.

The ship’s captain welcomed the visitors in the presence of Najim bin Sulaiman al Abri, Oman’s ambassador to the Kingdom of Belgium and head of its mission to the European Union. A number of diplomatic staff at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Kingdom of Belgium were

present on the occasion.

The Belgium Minister and the attendees listened to a briefing about the sixth international voyage of the ship “Oman, the Land of Peace”. The minister and visitors were introduced to the facilities on the second Oman Youth Ship and its training programmes and tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman. — ONA



# PLAN TO PLANT 1.5 MILLION MANGROVES



**MUSCAT:** The Environment Authority of Oman launched an action plan to plant 1,500,000 mangrove seeds in Khor Ghawi in the Wilayat of Al Jazir and the Wetland Reserve in the Wilayat of Mahout in the Al Wusta Governorate during the months of July and August of this year, as part of the national initiative to plant 10 million trees.

The authority’s plan is to plant mangroves in the mentioned areas with the aim of enhancing the biodiversity of marine organisms, in addition to its role in reducing the carbon footprint and protecting the lagoons from erosion. The area is also considered a natural habitat for migratory and endemic birds.

Bader al Busaidy, an environmental systems specialist at the Environment Authority,

said that preparations for this work began months ago, and a timetable was set for the implementation of the work of planting 1.5 million mangrove seeds. This month, during the cultivation, the tidal conditions of the target sites will be determined through the approved international sites to determine the exact times of planting.

He added, on July 29, half a million seeds will be planted in Khor Ghawi in the Wilayat of Al Jazir, then a million seeds will be planted from July 31 to August 11 in the area of the Wetland Reserve and Khor Al Hofinat in the reserve, and a distance between each seed is 30 cm. At the rate of 1,000 seeds per 300 metres, the total target area will be 13.5 hectares of the total area of the mentioned sites.





## MoCIIP extends deadline of liquidation package

**MUSCAT:** The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) announced the extension of the package of facilities for commercial companies in all their legal forms wishing to liquidate their commercial records until December 31, 2022.

This is with the aim of facilitating these commercial establishments and correcting their conditions, and encouraging owners of multiple commercial records to liquidate their commercial establishments.

Khalid bin Khamis al Masrouri, Director of the Commercial Establishments Control Department, MoCIIP,

Request for liquidation can be submitted electronically through the electronic portal 'Invest Easy' or through Sanad Service Centres, and attach the required documents

said that "the liquidation or merging of commercial records contributes to addressing the phenomenon of multiple commercial

records, correcting market conditions, improving the business environment and its competitiveness, and supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) development plans."

He further added that a request for liquidation can be submitted electronically through the electronic portal 'Invest Easy' or through Sanad Service Centres, and attach the required documents.

It is noteworthy that the number of companies that benefited from the facilities package that the MoCIIP started operating on June 15, 2021, until the end of May 15, 2022, amounted to 3,607 companies. — ONA

## MoU signed to support charity drive for children with disabilities

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
@lakshmioman

Creating opportunities in life should not be just for able bodies but also for individuals with disabilities.

A memorandum of understanding signed between the Association for Children with Disability and Kempinski Hotel Muscat is aiming at that goal by providing further support toward the welfare of the children.

The collaboration is between Kempinski's BE Health programme, part of the ongoing sustainable and corporate responsibility initiatives, and the Association for Children with Disability. The move also provides an opportunity for guests of the hotel to contribute.

"Our cooperation with the Association for Children with Disability began shortly after the opening of the hotel with activities for children. It has been evolving since then. It started with charity by giving back to the community, but now we are bringing it to the next level and that means our guests have the opportunity to donate directly to the association. We will offer the guest the option to add the donation to the invoice of the hotel and hundred percent of this donation will be passed onto the association," explained General Manager, Carsten Wiegandt.

The previous activities have seen the members of the association and their families attend events for children and functions.

HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, Chairperson of the Association for Children with Disability, said, "the goal of this agreement is to achieve the objectives that the association seeks, and one of our most important goals is to support children with disabilities and help them in all areas of life to enable them to adapt and integrate into their society professionally,



psychologically and socially, to care for the child and provide them with the best advanced services, in order for them to have a decent life."

According to the Sultanate of Oman's E-Census, there are 10,880 children in the country with disabilities.

"These donations would further support the service we provide at the centres of the association for our kids with disabilities. They will also provide us with equipment for the training of the children," she pointed out.

Carsten said it is important to give back to the community that you are in, "Children are the most vulnerable ones so it is very important to support them and also make sure that later on they get an opportunity to grow and learn -- important steps for their future life."

During the Ramadhan the hotel had arranged Qarraqasho for the children from the association and their siblings. Kempinski also conducts training programmes for children who are studying in

schools practicing inclusiveness.

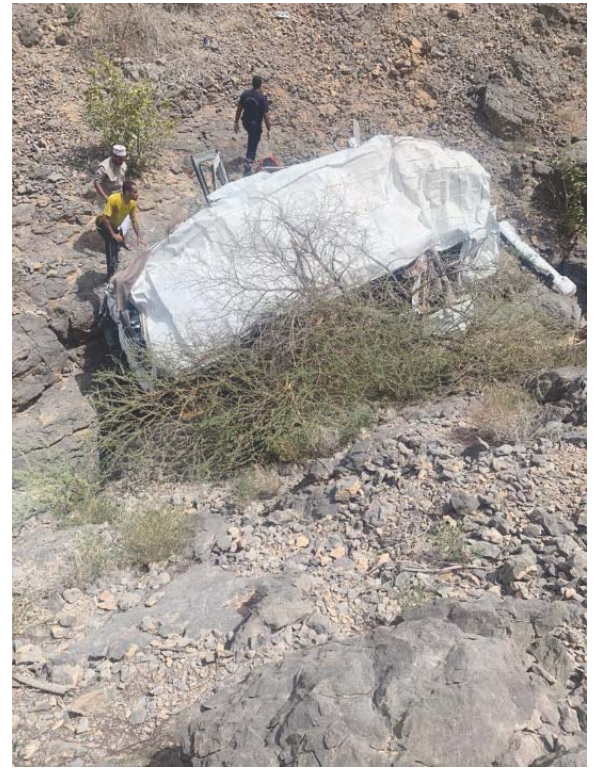
"It is something we strongly believe in. We have not only begun to support children in their younger age, but later on when they become young adults, we also create opportunities such as training, so that later they can participate in the professional life. The support is not just all about fun, but it is also about development and creation of further opportunities," the General Manager explained.

The fields of training will depend on the skills each individual has gained.

"Coming from Europe, I have seen that almost every position can be fulfilled by almost every person. It depends on capabilities and training."

To the question whether the young adults with disability will be able to achieve employability, he said, "I think it is very important to take this step because it has been successfully done already in other countries. We are now trying to move forward to establish it here also."

## Five dead, 14 injured in Al Hamra bus accident



KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

Five people died and 14 others injured when a bus they were travelling in crashed in the wee hours of Saturday.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) said "five people have died and 14 others sustained moderate to serious injuries when a bus carrying 19 passengers met with an accident in Al Jabal Al Sharqi in the Wilayat of Al Hamra in Al

Dakhiliyah Governorate."

The five deceased have been identified as orphans. Members of youth hostels and the Childhood Care Centre were part of the trip sponsored by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD).

All the 19 members onboard were on a weekend trip to the Al Jabal Al Sharqi and were scheduled to return by evening in the same day.

"With profound grief, we, at the Ministry of Social Development,

would like to confirm the sad news about the traffic accident in Al Jabal Al Sharqi in the Wilayat of Al Hamra , which was carrying 19 members, which resulted in the death of 5 people and the injury of 14 others with moderate to serious injuries," a statement from the Ministry of Social Development said.

It further said that the Ministry is closely following up with the concerned authorities the details of the accident.



OCEANIC SHRIMP  
AQUACULTURE  
روبيان المحيط  
الإستزراع السمكي



شركة تنمية أسماك عمان ش.م.ع.  
Fisheries Development Oman S.A.O.C

### Tender Announcement

Oceanic Shrimp Aquaculture company, one of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) subsidiaries, would like to invite qualified local and international companies to participate in the following tender:

| Reference   | Tender                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Fees (OMR) | Deadline       |
|-------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| OSA/01/2022 | Procurement, Construction, Testing, and Commissioning of 11KV feeder lines from the Tanweer Power Plant at Khuweymah (Jalan Bani Bu Ali) to Shrimp Farm Project Sites at Khuweymah and Qurun. In addition to Internal HT distribution networks within the project sites. | 100 OMR    | 15 August 2022 |

- Bidder Qualification: DCRP approval grade C or above
- Tender Submission: in a sealed envelope addressing the Procurement Department, Oceanic Shrimp Aquaculture (5th Floor, Minarat Al Qurum Building, Qurum, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman) or via E-mail to: [tender@oceanic.om](mailto:tender@oceanic.om)
- Clarifications will be received between 24 July – 10 August 2022 via E-mail to: [roy@oceanic.om](mailto:roy@oceanic.om) (Please mention the Tender Reference in the email subject)



# WHO triggers highest alert on monkeypox

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Saturday declared the monkeypox outbreak, which has affected nearly 16,000 people in 72 countries, to be a global health emergency -- the highest alarm it can sound.

"I have decided that the global #monkeypox outbreak represents a public health emergency of international concern," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a press conference. He said a committee of experts who met on Thursday was unable to reach a consensus, so it fell on him to

decide whether to trigger the highest alert possible.

"WHO's assessment is that the risk of monkeypox is moderate globally and in all regions, except in the European region where we assess the risk as high," he added.

On June 23, the WHO convened an emergency committee (EC) of experts to decide if monkeypox constitutes a so-called Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) -- the UN health agency's highest alert level.

A US health expert sounded a grim warning late on Friday.

— AFP

# Russian missiles hit Ukraine port, putting landmark grain deal at risk

KYIV: Russian missiles hit Ukraine's southern port of Odesa on Saturday, the Ukrainian military said, threatening a landmark deal signed just the day before to unblock grain exports from Black Sea ports and ease global food shortages caused by the war.

The deal signed on Friday by Moscow and Kyiv and mediated by the United Nations and Turkey was hailed as a breakthrough after nearly five months of punishing fighting since Russia invaded its neighbour. It is seen as crucial to curbing soaring global food prices by allowing grain exports to be shipped from Black Sea ports including Odesa.

UN officials had said on Friday they hoped the agreement would be operational in a few weeks but it was not yet clear if that would still be possible given Saturday's strikes.

Two Russian Kalibr missiles hit infrastructure at the Odesa port, while another two were shot down by air defence forces, Ukraine's Operational Command South wrote on the Telegram messaging app. "In the context of what is currently happening with Ukrainian grain, the strike was carried out exactly where the grain is," said Yuriy Ignat, spokesperson for the Ukrainian air force.

The cruise missiles were fired from warships in the Black Sea near Crimea, he added.

A Russian defence ministry statement on Saturday outlining progress in the war did not mention any strike in Odesa. The ministry did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

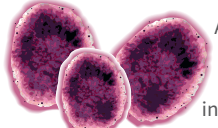
The strike appeared to violate



Police experts inspect a crater caused by a shell explosion outside the National University of Urban Economy in Kharkiv on Saturday. — AFP

## Monkeypox

According to the WHO the unexpected appearance and wide geographic spread of cases suggest that the virus might have been circulating for while undetected by surveillance systems



A member of the *Orthopoxvirus* genus which includes smallpox

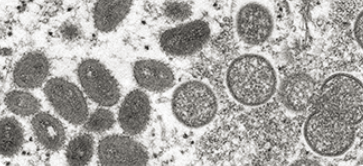
### Origins

First identified in humans in 1958 in DR Congo

Most historic cases reported from rainforest regions of the Congo Basin



Mostly transmitted to people from wild animals such as rodents and primates



Person-to-person transmission possible by contact with lesions "body fluids" respiratory droplets and contaminated materials

Not considered to be highly contagious between people

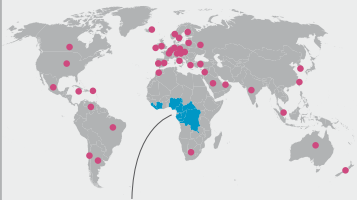
### Current outbreaks

As of July 21

- Around " " confirmed cases reported to WHO
- In " " countries across " WHO regions

WHO removed the distinction between endemic and non-endemic countries on June " "

- Previously non-endemic countries with confirmed cases



Previously considered endemic

UNAIDS said "a significant proportion" of recent monkeypox cases has been identified among gay "bisexual and other men who have sex with men

But transmission is most likely via close physical contact and could affect anyone

Handout photo: Cynthia S. Goldsmith/ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Source: ECDC/WHO/UN



# Ex-Trump aide Bannon found guilty of contempt of Congress

WASHINGTON: A federal jury found Donald Trump's former aide Steve Bannon guilty of contempt of Congress on Friday for defying a subpoena to testify before lawmakers investigating the assault on the US Capitol.

Bannon, who led Trump's 2016 presidential election campaign, was among hundreds of people called by a House of Representatives committee to address the storming of Congress by Trump supporters on January 6, 2021.

The 68-year-old Republican strategist did not appear on the summons date or provide requested documents, and was

indicted on two charges of contempt of Congress.

The 12-person jury deliberated for less than three hours before finding Bannon guilty of both misdemeanor charges.

Bannon, who served as Trump's strategy chief at the White House before being sacked in 2017, faces a minimum of 30 days in jail and a maximum sentence of a year for each count.

Sentencing was set for October 21.

