

HM greets President of Nepal

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, on her country's Constitution Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Bidhya. His Majesty also wished the people of her country further progress and prosperity. – ONA



HM offers condolences

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offered condolences to King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, Camilla, the Queen Consort, and members of the British Royal Family on the demise of Queen Elizabeth II. His Majesty also expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the British Monarch on the occasion of his accession to the throne in the United Kingdom. — ONA

NEW YORK

HM GREETINGS TO GLOBAL SUMMIT

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the participants of the Transforming Education Summit held at the United Nations headquarters in New York. Dr Madeeha is leading the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the summit. Oman's participation comes in response to an invitation presented by the UN Secretary-General to debate the impact of the pandemic on the education sector. SEE P2

DILSHAD TRANSLATED INTO PERSIAN

The Omani novel titled Dilshad written by Omani novelist Bushra Khalfan, has been translated into Persian, said Asghar Ali Karmi, Iranian writer and translator. Karmi told Oman News Agency that the novel presents visual and social details distributed between the alleys of Muscat and its old neighbourhoods, which earned the novel vast narrative horizons that enable the reader to gauge the Omani oral and traditional heritage. Karmi expected that the Persian translation of the novel would be launched during the next edition of Tehran International Book Fair. — ONA

World bids adieu to Queen

DELEGATED BY HM, SAYYID BADR PARTICIPATES IN QUEEN'S FUNERAL SERVICE

LONDON: Delegated by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, took part in the official state funeral service of Queen Elizabeth II.

The service was held at Westminster Abbey in the British capital, London on Monday.

Present at the service were King Charles III of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Head of the Commonwealth, members of British Royal Family and a large congregation including world leaders and their representatives. The foreign minister was accompanied during the funeral service by Hussein bin Mohammed Muqaihel, Charge d'affaires of the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in London.

FINAL RESTING PLACE

Queen Elizabeth's coffin was lowered into a vault at Windsor Castle, her final resting place,



The Bearer Party takes the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II from the State Hearse into St George's Chapel inside Windsor Castle on Monday for the Committal Service for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. – AFP

on Monday after a day of inimitable pageantry that drew world leaders to her funeral and huge crowds to the streets to say

farewell to a revered monarch. Hundreds of thousands of well-wishers lined the route her hearse took from London, throwing

flowers, cheering and clapping as it passed from the city to the English countryside that she so loved much.

Many more had crammed into the capital to witness the procession and funeral, in a moving tribute to Britain's longest-serving monarch who won global respect during 70 years on the throne.

Inside the majestic Westminster Abbey where the funeral was held, some 500 presidents, prime ministers, foreign royal family members and dignitaries, including Joe Biden of the United States, were among the 2,000 congregation.

Later the attention switched to St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, where some 800 guests attended a committal service ahead of her burial. It concluded with the crown, orb and sceptre — symbols of the monarch's power and governance — being removed from the coffin and placed on the altar. SEE PAGES 6 AND 7

CBO gives nod for e-payment services

MUSCAT: The Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) held its third meeting for this year, on Monday.

The board discussed the most important economic, financial and fiscal developments in the Sultanate of Oman in 2022, and reviewed the financial data safety report of the banking sector, performance indicators through the banking oversight and supervision reports as well as some suggestions and studies that would enhance the efficiency of the CBO's fiscal policies.

The board also reviewed the financial position at the CBO and some reports submitted by the executive administration regarding financial stability, the situation of reserves and the performance of CBO's international investments.

The board approved applications for provision of e-

The board also reviewed the financial position at the CBO and some reports submitted by the executive administration regarding financial stability

payment services for Amwal Pay and Om Pay companies who met all the procedures and requirements for obtaining the licence. The step stems from the CBO's keenness in supporting and encouraging technological and electronic services and complementing some successful examples of the institutions that undertook the experience of the oversight experimental structure in line with the global fintech developments. — ONA

MADE IN DUQM DRYDOCK SHIP



Asyad Group announced the inauguration of the second ship built at Asyad Drydock in Duqm 'MEFK Pearl', a 24-metre long boat that will be operated at the Port of Fujairah. This new milestone in the group's shipbuilding journey further solidifies Asyad's position in world map as a logistics hub, supplying regional markets with high-tech technology and turnkey steel and aluminium ships. DETAILS ON P3



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YOU NEVER ACTUALLY OWN A PATEK PHILIPPE.
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Al-Qurum
MUSCAT - 22009991



GCC parliamentary meet reviews trade, cooperation

MUSCAT: The GCC Parliamentary Coordination and Foreign Relations Committee, held its 15th meeting under the presidency of the Sultanate of Oman at Al Bustan Palace hotel on Monday.