"We may have lost the battle here today but we're not going to lose this war," Bannon said after the verdict. "I stand with Trump



Former US President Donald Trump's White House chief strategist Steve Bannon speaks as he departs after he was found guilty during his trial on contempt of Congress charges. — Reuters

and the Constitution."

Later, in an interview with Fox News, the former investment banker said there would be "a long appeals process" ahead.

"If I go to jail, so be it," Bannon said.

Bennie Thompson and Liz Cheney, the chair and vice chair of the House committee, welcomed the verdict, saying "no one is above the law."

"The conviction of Steve Bannon is a victory for the rule of law and an important affirmation of the Select Committee's work," they said in a statement.

"Just as there must be

accountability for all those responsible for the events of January 6th, anyone who obstructs our investigation into these matters should face consequences."

Presenting the government's case, prosecutor Amanda Vaughn told the jury that Bannon had made a "deliberate decision" not to obey the subpoena. Bannon's attorneys did not call any witnesses during the brief trial and he did not testify in his own defense.

Bannon's lawyer Evan Corcoran denied his client had ignored the subpoena, saying the date was "the subject of ongoing discussions and negotiation" and "flexible." — AFP

## SHORT TAKES

### TEHRAN

#### At least 22 killed in south Iran floods

Flooding in southern Iran has killed at least 22 people and left one person missing following heavy rainfall in the largely arid country, a local official said on Saturday.

Iran has endured repeated droughts over the past decade, but also regular floods, a phenomenon made worse when torrential rain falls on sun-baked earth.

Videos posted on local and social media showed vehicles being carried away by the rising



waters of the Roodball river in the southern province of Fars.

One video showed adults pulling a child from a car as it began to shift downstream.

### BEIJING

#### China says Covid vaccines are safe

China's Covid-19 vaccines are safe and have been given to leaders of the state and ruling Communist Party, officials said on Saturday, as Beijing steps up efforts to allay public concerns about safety that risk hampering its vaccination drive.

"China's state and Party leaders have all been vaccinated against Covid-19 with domestically-made shots," said Zeng Yixin, deputy head of the National Health Commission.

In China, "state and Party



leaders" is a specific category of top officials at the national and deputy national level that would include President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang.

### KOLKATA

#### Minister in India's West Bengal arrested

India's financial-crime investigation agency arrested a West Bengal government minister on Saturday for allegedly making money off recruitment for state-run schools, officials said.

Partha Chatterjee, who was education minister in the eastern state for more than five years, was accused of appointing hundreds of teachers and non-teaching staff for money and other forms of bribes, putting them in positions they were not qualified



for or had they paid acquire, said an official of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). Chatterjee, who holds three ministerial posts, was arrested at his home in Kolkata, ED said.

# I feel utterly hopeless about American climate policy



Farhad Manjoo

In a column published in June 2021, I declared the coming year would be a “hinge in history” for American participation in the global effort to address the climate crisis. Having won the White House and control of the House and the Senate, Democrats had cracked open a rare window of political opportunity — their first chance since 2010 to pass major federal legislation to reduce our carbon emissions.

But the window wasn’t very big, and it wouldn’t stay open long. President Joe Biden had proposed setting a target of 2030 for the United States to cut carbon emissions to half of 2005 levels. He’d outlined hundreds of billions of dollars of investments in clean energy, public transit, electric vehicle infrastructure, severe weather preparedness and climate-related research and development. Now, in the face of united Republican opposition, and with midterm politicking rapidly approaching, could Democrats seize what I called “the country’s last best political opportunity” to address climate change and pass Biden’s plan?

Well, a year has passed, and the answer is in: Nope.

When Sen. Joe Manchin pulled his support last week for even a significantly scaled-down version of Biden’s climate plan, America’s great window of opportunity all but slammed shut. Manchin’s decision was no surprise — he has been stringing his party along for more than a year — but for me it still packed a wallop.

Was I thrown into a spiral of despair about the incapacity of our political system to take on urgent issues? Was I left feeling hopeless about the world’s efforts to avoid climate scientists’ worst-case scenarios? Did I wonder more than once what even was the point of Democrats running the show if they could not secure this plan? Yeah, maybe just a little.

It is difficult to overstate the case for a huge federal effort on climate change. It’s popular — most Americans think Congress should address the causes and effects of climate change. And because there are new disasters brought about by a warming planet seemingly every week now, the issue will only grow more urgent. (About 100 million Americans are sweating through severe heat this week.)

Biden’s plan also made economic sense: Regardless of whether America participates, a global transition to renewable fuels is already underway. China leads the United States (and the rest of the world) in growth in renewable power generation capacity and in solar panel manufacturing; because the Chinese government is investing heavily in renewables while we are not, we risk falling further behind in industries that will dominate the future.

It has also rarely been clearer that our dependence on fossil fuels is doing us no national security favours. Biden was in Saudi Arabia last week when he conceded defeat on the climate bill. He was there to ask one petromonarch for



more oil because another petromonarch is using his fossil fuel profits to finance an invasion of a sovereign neighbour. But despite an embarrassing fist bump with the Saudi crown prince, whose country Biden once aimed to sideline as a global “pariah,” the president hasn’t yet secured any guarantees for more oil. That may change at an upcoming meeting of the OPEC+ oil cartel — but shouldn’t we be striving for a future in which we wouldn’t have to bend to such characters because they happen to sit on a lot of dead plants and animals?

It’s precisely the strength of the case for federal climate action that has left me feeling so down. Democrats seem headed toward losing their congressional majorities in the midterms, and Biden’s approval ratings are abysmal. It is difficult to imagine the party will get another shot at taking major climate action anytime soon. What will become of climate change as a political issue if Democrats are out in the political wilderness? Are we doomed to another decade of inaction?

Climate experts told me not to abandon all hope. Alex Trembath, the deputy director of the Breakthrough Institute, an environmental research group, took issue last year with my characterisation of Biden’s plan as a do-or-die moment for the American climate movement.

“There isn’t a 12-year deadline or a one-year deadline,” Trembath told me this week. He argued that advocacy that leans on such deadlines is bound to provoke nihilism, and that a better way to talk about climate change is as a long-

term issue that we will have to keep dealing with for as long as we live.

Trembath also pointed out that some of the most effective U.S. environmental regulations were passed “quietly” — that is, they were small, boring-seeming rule changes and tax credits hidden in bigger legislation. Rather than pushing for a sweeping climate bill, perhaps Democrats can now aim for passing many such small measures in future legislation.

There is also executive action. On Wednesday, Biden announced several steps that his administration would be taking on the climate — for instance, he’ll direct the Interior Department to allow the installation of offshore wind farms in the Gulf of Mexico.

I don’t want to dismiss these efforts out of hand. “With climate change, everything we do matters,” said Leah Stokes, a political scientist at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who studies environmental politics. “Every ton of carbon pollution we can cut is a good thing.”

But even though Stokes is pushing for strong executive action, she was careful to note the limits of this strategy. By pouring hundreds of billions of dollars into renewable fuels and infrastructure, Biden’s legislative plan would have accelerated the creation of a clean-energy economy in the United States. Regulation, on the other hand, might curb the worst excesses of the fossil fuel economy, but it would do little to build something new. “We shouldn’t fool ourselves,” Stokes said. “It’s not as powerful as investments in Congress.”

# What’s the matter with Italy plagued by political crisis?



Paul Krugman

As president of the European Central Bank, Mario Draghi saved the euro. In my estimation, this makes him history’s greatest central banker, outranking even former Fed chairs Paul Volcker, who brought inflation under control, and Ben Bernanke, who helped avert a second

Great Depression. In a way, then, it wasn’t surprising that last year, Draghi was brought in to lead Italy’s new coalition government — often labelled “technocratic,” but actually more a government of national unity created to deal with the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. In a properly functioning democracy, nobody should be indispensable, but Draghi arguably was, as the only person with the prestige to hold things together.

But even he couldn’t pull it off. Facing what amounted to sabotage by his coalition partners, Draghi simply resigned, creating fears that the coming election will put anti-democratic right-wing populists in power.

I have no idea what will happen. Italy, like any nation, is unique in many ways, but not in some of the ways many people imagine. No, it isn’t fiscally irresponsible. No, it’s not incapable of running its internal affairs. And the threat of a takeover by the authoritarian right is hardly special to Italy; if you

aren’t terrified by that prospect here in America, you haven’t been paying attention.

True, Italy does have a problem with economic stagnation. Even before the pandemic struck, Italy was noteworthy in having experienced two decades without growth in real gross domestic product per capita. That stagnation is important and a major economic puzzle. But it doesn’t seem central to current events.

In other ways, Italy seems surprisingly functional given its reputation. Notably, it did a far better job than the United States in getting its population vaccinated. And while Americans on average have higher incomes than Italians, we’re also far more likely to die younger.

What about Italy’s reputation for fiscal irresponsibility? There was a time when that notoriety was justified, and past imprudence left Italy with relatively high debt (although not relative to some other European nations, Japan, or Britain for much of the 20th century.) But in recent years, Italy has been quite disciplined in its spending.

Consider the primary fiscal balance — tax receipts minus government outlays other than interest payments. Until the pandemic struck, Italy actually ran consistent primary surpluses, a bit bigger than the rest of Europe as a share of GDP, and in sharp contrast to US deficits.

In 2010-12, Italy, along with other southern European nations, experienced a debt crisis, with



In a properly functioning democracy, nobody should be indispensable, but Draghi arguably was, as the only person with the prestige to hold things together

“to spread” — the difference between Italian and German interest rates — exploding. But as a handful of analysts — above all, Belgium’s Paul De Grauwe — pointed out, this crisis seemed driven less by fundamental insolvency than by self-fulfilling panic. In effect, investors engaged in a run on the debts of southern European nations, creating a cash shortage that these countries, which didn’t have their own currencies and hence couldn’t print more money, were unable to resolve.

That’s where Draghi came in. In July 2012, as ECB chair, he said three words — “whatever it takes” — that were taken as a promise that the bank would supply cash as needed to countries in crisis. And the mere promise was enough. Spreads plunged, and the crisis went away.

Now, however, the spread is back. Not at 2012 levels so far; as of this morning, 10-year Italian bonds were yielding “only” 2.3 percentage points more than German. But this time, Italy’s crisis may well prove more intractable than the euro crisis of the early 2010s.

Why? It’s true that the ECB is, in effect, trying once again to pull a Draghi: It has introduced a new bond purchase scheme that is supposed to prevent the kind of market fragmentation that almost killed the euro a decade ago. But while Christine Lagarde, the current ECB president, is smart and impressive, it’s unclear whether one can pull a Draghi without Draghi himself.

# Are you a perfectionist?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi @alsinawi

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

According to the English dictionary, a perfectionist is a person who ‘wants everything to be perfect and demands the highest standards possible.’ While most people associate perfectionists with high success, in reality perfectionists stress more and achieve less than the rest of us.

A perfectionist is always motivated to produce high quality work and expect those around them to be of the same standards. They are also highly critical of themselves and fear being criticised by others. They worry about things going wrong and keep thinking ‘what if?’

This mindset causes several problems to the person and the whole team. A leader with a perfectionist personality style finds it difficult to trust other team members so he or she tends to do everything on his or her own and

avoid delegating responsibilities to others which prevent others from gaining skills and experience.

According to psychologists most perfectionists have fear and insecurity. They worry if they let go of their meticulous attitude their performance and standards would be affected. Perfectionism in itself is not classified as mental illness but it is linked to high risk of developing anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

From a psychological perspective, perfectionists tend to have what is known as a ‘fixed mindsets’ which means they believe people are born with natural talents and abilities as a result they set exceedingly high standards and strive to avoid failure at all costs.

If a perfectionist experiences failure his or her self-esteem will be affected and would end up blaming

A PERFECTIONIST IS MOTIVATED TO PRODUCE HIGH QUALITY WORK ALL THE TIME AND EXPECT OTHER TEAM MEMBERS TO DO THE SAME WHICH CAN CREATE STRESS AND PRESSURE ON OTHER TEAM MEMBERS’

themselves for a long time. On the other hand, non-perfectionist have ‘growth mindsets’ so they believe in their ability to learn and grow over time. They consider failure as an opportunity to gain new experience and it does not affect their self-esteem.

So how can a perfectionist manage this problem? The first step is to acknowledge your trait and reflect on your thought patterns and behaviour. You also need to

accept the fact that life is full of uncertainties. Focus your energy and thoughts on what you can control.

Avoid fixating on the negative aspects of your work and behaviour and recognise the good parts. Make a list of the three things you appreciate about yourself. Allow yourself to make mistakes, this will provide you a chance to learn and grow and make you realise that it’s not the end of the world. Enjoy every part of what you do and don’t obsess about the end results.

Most perfectionists set hinge objectives that may be difficult to achieve in the allocated time therefore one way to avoid this is to set realistic and smart objectives for yourself and for your team. This will make you less stressed and frustrated when things don’t go your way

Avoid taking criticism personally

after all it is someone’s opinions about your work not your personality. Remember that health criticism allows you to identify gaps in your work so you can fix them.

Be kind to yourself and try to lower your unrealistic standards. Do not be harsh on yourself and accept that you are doing your best. Sometimes social media can promote perfectionism through its different platforms, be it YouTube channels, podcasts, books and movies which link success to perfectionism. If you find such social media overwhelming you need to cut down the amount of time you spend watching them or delete them altogether.

Some people need professional help from mental health professionals to help them understand the roots of the perfectionist way of life and how to overcome it.

## Italy’s famous Po Valley rice paddies decimated by drought

BRIGITTE HAGEMANN

The roar of Dario Vicini’s motorcycle cuts through the silence as he drives across his rice paddy to survey the destruction wrought by Italy’s worst drought in 70 years. His fields are nothing but desolation, with rice stems slowly dying in the sandy ground.

“Under normal circumstances, I would never have been able to ride my motorcycle over the field,” Vicini explained.

“At this time of year, the plants would be up to my knees and the rice field would be flooded,” he said.

“Here, they’re tiny, because the water needed to irrigate them has never arrived.”

Vicini’s “Stella” farm, located in the village of Zeme in the Po Valley, 70 kilometres southwest of Milan, is part of Italy’s “golden triangle” of rice paddies.

Europe’s leading rice-growing region — which supplies Italy and the world with the country’s famous arborio for risotto and many other varieties — stretches west from Pavia in Lombardy to Vercelli and Novara in Piedmont.

Vicini said the area’s last “decent rain” came in December.

“It’s the fault of climate change,” said the 58-year-old farmer, who estimates his income has fallen by 80 to 90 per cent.

Enrico Sedino, another farmer in the area, is even more worried.

“If there’s no more water, I can lose up to 100 per cent of my turnover,” he said.

Around the rice paddies, cracks are visible in the parched earth and the feeble, stunted rice shoots are covered with a thin layer of dust.

The small irrigation canals that run alongside the fields are dry, or nearly so.

The waters of the Po River — Italy’s longest river whose flat drainage basin is the wide, fertile plain perfect for growing rice — are this year at a historically low level not seen since 1952. The water, when it comes, arrives in dribs and drabs.

Zeme Mayor Massimo Saronni, a rice farmer himself for three decades, said that not only is the harvest suffering “but the whole ecosystem is withering away”.

Before, the rice paddies resounded with the song of crickets and the croaking of frogs, while clouds of dragonflies flittered above the fields. Freshwater birds like grey herons and white ibises fed on insects.

Now, “being in the countryside with such a heavy silence, it’s depressing, you feel like you’re on the moon!” he said.

Vicini’s 50 hectares are irrigated through the Cavour Canal, which carries the waters of the Po, while other rice paddies in the Pavia region are fed by Lake Maggiore or Lake Como. — AFP

# The race to succeed Johnson, explained

PETER ROBINS AND STEPHEN CASTLE

Britain is scheduled to have a new prime minister by early September, less than three years since the incumbent, Boris Johnson, led his Conservative Party to its biggest election victory in decades.

There are two contenders: Johnson’s former top finance official, Rishi Sunak, and Liz Truss, the foreign secretary.

But it will not be a general election that decides who gets the job. Instead, the selection process is playing out inside the Conservative Party.

Here is a guide to how it works, who could win and what might happen next.

In Britain’s parliamentary system, the leader of the majority party is in charge.

It is hard to get rid of a British prime minister but far from impossible. The job goes to the leader of the political party with a parliamentary majority. The party can oust its leader and choose another one, changing prime ministers without a general election.

Three of Britain’s last four prime ministers, including Johnson, came into office between elections. The new prime minister may then choose to face the voters — in 2019, Johnson did so within months — but there is no obligation to call a new general election until five years after the last one.

Boris Johnson’s party forced him to step down, with a shove from a potential replacement.

Johnson’s position started to weaken late last year, with a series of scandals involving parties during Britain’s coronavirus lockdown that eventually brought him a fine and a stinging official report. In June, he survived a no-confidence vote among his party’s lawmakers.

The next month, however, brought a new scandal, with the departure of Chris Pincher, a deputy chief whip, who was responsible for keeping Conservative lawmakers in line. Johnson had placed him in the job despite accusations of inappropriate behaviour. Ministers and other officials denied on Johnson’s behalf that he had been aware of those accusations, only for successive accounts to rapidly unravel.

On the evening of July 5, Sunak resigned, alongside another top minister, Sajid Javid, the health secretary. A flood of further resignations followed, with more than 50 members of Parliament quitting Cabinet roles or other official positions by July 7, including some appointed to replace those who had already resigned.

IN THE FINAL VOTE, SUNAK MAY ALSO SUFFER FROM HIS ASSOCIATION WITH TAX INCREASES AND BRITAIN’S COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS, AS WELL AS HIS PART IN PUSHING OUT JOHNSON, WHO RETAINS A FOLLOWING AMONG PARTY MEMBERS

Later that day, Johnson announced that he would resign, acknowledging in a speech that it was clearly “the will of the parliamentary Conservative Party” that he step aside.

His lawmakers set the terms of the contest to replace him.

When Johnson resigned as leader of his party July 7, he said he would remain as prime minister until the

Conservatives had chosen a new leader. His two most recent predecessors, David Cameron and Theresa May, both took that approach when they resigned.

But the timetable for the leadership contest is not in Johnson’s hands: It is set by backbench Conservative lawmakers through a body called the 1922 Committee.

The broad outlines of the two-stage process remain constant. First, Conservative lawmakers hold a series of ballots among themselves to whittle the number of contenders down to two.

Then there is a ballot on the final choice among the party’s entire dues-paying membership. These are members of the public who pay a standard annual subscription of 25 pounds, about \$30, and it is estimated that there are about 160,000 of them.

Eleven lawmakers sought to run this time, with the final two — who ended up being Sunak and Truss — revealed on Wednesday after five rounds of voting.

Party members will be able to question Sunak and Truss at a series of meetings around Britain over the summer, but the later sessions may matter less; voting, by post and online, opens in early August.

The result is then due September 5. That would give the new prime minister time to prepare for a major televised speech at the Conservative Party’s annual conference in October.

— The New York Times



Conservative leadership candidate Rishi Sunak poses with his supporters after a Conservative Party leadership campaign event in Grantham, Britain. – Reuters

Life’s like a camera, focus on important stuff



Ray Petersen  
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The writer is a media consultant

Good decisions today, could prove to be bad decisions tomorrow... such is the nature of life, the way the world turns, and the changing face of our societies, and from that perspective, I must support the recent decision to add more professions to the list of those for which work permits may be issued to expatriates. There has been the usual kerfuffle on social media from those who have been ‘offended’ by such announcements, this week, and in the past, and I think some of that may be due to the unwitting (surely) and antagonistic nature of the word ‘banned’ in the media announcements. It’s a word that just immediately gets peoples ‘backs up.’ We know we should let it go... but I digress.

The reality is that the Sultanate of Oman’s priority must be employment for Omanis, and this move is a sensible, and sensitive way to develop a workplace sector of society that is Omani, not expatriate, based. Young Omanis must have genuine employment opportunities, especially the graduates, and this is the one sure way to get them, so let’s just accept it, and let this in many ways very youthful nation, move forward. We cannot compare the needs of the Sultanate of Oman 20 or even 10 years ago, with those of today can we?

I know it’s a bit harsh, but I don’t see that Oman has any obligation to other nations, to provide employment opportunities. Certainly, it’s a very different ‘kettle of fish,’ as they say, if Omanis for whatever reason cannot fill vacancies, but the reality is that the circumstances under which expatriates may be employed should be those both obvious and justifiable.

WHETHER FOR A LITTLE WHILE OR A LONG TIME, YOU HAVE BEEN PRIVILEGED TO BE HERE, UNDER THE SUN, ENJOYING THE DIVERSITY OF A COUNTRY YOU HAVE EMBRACED. LEARNING HUMILITY FROM A PEOPLE YOU HAVE GROWN TO LOVE, AND LIVING A LIFESTYLE THAT REALLY, YOU COULD ONLY HAVE IMAGINED IN YOUR WILDEST DREAMS.

For example, highly skilled professions where not only skills, but significant experience are paramount. Among these, off the top of my head, I can think of specialists within the healthcare and medical sector, where experienced surgeons, physicians, consultants, and nurses have mentoring roles that support professional development.

A special case too must be made for those in the teaching and lecturing sphere of the education sector, as while I have no doubts at all of the educational qualities of graduate Omani teachers, it is the resounding effect of mentors and guidance, observations and professional development, that ‘round out’ a graduate teacher towards maximising their teacher-ability, so, maybe for a wee bit longer, let the expatriate ‘experience,’ guide that continued education sector development.

The English language teaching and learning too, still requires ‘Native English Speakers,’ to be at the forefront of that specific educational sector, as the medical, legal, academic, diplomatic, and cross-linguistic business fraternities specifically require ‘absolute’ accuracy of communication and understanding. Pidgin English may get one by elsewhere, but not there.

The same applies too, I’m sure, in many other professions where the Sultanate of Oman has some presence at the top of the profession, but not sufficient leadership and management experience to ‘remove the training wheels,’ just yet. I do understand that some expatriates may feel discomfited by this week’s announcements, but it is not as if anyone is going to be ‘kicked out’ of their jobs, is it? ‘Keep calm,’ you’ll figure it out!

Look at it another way... Whether for a little while or a long time, you have been privileged to be here, under the Sun, enjoying the diversity of a country you have embraced. Learning humility from a people you have grown to love, and living a lifestyle that really, you could only have imagined in your wildest dreams. Wherever you go next will never be the same, probably never be as good, but it will be different.

While we may have made our homes in the Sultanate of Oman, it is not our ‘home’ and we must be both mature about the situation of this nation and its people, and we owe it to this gentle nation, this Jewel of the Gulf, to offer our understanding and support in their march towards prosperity.



PRIDE OF LANKA

Military personnel in ceremonial uniform lower the Sri Lanka national flag at Galle Face Green in Colombo on Saturday.

A diaspora is a terrible thing to waste



Kent Harrington

The author, a former senior CIA analyst, served as national intelligence officer for East Asia, chief of station in Asia, and the CIA’s director of public affairs.

There have been diasporas ever since the Old Testament, and, leaving aside their tragic nature, no two mass exoduses have been alike. In the twentieth century, the world witnessed Jews escaping from pogroms, the Bolshevik revolution, and then Hitler; African-Americans migrating en masse out of the Jim Crow South; and Vietnamese fleeing a war-torn country. In this century, Syrians, Iraqis, and Afghans have fled failed liberations and brutal sectarian wars; Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans have been walking away from poverty and violence; and, now, millions of newly arrived Ukrainians in Europe and elsewhere are wondering when or even if they will ever go home.

For some countries, diasporas also are not new. Just ask the Russians. For three-quarters of a century, Stalin’s NKVD and its successor, the KGB, kept close tabs on expatriate Russians, constantly worrying about the threat they might pose. And now, Russian President Vladimir Putin’s security service, the FSB, is continuing the tradition. According to recent FSB estimates, almost four million Russians left the country in the first three months of this year.

Obviously, FSB statistics are hard to verify. But the sheer magnitude of this year’s departures is striking. Compared to the first quarter of 2021, Russian arrivals in Georgia and Tajikistan increased fivefold, and they grew fourfold in Estonia, threefold in Armenia and Uzbekistan, and twofold in Kazakhstan. Moreover, Latvia and Lithuania together took in some 74,000 Russians, and popular tourist spots like Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey welcomed just under a million. Nearly 750,000 people crossed into the Georgian region of Abkhazia, one of Putin’s vassal territories.

While some of these traveling Russians doubtless returned home, the total number of departures in the first quarter is remarkable. It represents nearly 2 per cent of the country’s population, and that doesn’t even count the Russians who have left for Europe or other parts of the world.

The FSB isn’t tracking these departures just to pass the time. From the October Revolution to the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian diasporas were flies in the ointment of the worker’s paradise. While Russians had already started to flee in the wake of the failed 1905 revolution, these numbers surged when the Bolsheviks took power in 1917 and during the subsequent civil war. “Little Moscows” cropped up across Europe.

This history was repeated in the 1990s, but with a twist. Not only did the collapse of the Soviet Union leave 30 million ethnic Russians outside Russia’s borders (primarily in the Baltics, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine), but several million more emigrated to Europe, Asia, and North

America, producing the second major diaspora in the space of a hundred years.

Do such large expatriate communities really matter? That depends on your point of view. In the 1920s, exiled Russian monarchists, rightists, and assorted military veterans – the losers in the five-year-long civil war – continued to conspire against the Bolshevik regime. But they continued to embody all the divisiveness that had led to their earlier defeat. Likewise, in 2011, the German historian Karl Schlögel argued that

WHILE SOME OF THESE TRAVELLING RUSSIANS DOUBTLESS RETURNED HOME, THE TOTAL NUMBER OF DEPARTURES IN THE FIRST QUARTER IS REMARKABLE. IT REPRESENTS NEARLY 2 PER CENT OF THE COUNTRY’S POPULATION, AND THAT DOESN’T EVEN COUNT THE RUSSIANS WHO HAVE LEFT FOR EUROPE OR OTHER PARTS OF THE WORLD.

today’s Russian exiles lack the political structures to organise, and thus have little potential to effect change in their home country.

But Schlögel also identified an important difference between the émigrés and refugees of the 1920s and Russia’s twenty-first-century expatriates: today’s diaspora includes the most dynamic and entrepreneurial elements of Russian society, from business managers and information-technology specialists to scientists and artists. Their flight abroad represents a major brain drain.

Igor Zubov, Putin’s deputy interior minister, warned of this problem in June, when he asked the Russian parliament to allow more foreign IT workers to enter

the country. In his testimony, he revealed that Russia was short some 170,000 IT workers, contradicting official claims that most of those who left had already returned home. The Russian Association for Electronic Communications has painted a similar picture. Industry insiders forecast that 10 per cent of Russian IT workers may leave in 2022.

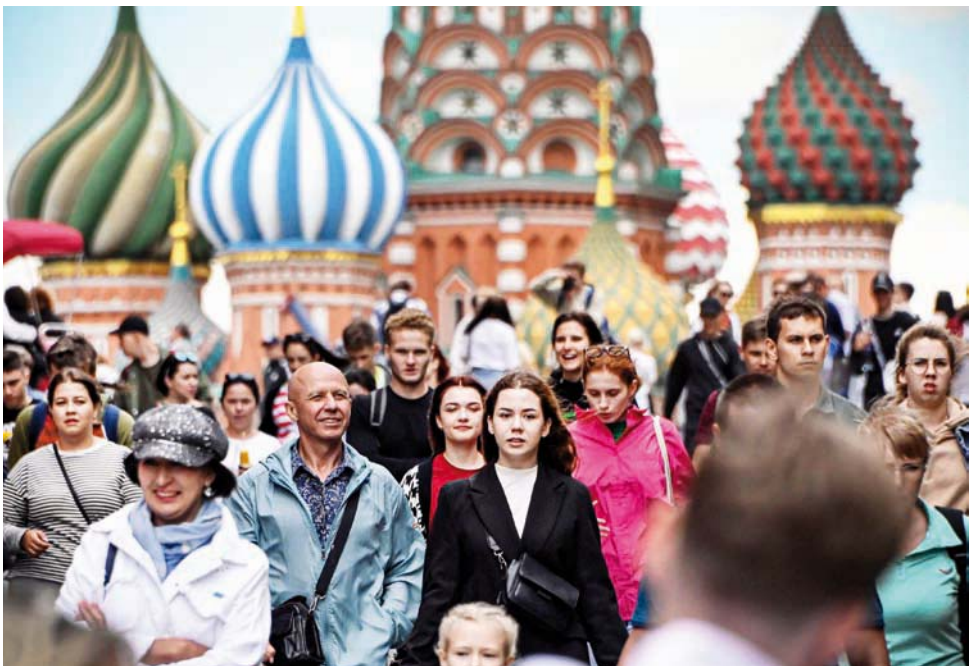
It’s not just techies. As in the 1920s, hundreds of Russian journalists, writers, actors, film-makers, and artists have also fled abroad, often resuming the same work in their countries of refuge. Investors and entrepreneurs, too, are leaving. Henley & Partners, a British firm that brokers citizenship deals for wealthy clients seeking to change their nationality, reports that 15,000 millionaires are expected to leave Russia in 2022.

Most will try to domicile in Malta, Mauritius, or Monaco, where inviting beaches and lax tax laws welcome immigrants who come with cash.

Whether skilled professionals and Cristal guzzlers are leaving because of their opposition to Putin or for personal economic reasons, what matters is that they are depriving Russia of critical talent and capital. That is why the Biden administration has proposed legislation to loosen visa requirements for Russian IT workers and scientists with advanced degrees. And other countries and companies are making similar efforts to harness the benefits of the new Russian diaspora.

But these efforts will yield mostly private economic and financial gains, while the political potential of the diaspora remains untapped. If Western countries want to support Ukraine and confront Russian aggression, they ought to be doing more to bring together Russia’s expatriate intellectual and financial capital, forming a real community abroad that can communicate with, and potentially influence, Russians back home.

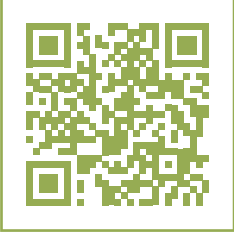
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People walk along Red Square in central Moscow in front of St Basil’s Cathedral. – AFP

# sport

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## Ronaldo in limbo as Europe’s elite turn their backs on Man Utd star



**LONDON:** Cristiano Ronaldo faces an uncertain future after the Manchester United striker's attempt to force his way out of Old Trafford failed to spark the expected rush for his signature. The Portugal superstar shocked United earlier this month with his bombshell exit request after the team's failure to qualify for the Champions League. Ronaldo would have anticipated a host of top clubs jostling to sign him. But for the first time in his glittering career he is no longer a must-have item for Europe's wealthy elite as Chelsea, Bayern Munich, Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain all appear to have turned their

backs on the forward. Concerns over Ronaldo's declining work-rate and his notoriously demanding personality have left the 37-year-old in limbo. Chelsea co-owner Todd Boehly was reported to have spoken to Ronaldo's agent Jorge Mendes about a deal to mark the new era at Stamford Bridge. But Blues boss Thomas Tuchel is believed to have concerns about trying to integrate Ronaldo into his plans for a fluid front three after signing Raheem Sterling from Manchester City. "We focused on our top target Raheem Sterling who we signed and everything else stays behind closed doors,"

Tuchel said when asked about Ronaldo. Selling Robert Lewandowski to Barcelona could have created space for Ronaldo at Bayern, but the German champions' CEO Oliver Kahn poured cold water on that idea. "As highly as I rate Cristiano Ronaldo as one of the greatest, a transfer wouldn't be a fit with our philosophy," he said. "I love Cristiano Ronaldo and everyone knows how fantastic he is. But every club has a certain philosophy and I'm not sure if it would be the right thing for Bayern and the Bundesliga if we signed him now." United manager Erik ten Hag has repeatedly stated

the club's public position that Ronaldo is "not for sale". Yet, although Ronaldo finished as United's top scorer last season, there is a growing sense in Manchester that his departure could benefit Ten Hag's chances of building a side more suited to the style he created at Ajax. United have flourished without Ronaldo on a pre-season tour of Asia and Australia, scoring 11 goals in victories over Liverpool, Melbourne Victory and Crystal Palace. **DWINDLING OPTIONS** A dynamic front three of Marcus Rashford, Anthony Martial and Jadon Sancho has shown what they are capable

of. All three of those players struggled last season after Ronaldo's arrival changed the style of a United side that had finished second in the Premier League the season before. Ronaldo's time at Juventus also coincided with a decline in European results for the Italian giants, despite his goalscoring record of 101 goals in 134 games. After witnessing two European giants struggle to accommodate the ageing five-time Ballon d'Or winner, there are few takers for the veteran goal-scorer. Ronaldo's iconic status at United, established in his trophy-laden first spell with the club, has also lost some of its lustre. — AFP



## Oman Sailing Championship begins today

**MUSCAT:** Due to a period of prolonged heavy rains across the country, the Oman Sailing Championship 2022, originally scheduled to begin in Sur on July 17, has been rescheduled and will now take place on Sunday until Wednesday. Approximately 75 sailors from Oman Sail's sailing schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Marina Bandar Al Rowdha, Al Musannah and Sur will compete for a place in the Oman National Team for international events. Racing will begin on Sunday and over four days, sailors in Optimist, Diam24, ILCA 4, ILCA 6, ILCA 7 and iQFOiL classes, along with athletes from the SailFree programme competing in the RS Venture class for the first time in championship history, will put their training to the test to claim gold, silver, and bronze medals, while impressing coaches from Oman Sail. Said al Araiimi, Sur Sailing School Manager, said, "The recent rains have given us little choice but to delay the start of the championship in the interests of the safety of our sailors and the local community. We still anticipate a high quality event at the Oman Sailing Championship, which gives us an exciting opportunity to gauge the progress of the talented sailors together from our four sailing schools and select the top performers for forthcoming international competition." Organised by Oman Sail and held under the authority of the Oman Maritime Sports Committee, there will be 20 races and no more than five each day in the iQFOiL competition and 12 with a maximum of three in all other classes. The top three sailors in each class will receive prizes and be considered to be part of the Oman National Team for upcoming national, regional and international competition.

## Al Adwani to lead Olympic coaching programme in Qatar

**WALEED AL JAHWARI**  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

Olympic certified lecturer Hisham al Adwani will host the Olympic Values Training Course, which is organised by the Qatar Olympic Academy in Doha on Tuesday. The three-day course targets club coaches, teachers and those interested in the Olympic sports movement. The course program will be led Al Adwani and he will be assisted by Mohammed Omar, Qatar's Al

Khor Club coach and Hasna Abu Haqab from the Qatar Olympic Academy. The course's themes will feature the Olympic movement, the Olympic values education programme, modern strategies for teaching Olympic values, getting to know the three main Olympic values which are friendship, respect and excellence. Moreover, the course will identify the principles of the Olympic movement and their relationship to Olympic values in



terms of concept, meaning and purpose. The training course will highlight the Olympic values and their role in making the Olympic champion, and ways to introduce Olympic values into the curriculum of the physical education lesson according to the different academic levels. During the programme, Al Adwani will address the practical aspect of activities and exercises that instil Olympic values among athletes, as well as presenting

examples of applications of knowledge activities to spread Olympic values and principles to students in the physical education and training session. Oman's certified Olympic lecturer will also present a set of initiatives for some countries such as France, Turkey, Estonia and others on spreading Olympic education. The Olympic Values is one of the programmes supported by the International Olympic Committee.

# Six-day international training of table tennis coaches begins



ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

As many as 13 coaches took part in the Olympic Solidarity Technical Course for Table Tennis Coaches (Level 2) which began at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Saturday. The training course is organised by the Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) in coordination with Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) and Olympic Solidarity. The six-day coaching course, which is presented by the international certified trainer Karima Tella from Algeria, includes theoretical and practical sessions.

The course opening took place

earlier on Saturday in the presence of OTTA officials who welcomed the international trainer and the participants. Later, the lecturer started the agenda of course for day one which witnessed a general briefing on the course contents beside some basic training skills. In the evening session, the participants implemented some training skills like turning and movement during the matches. The forthcoming days will feature a series of theoretical and practical sessions on coaching top performer paddlers; physical preparations for the players ahead of actual training, foot work, analysis of a game; attack and defence fundamentals;

pressurising rivals; technical standard training on backhand and forehand; and many others related sessions. Each day will comprise six hours of training; four hours for theoretical and two hours for practical sessions.

Karima Tella is an approved lecturer from ITTF, world TT governing body, and she is a member of the technical coaching expert committee. She was a former player and coach in different clubs and teams. She is focusing now on delivering an advanced coaching course to different countries.

Mohammed al Jassasi, Board member of OTTA and head of coaching and umpiring

committee, said that OTTA is keen to provide a proper development for all the personnel related to table tennis family including coaches, referees, players and officials. "Coaches are considered as key members in the TT sport as they deliver crucial roles to the players during coaching and official competitions. This training course is designed properly to ensure development of our national and expatriates coaches to grow and lead their respective teams"

Al Jassasi affirmed that OTTA will organise more courses for coaches in the near future to boost the number of qualified trainers in Oman.



## Morocco find tougher World Cup preparations but other African sides wait

**RABAT:** Morocco will take on two South American opponents in friendlies in September in the build-up to the World Cup while Africa's four other Qatar-bound teams are hoping they too can face strong opposition in the run-up to the tournament.

The continent's five representatives for the World Cup in November are due to play Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers in the next international window between September 19-27 — the last opportunity for national teams to get together until one week before the World Cup kicks off in Doha on November 21.

Morocco have a bye after their September opponents Zimbabwe were kicked out of the Cup of Nations qualifiers because of a Fifa ban.

Instead, they will now play two friendlies in Spain, against Chile in Barcelona on September 23 and Paraguay in Seville on September 27, the Morocco Football Federation said on Friday.

But the other African World Cup representatives — Cameroon, Ghana, Senegal and Tunisia — are still committed to Cup of Nations qualifiers in September, which Senegal coach Aliou Cisse has dismissed as too weak.

Senegal play Mozambique, who sit in 118th position in the

latest Fifa rankings; Cameroon take on Namibia (117th), Tunisia meet neighbours Libya (120th) and Ghana are up against Angola (122nd place). All matches are home and away in the group stage of the Cup of Nations preliminaries.

While European countries are tied up in September with Nations League matches, the World Cup-bound African countries could play against Asian, South American or North American opposition in what would be more testing preparations.

Confederation of African Football president Patrice Motsepe said postponing September's Cup of Nations qualifiers was being discussed.

"We want to try and help our teams that are going to Qatar and we now have more space on the calendar now that the Cup of Nations finals have been moved," he told a news conference on Friday.

CAF earlier this month announced the next Cup of Nations finals in the Ivory Coast are to move from mid-2023 to January 2024 because of concern over the rainy season in mid-year in the region. It means they could move the qualifiers to windows in March and June next year and open up September for friendly games.

— Reuters

## Sainz, Magnussen go to back of grid in France

**PARIS:** Ferrari's Carlos Sainz and Haas driver Kevin Magnussen will start Sunday's French Formula One Grand Prix at Le Castellet from the back of the grid due to engine penalties.

The governing FIA said before final practice on Saturday that Ferrari and Haas had replaced the internal combustion engine, turbocharger and motor generator units in their cars' power units.

The changes exceed both driver's allocation for the season, triggering automatic penalties.

Sainz, the winner in Britain this month and fourth in the championship, already had a 10-place penalty after taking part in Friday practice with new control electronics.

The Spaniard, fastest on Friday, had been widely expected to drop



Circuit Paul Ricard, Le Castellet, France – July 23, 2022 Ferrari's Carlos Sainz Jr in action during practice. — Reuters

further as a consequence of his car's engine blowing and catching fire in Austria two weeks ago.

"It's always difficult to overtake but he's got the pace, it can be a good race for him," Ferrari team

boss Mattia Binotto told Sky Sports television.

"I think he's focusing on trying to have a good weekend and trying to minimise the disadvantage of having the penalties."

Ferrari are chasing their third successive win this weekend, with Charles Leclerc triumphant in Austria after Sainz's Silverstone success. Haas also use Ferrari engines. — Reuters

## Sweden beat Belgium 1-0 to set up Euro semi with England

**MANCHESTER:** Defender Linda Sembrant fired a stoppage-time winner to give Sweden a hard-fought 1-0 win over Belgium on Friday and set up a Women's Euro 2022 semifinal against hosts England next Tuesday.

Belgium's game plan of containing the Swedes and hitting them on the break looked like it would see them force extra time, but the last of Sweden's 34 attempts on goal was forced home by Sembrant to send the Belgians crashing out.

The Swedes kept Belgium pinned back for most of the first half and should have taken the lead when Stina Blackstenius slotted the ball home in the 25th minute.

However, a VAR review showed that she was just offside when Kosovare Asllani passed her the ball and the goal was chalked off.

The second half was almost identical with the Swedes pouring forward and the Belgium defence standing resolute, and goalkeeper Nicky Evrard pulled off a brilliant reflex save to deny Blackstenius in the 73rd minute.

Despite tiring as the game wore on, Belgium continued to threaten on the break and Sembrant and her defensive colleagues had to be on their toes, and they had no interest in playing another 30 minutes.

"We didn't want extra time," Sembrant told broadcaster SVT.

"We really pressed them in the second half, we wore them down more and more. The only thing that was missing was the goal."

It finally came in the second minute of stoppage time as Sweden won a corner from the left and Asllani fired it in towards the centre of the goal and it dropped at the far post to Nathalie Bjorn.

Her initial shot was blocked but Sembrant, who missed two of the group games through injury, reacted quickest to rifle the ball home to send the Swedes, who lost the final at last year's Tokyo Olympics to Canada on penalties, through to face the hosts in the last four.

— Reuters



Sweden's defender Linda Sembrant (2R) celebrates her goal at the end of the UEFA Women's Euro 2022 quarterfinal football match between Sweden and Belgium at the Leigh Sports Village Stadium, in Leigh, on July 22, 2022. No use as moving pictures or quasi-video streaming. — AFP

# McLaughlin smashes world record as Miller-Uibo, Norman win 400m golds



USA's Sydney McLaughlin poses with a sign showing her time after winning the women's 400m hurdles final and breaking a world record during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon on Friday. – AFP



Sydney McLaughlin poses on the podium during the medal ceremony for the women's 400m hurdles. – AFP

**EUGENE:** American Sydney McLaughlin shattered her own 400 metres hurdles world record to clinch her first individual World Championships gold, while compatriot Michael Norman claimed the men's 400m crown and Bahamian Shaunae Miller-Uibo won the women's event.

McLaughlin blazed home in 50.68 seconds to set the first world record at this year's championships, finishing well clear of silver medallist Femke Bol of the Netherlands. Defending champion Dalilah Muhammad finished third.

"The time is absolutely amazing and the sport is getting faster and faster," said McLaughlin, who won 4x400m world relay gold in Doha. "Just figuring out what barriers can be broken. I only get faster from here."

Miller-Uibo cruised to 400m gold in 49.11 seconds to win her first world title, adding to her two Olympic gold medals from 2016 and 2020 over the distance.

Dominican Republic's Marileidy Paulino, silver medallist behind Miller-Uibo in Tokyo, had to settle for second place again while Sada Williams of Barbados took bronze.

In the men's event, Norman made up for a disappointing fifth-placed finish in Tokyo by winning gold in Eugene, charging to victory in 44.29 seconds for his first world crown.

Former Olympic and world champion Kirani James of



Gold medallist USA's Michael Norman (C), silver medallist Grenada's Kirani James (L) and bronze medallist Britain's Matthew Hudson-Smith pose on the podium during the medal ceremony for the men's 400m during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon on Friday. – AFP



Bahamas' Shaunae Miller-Uibo celebrates with her medal after winning the women's 400m final during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon on Friday. – AFP

Grenada was runner-up while Britain's Matthew Hudson-Smith held off Champion Allison to take the final podium place.

"Last year was not a good year for me so I had to do a lot of hard work just to get back to where I was," Norman said. "This moment

is going to be remembered forever."

Tokyo bronze medallist Kelsey-Lee Barber joined 400m runner Cathy Freeman as the only Australians to retain a world athletics title after defending her javelin crown with a world-leading throw of 66.91m.

American Kara Winger (64.05) and Japan's Haruka Kitaguchi (63.27) snatched silver and bronze with their last-round throws.

The American men's relay quartet of Christian Coleman, Noah Lyles, Elijah Hall and Marvin Bracy cruised into the 4x100m finals in 37.87 seconds, and the U.S. women's team also had little trouble, finishing fastest in 41.56 seconds.

Reigning world champions Jamaica qualified without Shericka Jackson, Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Elaine Thompson-Herah, who swept the 100m podium.

Allyson Felix postponed her retirement plans after being called up for Saturday's 4x400m relay preliminaries, having brought the curtain down on her glittering career last week.

Peru's Kimberly Garcia Leon won the inaugural 35 km women's race walk in 2:39:16, a week after claiming her first world gold over 20 km.

Katarzyna Zdziebło of Poland and China's Qieyang Shijie also mirrored their results from the 20 km race walk by finishing second and third. — Reuters



Scott Piercy drives on the 11th hole during the second round of the 3M Open golf tournament. – USA TODAY Sports

## Piercy surges to three-stroke lead at PGA 3M Open

**WASHINGTON:** Scott Piercy opened with four consecutive birdies on his way to a seven-under par 64, seizing a three-stroke lead after Friday's second round of the US PGA Tour's 3M Open.

The 43-year-old American's bogey-free round put him on 13-under 129 after 36 holes at TPC Twin Cities in Blaine, Minnesota.

"It feels great," Piercy said. "It has been a little bit since I've played like I should play. To prove it to myself again, I know it's in there, it's just like, 'OK, how do we get it out of me?'"

Argentina's Emiliano Grillo, chasing his first PGA victory since 2015, was second on 132 with England's Callum Tarren third on 134 after a sizzling 63, one off the course record.

Piercy, a 2016 US Open runner-up, chases his fifth PGA title, but his first solo crown since the 2015 Barbasol Championship. He is 1-4 with a 36-hole PGA lead, winning at the 2012 Canadian Open.

"There's a lot of business to take care of this weekend," Piercy said. "But to come out the first two days and do what I did gives me a lot of confidence going into the weekend."

Back-nine starter Piercy,

ranked 297th in the world, shared the 18-hole lead and charged at the start in round two with a birdie binge.

Piercy sank a 27-foot birdie putt at the 10th, a 10-footer at 11, another from just outside four feet at the par-5 12th and the last from just under six feet at the par-3 13th.

It was the third time in his PGA career that Piercy began a round with four birdies after the third rounds at last year's Palmetto Championship and the 2019 Heritage tournament.

Piercy made a 17-foot birdie putt at the second hole and added birdie putts from just outside 10 feet at the par-5 sixth and par-4 seventh.

Grillo, third at the 2020 3M Open, had five birdies and an eagle against a lone bogey.

"I played great. Everything worked," Grillo said. "Made some putts. Happy days."

World number 132 Grillo, who shared second three weeks ago at the John Deere Classic, won his only PGA title at the 2015 Frys.com Open in only his eighth tour start.

Grillo had five birdies and an eagle against a lone bogey. He holed a 40-foot eagle putt after reaching the green in two at the par-5 sixth. — AFP

## Alcaraz edges closer to fifth title of 2022 in Hamburg



**HAMBURG:** Carlos Alcaraz edged closer to his fifth title of 2022 on Friday when he breezed past Karen Khachanov 6-0, 6-2 to reach the Hamburg clay-court semi-finals.

"I played unbelievable today, probably one of my best matches this year," said Alcaraz after firing 21 winners past his rival.

Alcaraz improved to 2-0 in the pair's head-to-head series following a straight sets win in the last 16 of the French Open.

The 19-year-old Spaniard will face Alex Molcan in Saturday's semi-final.

The Slovakian led Borna Coric 7-6 (9/7), 2-0 before the Croatian retired with an injury.

Lorenzo Musetti is poised to crack the top 50 for the first time after making the semi-finals by beating Alejandro Davidovich Fokina 6-4, 6-3.

Musetti, 20, next faces Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo who defeated Aslan Karatsev 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (7/4).

Cerundolo claimed his maiden ATP title in Bastad last weekend. — AFP

## Berrettini stops Thiem to reach Gstaad final



**PARIS:** Matteo Berrettini put the brakes on Dominic Thiem's impressive return to the courts on Saturday crushing him 6-1, 6-4 in the semi-finals in Gstaad.

The Italian world number 15, playing his first tournament since having to withdraw from Wimbledon with Covid, made short work of the 2020 US Open

champion, putting him away in just 77 minutes.

It has still been a good week for the Austrian who has slipped to 274 in the ATP rankings after a year of setbacks, including a wrist injury, depression and Covid. This was his first semi-final in 14 months. Berrettini goes forward to his eleventh career final and is

bidding for a third straight title after wins on grass at Queen's and in Stuttgart.

In Sunday's final he will meet either the French Open finalist and defending champion on the Gstaad clay, Casper Ruud, or the world number 40 Albert Ramos-Vinolas who meet in the second semi later on Saturday. — AFP





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## Oman Customs uncovers smuggling cases in 2021

**STRONG GROWTH:** Sultanate of Oman registers a trade surplus of RO 6.39 bn in 2021, boosted by higher crude oil exports and buoyant oil prices

**HAMMAM AL BADI**  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

Instances of customs-related smuggling jumped 62.5 per cent to 520 cases in 2021, up from 320 a year earlier, according to the annual report of the Directorate General of Customs (Royal Oman Police).

The spike is attributed to improved surveillance, detection and monitoring efforts, as the modern risk management and customs declaration systems adopted by authorities.

Trade volumes (imports and exports) have been surging as well in recent years.

According to data furnished by the Directorate General of Customs, the volume of trade exchange amounted to RO 33.8 billion in value during 2021, compared to RO 28 billion in 2020. Seaports handled 74 per

cent of the total volumes, with Sohar Port handling the lion's share in this category.

The Sultanate of Oman registered a trade surplus of RO 6.39 billion in 2021, compared to a trade surplus of RO 2.04 billion in 2020, the result of resurgent oil prices and also higher crude oil exports.

In terms of customs revenue, seaports generated 47.56 per cent of total customs revenues, followed by land ports with a 45.56 per cent share, and airports with a 6.88 per cent contribution.

Total merchandise exports witnessed an increase of 33.7 per cent, reaching RO 20.1 billion in 2021, compared to RO 15.03 billion in 2020.

Hydrocarbons and petroleum fuels were the highest commodities exported from the Sultanate of Oman with a total value of RO 12.7 billion, followed by plastics and related products valued at RO 886 million, and vehicles and spare parts amounting to RO 698 million in value.

Merchandise imports increased by 5.47 per cent to RO 13.7 billion in 2021, compared to RO 12.99 billion a year earlier.

## Oman's green energy potential to be showcased at London forum

**BALQEES ALORAIMI**  
MUSCAT, JULY 23

A key conference spotlighting renewable and green energy opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman will be held in London on July 27, 2022.

The two-day 'New Energy Conference' will seek to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a global destination for investment in green energy.

The opening session will be held under the auspices of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of the Oman Investment Authority (OIA).

The event itself has been organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in cooperation with the Omani Embassy in London, the Oman Investment Authority, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Anglo-Omani Society and the Omani-British Friendship Society.

Asila bint Salim al Samsamiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, explained that the conference aims to focus on the Sultanate of Oman and to attract the international business community to the opportunities available in the green energy sector and other sectors such as industry, tourism, fisheries, mining, and logistics.

She added that the conference also aims to introduce the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman and the facilities and incentives provided by the Omani government to investors, and to discuss investment



cooperation opportunities in the renewable energy sector between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, attract investments, enhance Omani exports and create investment partnerships.

The conference will focus on the opportunities, ingredients, capabilities, incentives, and advantages that can be presented to the British investor, and the Sultanate of Oman's current view of clean energy as one of the most important sectors targeted in accordance with the Oman Vision 2040 and the National Energy Strategy.

The Sultanate of Oman has embarked on a number of green energy projects, with the aim of

generating 30 per cent of electricity from renewable energy sources by 2030, said Al Samsamiyah, noting that there are many success stories for investment projects in the clean and renewable energy sector whose sources vary from wind energy, solar energy and green hydrogen.

The conference will also provide an opportunity for direct bilateral meetings with British companies specialised in this sector, presenting investment opportunities in the energy sector, and introducing investors to the investment environment, incentives and facilities for investment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Underlining the importance

of the UK market, the Under-Secretary said Britain is presently the largest investment partner of the Sultanate of Oman.

This partnership has expanded over the past few years to include several sectors: most notably oil and gas, technology, infrastructure, defence and education. Foreign Direct Investments from the UK totalled RO 7.112 billion as of end-2020, she said.

Earlier this year, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Investment Authority, signed a partnership agreement with Britain to enhance investment cooperation in the fields of clean energy and information technology.

## Oman's upgraded payments system to operate 24x7: CBO

**CROSS-BORDER TRANSACTIONS:** Integration of Omani, GCC and Arab payments systems under way

**CONRAD PRABHU**  
[@conradprabhu](https://twitter.com/conradprabhu)

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) says it is modernising the country's payments settlement system to enable round-the-clock operations, among other benefits.

The apex bank noted in its Financial Stability Report 2021, issued here last week, that the initiative is part of an array of measures being adopted to ensure smoother, faster, efficient and safe electronic transactions, seamlessly integrated with the payment systems of the GCC and wider

Arab regions.

"Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is planning to implement a state-of-the-art RTGS system to function on a 24x7 basis with advanced features, including allowing banks to monitor settlements with CBO around the clock and to ensure reduced settlement and credit risks," it said.

Formally known as the Real-Time Gross Settlement system, the RTGS is a critical component of the country's national payments infrastructure, providing an electronic fund transfer mechanism between the numerous participants of the settlement system.

At the same time, the Central Bank is upgrading its payment and settlement systems infrastructure to support interface between the RTGS system and the cross-border



payment systems of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as the rest of the Arab region – moves designed to enable seamless cross-border payments.

According to the report, the integration of Oman's RTGS with that of the GCC -- known as Arabian Gulf System for Financial Automated Quick Payment Transfer (AFAQ) -- is currently in

the pilot phase with three banks taking part in this phase.

"AFAQ enables banks and other customers across the region to transfer funds faster and securely, yet still maintain cost-efficiency," the Central Bank noted.

Also under way is the integration of Oman's payment system with the Arab regional payment system, known as BUNA.

The move "will enable central banks and financial institutions across the Arab region to send and receive payments in their local currencies at lower transaction costs", the apex report stated.

In other developments, the Central Bank has announced it is evaluating applications from a number of businesses seeking licenses to operate as Payments

Service Providers (PSPs) in the Sultanate of Oman. The first PSP licence was awarded to Thawani Technologies in 2020.

Another success of the past year, the Central Bank noted, was the mandating of salary payments of government and public sector staff to be made through the Automated Clearing House (ACH) system for payments.

"These measures focused primarily on removing market distortions and strengthening market incentives to promote the adoption of cost-effective payment services," the bank stated.

More recently, the CBO set up a task force to study the introduction of Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) to help "keep pace with accelerating developments in the field of payments", the apex bank added in its report.

Inflation in The Sultane



## MSX closes the week higher by 3.63pc

MSX30 Index ended the week higher by 3.63pc. financial index ended the week up by 3.37pc. services index closed higher by 1.53pc. The Industrial Index closed lower by 2.22pc respectively. The MSX Shariah Index closed flat.

Al Ahlia Insurance Co SAOG Board in its meeting on July 20, 2022, took note of the resolution made by National Life and General Insurance Co SAOG Board to make an offer within next 6 months to the minority 47.5pc shareholders of AAIC.

The offer shall be to acquire the minority shares at 1.15x times the Book Value, closer to the offer date and this expected offer is in accordance with the Takeover and Acquisition Regulations (E/2/2019) issued by CMA Al Ahlia Insurance Co SAOG Board notes that the offer of 1.15x is fair and reasonable. Further disclosures shall be made upon receiving the firm offer from National Life and General Insurance Co SAOG

BankDhofar has recently signed an agreement with Trust Fintech Company.

As per the agreement, BankDhofar will provide banking solutions to Trust Fintech. The agreement was mutually signed by Dr Tariq Taha, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar, and Ahmed al Rahbi, CEO of Trust Fintech.

Locally, Oman's June inflation rate rose by 2.85pc year-on-year, driven mainly by food prices by 6.09pc, the database of the monthly bulletin of the National Center for Statistics and Statistics data on Wednesday.

The prices of oils and fats increased by 19pc, organic fruits 9.2pc, and meat 8pc, compared to June of last year. Share prices rose 4.2pc in June, coinciding with the rise in oil prices globally. It was telecom prices that fell in June, pegging the decline to 0.01pc. On a basis, the inflation rate in Oman increased by 0.45pc in June compared to the previous month

of May. The annual inflation rate was last May.

The total number of guests in hotel properties of the 3 to 5-star category in the Sultanate of Oman increased 46.2pc to 654,807 guests YTD compared to 447,778 guests for the same period of 2021.

The occupancy rate increased 41.1pc YoY, according to the latest monthly statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) compared to 35.8pc last year. Total revenues of these hotels rose by 129pc to RO 73.058m YTD, compared to RO 31.897m during the same period of the previous year.

Data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total number of visitors coming to visit Oman through all airports in the Sultanate of Oman was 794,000, while the number of visitors departing from Oman by the end of May 2022 was about 1.5 million, indicating a 36-fold increase in the total number of visitors coming to Oman in May 2022 to 216,000 compared to the same month of the previous year, which numbered about 6,000. Number of Flights through Muscat International Airport in May was 5,668 flights and number of passengers reached 643,775.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) economies, including the Sultanate of Oman, are predicted to grow due to increasing energy prices (oil and gas) and the impact of the ongoing geopolitical uncertainties.

According to the KPMG's Global Economic Outlook H1'2022, the oil and gas prices are expected to continue soaring in 2022 and 2023, driven by their increased production and hike in prices.

Moreover, the economic activity in the GCC is expected to pick up further pace owing to the private sector activity and easing of Covid-19 related restrictions.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

## Bank Nizwa launches first Sharia compliant edu finance scheme

MUSCAT: A progressive bank that continuously devises innovative products and services to better serve its customers, Bank Nizwa recently announced the launch of its Education Finance scheme.

Based on the Islamic principle of Murabaha and Ijarah (Service Ijara), existing and new customers who transfer their salaries to the bank will be able to avail the new Education Finance scheme. Offering flexible payment options and a comfortable repayment period, Bank Nizwa gives customers the choice to finance the entire course fees whilst making the most of attractive profit rates.

With an understanding of the varying needs of its customers, three distinct segments can benefit from the bank's new Education Finance scheme. Students who have completed high school and are looking to pursue a higher education degree aimed at employment can apply for finance jointly with their parents or guardians.

Under this unique scheme, the parent or guardian will have to pay only the profit amount during the education period and will additionally also get a grace period of one year after the completion of the education period to repay the full amount.

Commenting on the new offering, Arif al Zaabi, AGM of Retail banking of Bank Nizwa, said, "The youth of today are the future of Oman and knowledge is the most powerful tool they can equip themselves to better prepare



for the challenges that lie ahead. Aligning itself to Oman Vision 2040 and the emphasis it places on the education sector, Bank Nizwa has always been dedicated to empowering the local youth."

"With the growing preference for Islamic finance in the community, Bank Nizwa decided to launch Oman's first Sharia-compliant education finance to benefit those who want to continue their learning journey. By helping build a knowledge-based economy where individuals reserve the skills and capabilities to drive transformational change, Bank Nizwa seeks to drive sustainable progress in the country."

Aligning to the vision of promoting quality education

amongst the youth, Bank Nizwa has also extended this scheme to help parents or guardians finance their children's school fees.

Although this option has no grace period and customers are required to pay the installments immediately, the convenient installment plans help to reduce the burden as the repayment period spreads over a longer time and at a competitive rate.

The flexible installment plans have also brought much relief to salaried individuals who are looking for education finance to further enhance their skills. Whilst there is no joint financing or grace period for working individuals, the Education Finance scheme gives them an opportunity to

cover the entire course fees.

The new scheme exemplifies Bank Nizwa's focus on youth empowerment and further reaffirms its position as a leading Islamic bank that provides innovative solutions for the socio-economic benefit of the country.

As the Sultanate of Oman's first Sharia-compliant education finance, the scheme gives individuals an opportunity to enhance their academic qualifications and build long-term prospects.

With innovative products like these, Bank Nizwa will continue to uphold its position as a pioneer Islamic bank that is committed to setting new benchmarks in the Islamic finance industry.

## Alizz Islamic Bank honoured for charity awareness

MUSCAT: The Association for Children with Disabilities (ACD) honoured Alizz Islamic Bank for its constant support of the organisation and its dedication in raising awareness by participating in the 7th 'Tadamon' Charity Exhibition which was held for three consecutive days at Al Shafaq Club in Al Athaiba.

The bank was represented at the event by Muna al Khusaibi, Deputy Senior Manager of Marketing and Corporate Communications.

The purpose of the exhibition was to encourage people to donate and engage in a social activity in order to provide the best services to the 450 children that the Association support, including



comprehensive early intervention programmes for children with disabilities from birth until the age of nine.

These programmes cover areas such as rehabilitation, social and psychological needs, daily life skills, education, and training, with a view to enroll children in

regular schools, if possible, or develop their skills, and help them adapt to their disabilities, which in turn ensures a better quality of life for themselves and their families as well as facilitating their integration into society.

It is part of the strategy of Alizz Islamic Bank to embark on such

humanitarian initiatives that serve society by taking care of each boy and girl who are going to take part in shaping Oman's prosperous future.

The focus on children with disabilities and orphans in the Sultanate of Oman is driven by government initiatives, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, ensuring that those with disabilities obtain all rights, be on equal footing with all other citizens of the Sultanate of Oman, including their rights to be rehabilitated in differed rehabilitation institutions, so that they can be integrated into the society to play their role in its prosperity side by side with their fellow Omanis.

## Twitter says Musk 'uncertainty' hurting revenue

WASHINGTON: Twitter blamed disappointing results on Friday on "headwinds," including the uncertainty imposed on the company by Elon Musk's chaotic buyout bid.

The firm is locked in a legal battle with the mercurial Tesla boss over his effort to walk away from a \$44 billion deal to purchase the platform, leaving the company in limbo.

Twitter missed expectations with revenue of \$1.18 billion, due to "advertising industry headwinds... as well as uncertainty related to the pending acquisition of Twitter by an affiliate of Elon Musk," the company reported.

Also, in the current context of tightening credit conditions and economic turbulence, many companies like Twitter that rely heavily on ads are suffering from a decrease in advertisers' budgets.

"Twitter is on a rowboat in the middle of a storm," said analyst Jasmine Enberg. "The Musk saga rocked the boat even harder."

"Twitter is now in the unenviable position of convincing advertisers that its ad business is solid," she added.

Twitter also reported that the number of "monetisable" daily active users -- those who can be shown advertising -- increased by 8.8 million, less than expected by

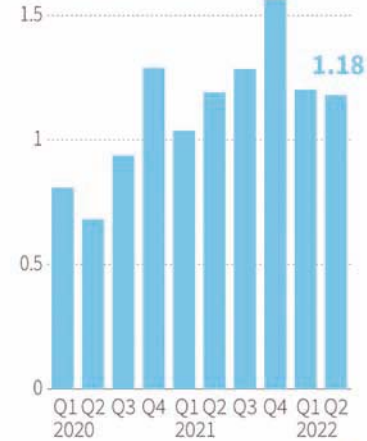
### Twitter

Net income by quarter  
In millions of dollars



Source: Twitter

Revenue by quarter  
In billions of dollars



AFP

analysts, to 237.8 million.

"Overall we would characterise the daily active user metrics as better than feared and holding up relatively firm in this environment," said analyst Dan Ives.

Despite the less than stellar results, Twitter's stock closed up nearly one percent at \$39.84, as investors seemed relieved the news wasn't worse.

By comparison, Snap's stock finished down 39 per cent a day after the parent company of messaging app Snapchat reported disappointing earnings.

Twitter's results cover the period ending in June so don't include Musk's move in July to

try to "terminate" the deal on the argument that the platform was not forthcoming about its tally of fake accounts.

The social media network, which is a key exchange of ideas, news and entertainment, has countered by saying the Tesla chief already agreed to the deal and can't back out now.

"Twitter believes that Mr Musk's purported termination is invalid and wrongful, and the merger agreement remains in effect," it said.

Twitter notched a victory earlier this week in its fight with Musk, when a judge agreed to a fast-track trial on whether to force the billionaire to complete the buyout.

— AFP

Germany’s energy crisis sparks fresh nuclear power debate

Germany’s foreign minister said she sees no reason to extend the operating lives of the country’s last three nuclear power plants — despite the energy crunch linked to Russia’s war in Ukraine- but government remains divided on the sensitive subject.

Annalena Baerbock said she believes Germany’s final phase-out of nuclear power at the end of the year remains the correct thing to do.”(This is based on) the facts that I know right now and with a view to what our challenge is,” she said.

The challenge is not the supply of electricity but of gas, the Green politician said on Friday evening at “The Right Questions” event organised by the influential Bild daily.

“I don’t see that nuclear power is the answer here,” she said.

Germany’s Greens have long opposed nuclear power; however, the three-party coalition government they are a part of are far from unanimous on the issue, which has been hotly contested for decades.

Finance Minister Christian Lindner, of the business-friendly Free Democrats (FDP), said Europe’s biggest economy should remain open to all sources of energy, including nuclear.

“In the coming years, we will not have an abundance of affordable electricity. That’s why we should secure every capacity,” he was quoted on Saturday as telling the Funke media group.

He also said that using nuclear power would mean not pumping “many thousands of tons of CO2 into the atmosphere.”

For these reasons, Lindner urged that the continued use of the three remaining nuclear power plants for a limited period of time be examined by the coalition with an open mind.

Under current law, the three remaining nuclear power plants — Neckarwestheim 2, Emsland and Isar 2 — must be shut down by December 31 at the latest. They accounted for around 6 per cent of net electricity generation in Germany this year.

Natural gas has so far been used to generate around 10 per cent of the country’s electricity.

There have been louder calls for nuclear energy produced in Germany to be used for electricity generation beyond 2022, to make up for dwindling gas supplies from Russia. — dpa

In the coming years, we will not have an abundance of affordable electricity. That’s why we should secure every capacity

CHRISTIAN LINDNER  
Finance Minister



VOLKSWAGEN TO HAVE NEW BOSS

Volkswagen Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Herbert Diess poses with the new Volkswagen ID Buzz electric van during its presentation in Hamburg, northern Germany. Diess will leave the management of the group to be replaced from September by the current chairman of the board of Porsche, Oliver Blume, a subsidiary of the group targeting the stock market, Volkswagen announced on July 22, 2022. — AFP File

The state of the video game industry



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The writer is a member of the International Press Association

Recession is the buzz word of the day and the phenomena that we are going to talk about in this article.

Recession is a multifaceted subject that has far-reaching ramifications for people, corporations and countries as a whole. It is a time for everyone to tighten their belts, refraining from frugal expenses and saving as much as possible, because the rainy days — figuratively speaking — are here.

Of all the industries that have been affected, I want to invest some time to talk about a sector that over the past two years was defined as recession-proof. But maybe it is not. That sector is video games entertainment.

Just last month, an article published by PR newswire stated that “video game industry proves once again to be recession-proof”. This was a sort of accepted dogma, which probably originated on Forbes in 2020, with an article titled: “Is gaming Recession Proof?”

Record revenue for \$160 billion industry with 2.7 billion players”. The article was quoting the Vice President of Unity, Julie Shoemaker as well as a list of publications and developers who believed that video games simply could not face recession.

IT IS A TIME FOR EVERYONE TO TIGHTEN THEIR BELTS, REFRAINING FROM FRUGAL EXPENSES AND SAVING AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE

It was easier to state that during one of the greatest industry booms of all time, when we were all constrained home due to Covid-19 lockdowns. It is much more difficult to prove the same point while the laying off hundreds of employees to cut costs just started.

Chinese video game companies have been put out of business as Chinese government is severely regulating the market for mobile games. Restrictions have been imposed to child access and monetisation, even referring to video games themselves as “spiritual opium”.

And the repercussions are noticeable in all of the top 10 countries for video games revenues. News and media outlets that used to cover e-sport are shutting down entire departments.

According to Upper Echelon Gamers: “Tides have shifted. They (the smaller players) are one of the first to go down

(like) ‘Canary in the coal mine.’ For those that don’t know that phrase, (it) was born when coal miners would bring a caged little canary bird into a coal mine, and if there was a build-up of carbon monoxide or some other dangerous gas, the canary would die first while the miners could then make it out alive.”

China is effectively and deliberately strangling its own video game market which is a revenue source for Western companies and when we realise that China itself is the number one market on Earth for video games mostly as the result of population size we can see that the effect of recession will inevitably go further. Western game developers pulling out of Russia which — at the time of the Ukraine Invasion — was among the top 10th largest video game economy in the world is cited directly as a macroeconomic factor impacting the looming recession.

I play video games too. Although not so frequently, and often limiting myself to a title or two a couple of times a week. I find myself more focused on work these days than wasting time on trivial hobbies.

This change in mindset on a global scale also seems to be one of the root causes for the gaming industry to start feeling the recession.

Rate hikes alone won’t curb inflation



PINELOI KOUJIANOU GOLDBERG

The writer is a former World Bank Group chief economist and editor-in-chief of the American Economic Review, is Professor of Economics at Yale University

As inflation in the United States reaches new heights, economists are debating how high the Federal Reserve will need to hike interest rates to curb demand and rein in price growth. Some commentators believe that the Fed will need to be as aggressive as Fed Chair Paul Volcker in the early 1980s, who ended up raising interest rates to as high as 20 per cent.

Such figures understandably raise concerns that the effort to contain inflation will result in a recession and a sharp increase in unemployment. As a recent Peterson Institute for International Economics policy brief observes, reductions in job vacancies engineered through contractionary policies empirically go hand in hand with increases in unemployment.

Worse, while interest-rate hikes would likely increase

unemployment over time, they will be insufficient to rein in inflation in the short run. Recent price increases may have been triggered by extraordinarily high demand following the pandemic, but supply-side factors — especially labour shortages and the energy crisis caused by Russia’s war in Ukraine — have also played a significant role. Inflation cannot be contained unless these factors are addressed, too.

The situation calls for three supplementary initiatives. First, the conflict in Ukraine must be de-escalated. Although the war did not “cause” inflation, it has certainly contributed to rising prices — especially in the food and energy sectors — by exacerbating shortages that were previously expected to recede as Covid-19 restrictions were lifted.

As long as the war continues, energy and food prices will remain high, and uncertainty will keep

rattling markets. Trade flows may be reoriented to phase out energy imports from “unfriendly” countries (to use the current jargon); but such realignments cannot happen fast enough to ease the current food and energy shortages. While diplomacy could still de-escalate the conflict (given that all sides have strong incentives to do so), time is running out. With each passing week, a face-saving settlement becomes harder to reach.

Second, America needs to move past Covid-19 in order to address labour shortages in specific sectors. Vaccines are widely available and have been shown to prevent serious illness in most cases. It is past time to abandon rules requiring workers to take multiple days off if they test positive, even when they are asymptomatic. Such policies have resulted in severe bottlenecks in key sectors, with the airline industry being a prominent

example.

Third, the US urgently needs policies to push its labour force participation rate back up to its pre-Covid level.

Many commentators have drawn parallels between the current economic environment and the stagflationary 1970s. But one feature that is unique to our time is the “Great Resignation.” The pandemic has left Americans tired, demoralised, and unwilling to accept work that doesn’t meet a higher standard of job satisfaction.

People are increasingly demanding “good jobs” with decent pay, benefits, and security (which often means that they are sheltered from unbridled foreign competition). But these are not the kinds of jobs that many firms offer. Plenty of essential jobs are neither particularly lucrative nor satisfying — whether it be loading and unloading trucks or container ships, washing dishes and

bussing tables in restaurants, or working in construction or heavy manufacturing. Moreover, even high-paying finance and tech jobs in New York and San Francisco may fall short of workers’ expectations if they require long daily commutes.

In a tight job market, it is not surprising that more Americans are saying “no” to work they perceive as unpleasant. But someone has got to do it, and for every American who upgrades their job or drops out of the labour force, there are several immigrants who would be happy to do the work that has been left behind. These immigrants, by definition, do not take work away from Americans; rather, they provide a net benefit to the economy. And the same goes for international trade, which can ease production bottlenecks and supply-chain shortages — effectively “importing” labour without immigration.

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## It's the best time to try the fruit in season — grapes

Grapes had become a favourite not just by consumers but also by farmers because of their nutritional value and good taste. The cultivation of grapes is widespread in many Oman wilayats, especially in the mountainous regions that enjoy moderate temperatures in the summer. Here's why you should give these locally produced fruits in season a try... **P20**

## Has Netflix found its Bond? Ryan Gosling stars in spy movie 'The Gray Man'

**IN THE NEW** Netflix movie "The Gray Man," Ryan Gosling's character jokes that he goes by the name Six because 007 was taken.

The film is a big-budget, effects-filled thriller in the spirit of a James Bond adventure. Netflix Inc and the movie's directors hope the film, which starts streaming on Friday, will launch the company's own long-running spy series.

Gosling stars as Sierra Six, a former inmate sprung from prison by the CIA in exchange for servitude in a secret programme.

"I've always wanted to make an action movie," Gosling told Reuters. "Action was my first love. It made me fall in love with movies in the first place. It took a minute to get there and find the right one."

"The Gray Man" is based on a novel

by Mark Greaney and directed by Joe and Anthony Russo, the brothers who helmed Marvel's mega-blockbuster "Avengers: Endgame."

The Russos said Netflix allowed them to bring their full vision to the screen. "Gray Man" was filmed at seven locations around the world from Azerbaijan to Croatia and France.

"We wanted to be very ambitious with this movie," Anthony Russo said. "It is hard to shoot action. It's expensive to shoot action, and Netflix was up for this level of ambition."

The movie packs in nine major action sequences, including a lengthy gun battle in a public square in Prague. "It was real trial by fire for me hav-

ing it be my first action film," Gosling said.

Chris Evans plays Gosling's nemesis, an assassin named Lloyd Hansen who was expelled from the CIA for excessive tactics.

"He's unapologetically himself," Evans said of the character. "I think most of us walk through the world measuring who we are based on who we think we're supposed to be, and Lloyd is unbound by those social norms."

"The Gray Man" is playing exclusively in cinemas this week before hitting Netflix.

The reaction from film critics has been mixed. As of Monday, "Gray Man" had a 52% positive rating among reviews collected on the Rotten Tomatoes website. Audiences were more enthusiastic, with 89% of commenters on the site giving a thumbs-up.

The Russos hope the film will be popular enough to warrant future installments.

"Whether it's exploring the events after the original 'Gray Man' movie, or before, or where we choose to go, there's a lot of options in this universe," Anthony Russo said. — **Reuters**

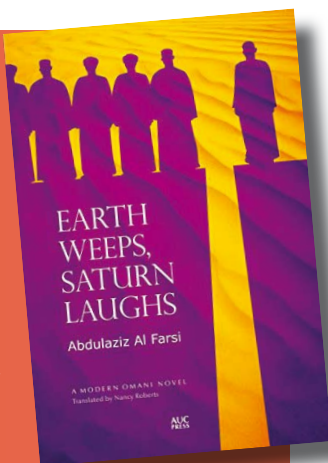


### READ

#### EARTH WEEPS, SATURN LAUGHS

BY ABDULAZIZ AL FARSI

*Earth Weeps, Saturn Laughs* opens with the return of Khalid Bakhit, a government employee, to his hometown in Oman after a time away in the big city, and concludes with his return to the city with a new maturity born of a series of wrenching encounters with reality.



### KPOP DOMINATES

K-Pop star J-Hope of the boy band sensation BTS will perform this month as the finale act at Chicago's annual Lollapalooza show, becoming the first South Korean artist to headline a major US musical festival, organisers said on Tuesday. J-Hope, 28, who made his debut as a member of BTS in 2013 and released his first solo mixtape five years later, is slated to close the four-day Lollapalooza festival with a main-stage performance on July 31, according to Live Nation Entertainment. — **Reuters**



### A DUCHESS' BIRTHDAY

An official picture has been released to mark the 75th birthday of Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall. Camilla is pictured looking relaxed and smiling in the image released for her milestone anniversary she celebrates on Sunday, which follows a busy week for the British royal, the wife of heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles. In the image, the future queen consort is sat at a garden table with flowers and plants in the background and a tea cup and saucer before her and a bowl of peaches. — **dpa**



# The Resilient Spirit of Basque Country Extends to Its Restaurants



**IN BASQUE COUNTRY**, the pandemic has served as a reminder of the extent to which food forms the fabric of local life. Eating well is a priority throughout Spain's northern autonomous community, and seems, to some local chefs, even more so now.

The region is an endless feast. Culinary destinations beckon beyond the many Michelin-starred restaurants. You'll find pintxo bars littered with waxy paper napkins, and people grazing on two-bite savory snacks, like croquetas or Spanish tortilla, atop a slice of bread and skewered with a toothpick; and sidrerías (cider bars) tucked in the lush green mountains, with patrons slicing into a fire-grilled steak the size of a forearm while sipping fizzy natural cider.

"Our culture is based on food," said Alvaro Garrido, chef and owner of the Michelin-starred Mina, a restaurant in Bilbao's La Vieja neighborhood. "Geographically, we're very lucky," he said, with access to fresh seafood from the Cantabrian Sea, high-quality produce from small, family-run farms, and meat and dairy from livestock raised on verdant pastures. The result is a strong culinary heritage that even the edgiest chefs hold sacred — and, of course, draws food worshippers from around the world.

Garrido and his partner, Lara Martín, who runs Mina's front-of-house, earned their first Michelin star in 2013 and have since garnered a following. On rare days off, when Garrido is not in the kitchen with the Mina "warriors," as he calls his staff, the native Bilbaino visits suppliers or enjoys a meal at a nearby

restaurant prepared by one of his peers.

I first interviewed Garrido in December of 2019, to tap



into his extensive restaurant knowledge and discover some of his favourite locales in Basque Country. (I worked as a kitchen intern at Mina for

about six weeks in 2014.) Shortly after, the pandemic brought the hospitality industry to a sputtering standstill.

Restaurants across Spain were forced to shutter by government mandate, some never reopened. But some of the places on Garrido's list

managed to quickly pivot their businesses. Zarate, a Michelin-starred restaurant in Bilbao known for its pristine seafood, converted a street-facing slice of its dining room into a seafood counter with takeaway dishes. Others waited until outdoor dining was approved and doubled down on their terrace service. Because of the largely extroverted, deeply food-centered culture, local customers were eager to return. Then, there was that characteristically Basque spirit of resilience, which helped restaurants to navigate during some of the bleakest moments of the pandemic — the people of the region are no strangers to persevering in the face of adversity. Amaia García de Albizu, the manager of Arrea! and sister of chef-owner Edorta Lamo, told me, "when the crisis arrived, it reminded us of our grandparents during the Spanish Civil War." Mindful of the hardships of their ancestors, they did their best to soldier on and maintain a sense of gratitude.

Ultimately, all of the restaurants on Garrido's list pulled through the pandemic. The national tourism industry association, Exceltur, predicted in a January report that Spain's tourism gross domestic product could reach about 88 per cent of its pre-pandemic levels in 2022 (€35 billion euros, or about \$138 billion) — that's about 47 billion euros above 2021, though that is still 19 billion euros lower than about 155 billion of 2019. With the return of tourism, the region has boomeranged back to life and the vibe among many restaurant owners is cautiously optimistic.

— NYT

## RECIPE

# Skillet Vegetable Potpie



**LOADED WITH THE** season's finest offerings, this pie comes together in one skillet and manages to be hearty yet light. Leek provides a sweet and aromatic base, potatoes add body, fennel delivers an earthy note and asparagus imparts crisp freshness. (You could also use broccoli or green beans.) Sour cream in the base offers a slight tang and keeps the sauce light. Be sure to chop all of your vegetables around the same size to ensure they cook evenly and are tender by the time the pastry is golden. If you like, add other seasonal vegetables like peas or fava beans in the spring, or cauliflower or Brussels sprouts in the fall and winter. (Frozen vegetables work well, too.) When using store-bought puff pastry, thaw it in the fridge overnight. If you don't have an ovenproof 9- or 10-inch skillet, simply transfer the mixture to a similar-sized round or square baking dish.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings  
Total time: 45 minutes

**INGREDIENTS:**  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 leek, finely chopped into 1/4-inch pieces  
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
1 fennel bulb, cored and finely diced into 1/4-inch pieces (about 14 ounces)  
2 medium Yukon Gold or red-skinned potatoes, peeled and finely diced into 1/4-inch pieces (about 14 ounces)  
16 to 20 asparagus spears, trimmed and sliced into 1/4-inch pieces (about 12 ounces)  
1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt (Diamond Crystal)  
Black pepper  
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, plus more for rolling  
1 cup vegetable stock  
8 ounces sour cream  
1 bunch of chives, finely sliced (about 1/2 cup)  
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard  
1 cup grated Gruyère (about 3 ounces)  
1 (14-ounce) sheet puff pastry, completely thawed  
1 egg, beaten with 1 tablespoon of water

1. Place an oven rack in the middle position, and heat oven to 450 degrees. Line a sheet pan with foil and set aside.
2. Heat a 9- to 10-inch ovenproof skillet over medium high. Add the olive oil, leek, garlic and fennel, and cook, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes, until softened. Add the potatoes, asparagus and salt, then season with black pepper and stir. Scatter with the flour and give it a quick stir to coat well. Add the stock, sour cream, chives, Dijon mustard and Gruyère, and stir until well combined. Remove from heat.
3. On a lightly floured surface using a lightly floured rolling pin, roll out the pastry 1 to 2 inches wider than the skillet. Carefully place the puff pastry over the top of the skillet and trim any long edges, then, working quickly, tuck and fold in the edges of the pastry so it sits just inside the rim of the skillet, to create a rough border. Brush the pastry with egg wash and carefully score the top with a few slits to allow air to escape during baking.
4. Place the skillet on the baking sheet and transfer to the middle rack of the oven. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, until the pastry is golden and bubbling around the edges. Let sit for 10 minutes before eating. — NYT



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## AROUND THE WORLD

### ENTERTAINMENT

## Montenegro's top fashion designer Milena Djurdjic launches first-ever collection



With more than 7,100 languages spoken in the world today, there is one language we can all speak fluently — fashion. It is a language that can be spoken without uttering a single word, making it complex, universal and all-embracing.

"It is an honor to be able to showcase my brand and ultimately represent Montenegrin fashion in Dubai, one of the fastest-rising fashion hotspots," said Milena Djurdjic, founder and creative director of Milena Djurdjic Designerwear. "It is my first time in this beautiful, modern city and having to showcase my latest collection on an international scale for a charitable cause, is a step closer towards achieving my goal of taking the brand globally," she added.



Milena recently showcased an 18-piece collection at a Charity Gala Event attended by HE Shaikh Butti bin Abdul Hakim al Maktoum, Bollywood Superstar Urvashi Rautela and Emirati Public Figure Dr Sara Almadani, amongst other VIP guests.

The collection featured romantic, feminine and delicate creations that are above all comfortable, attractive and functional and has an original approach to fashion.

Milena further commented: "We have combined Italian elegance and British style that is definite yet rebellious. One of the trademarks of our brand are multifunctional dresses that can be transformed and worn in many ways on different occasions — from simple daily variants to more formal ones."

Milena Djurdjic is a fashion designer at the Faculty of Design, Department of Fashion Design in Belgrade, and she also studied at the Accademia di costume e di moda in Rome. She held her first independent fashion show and collection in Montenegro in 2011, and to date she has created a total of 12 fashion collections with participation in over 20 fashion shows both in the country and abroad.

She is the winner of numerous awards, among which her favourite is the National Award for Dorpinos in the fashion scene, awarded by Montenegro Fashion Week. She is also a successful costume designer with participation in numerous film, series and theater projects, and she was also the main costume designer in charge of the appearance of the Montenegrin representative at the 2018 Eurovision Song Contest.

### TRAVEL TALES

## India's mango man, father of 300 varieties



Every day, Indian octogenarian Kaleem Ullah Khan wakes at dawn, prays, then ambles about a mile to his 120-year-old mango tree, which he has coaxed into producing more than 300 varieties of the beloved fruit over the years.

His footsteps quicken as he draws nearer and his eyes light up as he peers closely at the branches through his spectacles, caressing the leaves and sniffing the fruits to see if they are ripe.

"This is my prize of toiling hard in the scorching sun for decades," the 82-year-old said in his orchard in the small town of Malihabad.

"For the naked eye, it's just a tree. But if you see through your mind, it's a tree, an orchard, and the biggest mango college in the world."

The school dropout was just a teenager when he conducted his first experiment in grafting, or joining plant parts to create new mango varieties.

He nurtured a tree to produce seven new kinds of fruit, but it blew down in a storm.

But since 1987, his pride and joy has been the 120-year-old specimen, source of more than 300 different types of mango, each with their own taste, texture, colour and size, he says.

One of the earliest varieties he named "Aishwarya" after Bollywood star and 1994 Miss World beauty pageant winner Aishwarya Rai Bachchan. To this day, it remains one of his "best creations".

"The mango is as beautiful as the actress. One mango weighs more than a kilogram (two pounds), has a tinge of crimson to its outer skin and it tastes very sweet," Khan said.

Others he named in honour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and cricket hero Sachin Tendulkar. Another is "Anarkali", or pomegranate blossom, and has two layers of different skin and two different pulps, each with a distinctive aroma.

"People will come and go, but the mangoes will remain forever, and years after, whenever

this Sachin mango will be eaten, people will remember the cricketering hero," said the father of eight.

### FAMED FRUIT

Standing nine metres (30 feet) tall, his treasured tree has a stout trunk with wide-spreading, thick branches that yield a pleasant shade against the Indian summer sun.

The leaves are a patchwork of different textures and smells. In some places, they are yellow and glossy, and in others, a dark, dull green.

"No two fingerprints are the same, and no two mango varieties are similar. Nature has gifted mangoes with traits like

"I can grow mangoes even in a desert," he says.

### CLIMATE THREAT

India is the largest producer of mangoes, accounting for half the global output. Malihabad, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, has more than 30,000 hectares of orchards and accounts for nearly 25 per cent of the national crop.

Mostly owned by families for generations, the orchards are a mango lover's paradise, with the best-known variety possibly the melt-in-the-mouth Dasher, named for the nearby village where it originated in the 16th century. But farmers are worried by climate change, with a



humans," Khan said.

His method for grafting is intricate, and involves diligently slicing a branch from one variety, leaving an open wound into which a branch from another variety is spliced and sealed with tape.

"I will remove the tape once the joint becomes sturdy, and hopefully, this new branch will be ready by next season, and bear a new variety after two years," he explained.

Khan's skills have won him numerous accolades, among them one of India's highest civilian honours in 2008, as well as invitations to Iran and United Arab Emirates.

heatwave this year destroying 90 per cent of the local crop, according to the All-India Mango Growers Association.

The number of varieties has also fallen, which Khan blames on intensive farming techniques and the widespread use of cheap fertilisers and insecticides.

Growers also plant too many trees packed too tightly together, leaving no space for moisture and dew to settle on the leaves, he says. But he still has a good life, he says.

"I recently moved into a new house inside the farm to be closer to my beloved tree, which I'll keep working on till my last breath." — **AFP**

### DISCOVERY

## Scientists uncover history of 'ridiculously charming' penguins



**THE EVOLUTION** of penguins from their flying seabird ancestors into the flightless denizens of marine environments from frigid Antarctica to the tropical Galapagos Islands is among the wonders of the animal kingdom.

Researchers on Tuesday offered the most thorough examination to date of the history of penguins dating back to their origins more than 60 million years ago, including identifying a suite of genes crucial in adaptations related to underwater vision, long dives, body temperature regulation, diet and body size.

The researchers sequenced the genomes of the 20 living penguin species and subspecies. With more than three quarters of known penguin species now extinct, the researchers also included in their analysis 50 fossil species using skeletal data.

The researchers said penguins evolved from a common ancestor shared with a group of seabirds that includes albatrosses and petrels. Penguins first evolved the ability to dive, like a puffin, and subsequently lost the ability to fly as they adapted to an aquatic realm, becoming excellent swimmers and divers.

The earliest-known penguin — dating back to 61 million years ago, about 5 million years after the mass extinction event that doomed the dinosaurs — is called Waimanu manneringi, from New Zealand.

"To me, penguins are a perfect example of a major evolutionary transition, like the evolution of an aquatic lifestyle in whales or flight in bats," said avian paleontologist Daniel Ksepka of the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, co-author of the study published in the journal *Nature Communications* <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-022-31508-9>.

"We know penguins evolved from flying birds, but that happened over 60 million years ago and we need to look to the fossil record to piece together where, when and how that happened. Plus, penguins are ridiculously charming creatures. They love, they fight, they steal, and because of their funny upright posture it's really easy to imagine them having all the same motivations as people," Ksepka said.

The study illustrated how global temperature changes — oscillations between cold

and warm periods — and shifts in major ocean currents have been important drivers of penguin evolution.

"We estimated how populations of each penguin species fluctuated over the last 250,000 years from signatures left in their genome by population crashes and booms," Ksepka said. "The waxing and waning of ice sheets had a big impact on penguins, and species vulnerable to receding sea ice may suffer greatly from future global heating."

Penguins also were found to exhibit the lowest evolutionary rates yet detected among birds.

Penguins live primarily in the Southern Hemisphere, including species like the Adeline penguin along Antarctica's coastlines. The Galapagos penguin is the only one found north of the equator.

University of Copenhagen postdoctoral researcher and study lead author Theresa Cole said the research uncovered a variety of genes likely involved in unique penguin physiological adaptations.

They show gene mutations that shift their vision toward the blue end of the colour spectrum. Blue light penetrates more deeply into the ocean than light at the red end of the spectrum, so this trait helped fine-tune vision for low-light, underwater acuity.

Genes that help birds detect salty and sour tastes are active in penguins. But genes that help detect bitter, sweet and savory tastes are inactivated. Those may no longer be needed as penguins forage in cold, salty water and typically swallow prey including fish, shrimp and squid whole.

Penguins exhibit a flattening and stiffening of their wing bones and a reduction of their flight feathers into tiny structures that help convert wings into flippers. They also reduced the air spaces in the skeleton and increased bone wall thickness to increase diving efficiency, as well as adding the ability to store more oxygen in their muscles for long dives.

Penguins were once much larger than today's species. One species, Kumimanu biceae, that inhabited New Zealand between 55 and 60 million years ago stood about 6 feet (1.8 metres) tall. The largest extant species, the emperor penguin, is about 3 feet (1 meter) tall. — **Reuters**

# art & life

## Local Scene

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SUNDAY | JULY 24 | 2022



Mohammed Altiwani  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# It's the best time to try the fruit in season — grapes

By Arwa al Hashimi  
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While Oman is located within the Middle East, the country has been blessed with diverse topography that is ideal for agriculture. These fertile lands had made it possible for farmers to grow different agricultural products all year round which makes their way to different shopping centres and markets across the Sultanate of Oman. There were challenges along the way in growing crops but as of today, with aid of modern technology, farmers are able to cultivate different varieties of palm trees, citrus and other fruit-bearing crops including a wide variety of root crops.

The Governorate of Al Batinah has become the food basket of Oman producing the majority of these crops with areas like Al Mudhaibi, Nakhl, Wakan and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar adding to the annual supplies of agricultural goods.

In the last two months, grapes had been the fruit in season that dominated many central markets in different wilayats. In the past, many of the country's date consumption was imported from other countries but with patience and hard work from farmers, locally produce grapes are creating a competition which lowers the prices of these particular fruits.

The Ministry of Agriculture,

Fisheries and Water Resources pays great attention to the cultivation of this crop of fruits and it continues to provide material and moral support to farmers through holding seminars, providing improved seedlings, introducing farmers to modern methods in the field of agriculture, and working to promote agricultural products.

Grapes had become a favourite not just by consumers but also by farmers because of their nutritional value and good taste. The cultivation of grapes is widespread in many Oman wilayats, especially in the mountainous regions that enjoy moderate temperatures in the summer. Among these areas are the villages of Wadi Mistal in the Wilayat of Nakhl, where the cultivation of deciduous trees such as peaches, apricots, pomegranates and grapes is widespread. Grapes are cultivated in the villages of Wadi Mistal by using trellises to obtain an abundant and economically feasible crop.

Additionally, the cultivation of grapes requires special care and trellis plantings from above so that the branches of the grape tree wrap around them, and these trellises help the tree in the process of drooping clusters.

There are many types of grapes grown in Oman and they come in different colours — black, white and even a Lebanese variety.

Grape harvests had become an attraction between June and August. Many locals visit differ-

ent farms not only to take photos and enjoy the harvest but also to taste these gifts of the season.

The price of one kilo during this period is about one and a half riyals and its value rises at the end of the season. It is marketed in the local markets and sometimes it is sold directly from the farm. The prices of the grape crop vary depending on quality and flavour.

Local grapes are produced in limited quantities which is why farmers need more encouragement. Black/red varieties of grapes are greatly favoured by Omanis but the limited quantity of production yearly has caused its increasing demand. It is rare to find this variety in supermarkets as usually, they are normally bought right off the farms.

Great attention is needed for the cultivation of grapes in Oman. From the beginning of the season until the date of harvest, great care is needed by farmers to continuously monitor proper irrigation, fertilisation, pruning and creation of an appropriate environment for the fruits to grow.

The pruning process of the grape vines is carried out after the trees enter the phase of rest and dormancy and the fall of the leaves. Trees are encouraged to do so by preventing irrigation of the grape vines during November, December and January until the trees enter the resting phase and then the pruning process is completed and the buds and fruits grow in mid-July when the crop is to be harvested.