The meeting was headed by Yaqoub bin Mohammed al Harthy, Deputy Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

The meeting discussed the GCC joint topics submitted by the GCC legislative councils which included over 15 proposals.

Also discussed at the meeting were the roles of the GCC legislative councils in enhancing investment between the GCC states, supporting national economies and protecting social values through the mainstream and social media and supporting the realisation of cybersecurity by exploiting artificial intelligence.

The topics discussed during the meeting will be brought before 16th meeting of Heads of Shura, Representatives, National Assembly, and Parliament Councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

The meeting also discussed a proposal for forming a cooperation committee with parliaments of the Latin American states as well as a proposal to submit the final recommendations of the joint symposiums to the GCC Supreme Council.

The meeting approved the agenda of the 16th meeting of the Heads of Shura, Representatives, National Assembly, and Parliament Councils in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which will be held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura.

Education minister attends global education summit

NEW YORK: Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education and Chairperson of the Omani National Commission for Education, Science and Culture, led the Sultanate of Oman's delegation at the Transforming Education Summit held at the United Nations headquarters, on Monday.



The Sultanate of Oman's participation came in response to an invitation presented by the United Nations Secretary-General to debate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the education sector and throw light on the educational fields that require more development such as a safe integrated school environment, upgrading teachers' skills, education and digital transformation and the funding of education.

The summit was attended by heads and representatives of states and governments of member states, education ministers, United Nations agencies, civil society organisations concerned with education.

Dr Madeeha delivered a speech before the Transforming Education Summit in which she noted that Oman Vision 2040, which stemmed from a broad social consultation and consensus, concentrated on the modernisation of the educational system, supporting scientific research and innovation and enhancing social welfare. The Oman Vision 2040 views education as a fundamental pillar for achieving sustainable development.

'Oman is my destination' launched for students

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism signed an agreement of cooperation with the Ministry of Education to implement the "Oman is my destination" programme.

The programme aims to train students (grades 9-12) in the tourism sector.

The agreement was signed by Azzan bin Qasim al Busaidi, Tourism Under-Secretary, and Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Education Under-Secretary.

The cooperation agreement comes within the framework of grooming the entrepreneurial skills of students. It also aims to prepare them in launching their own student companies in the fields of tour guiding, hotels, hospitality, artisan products, conferences and exhibitions and adventure tourism. -- ONA

Three new hospitals under 10th Five-Year-Plan

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

In support of the health priority in the 10th Five-Year Plan, the Ministry of Economy has announced the details of a number of projects in the Health sector.

"The projects are part of the efforts to achieve the Universal Health Coverage Policy and to decentralise the health services in the country," the Ministry of Economy said in a statement.

The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (GSTB) recently floated tenders for the establishment of Al Falah Hospital in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, Al Nama Hospital in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, and the Samayil Hospital in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

As per the details available, the Al Falah Hospital will cater to 105,000 people in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, 40,000 people in Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, and 35,000 people in Al Kamil W'al Wafi.

The Samayil Hospital will

The plans to build these three hospitals (Al Namaa - Al Falah - Samayil) are in response to the Royal Orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in March 2022 to implement several development projects under the 10th Five Year Plan (2021-2025)

of Economy through its competencies is to set criteria for determining the priorities of development projects and methods of development planning to ensure a balance between the two development dimensions: Economic and social development, approve the annual development budget after the approval of the Council of Ministers, the statement said.

The concerned team at the Ministry of Economy studied, evaluated, and selected the priority of implementing development projects by discussing them with the Ministry of Health.

The 10th Five Year Development Plan approved a number of policies that achieve priority for health, including improving the institutional framework for healthcare.

"The adoption of the programme is in line with the strategic objectives of the Health priority in the 10th Five-Year development plan," the Ministry of Economy said.

إعلان مناقصة

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

SOHAR Port and Freezone invites Tenderers to the following tenders

تدعو شركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة الموردین للمشاركة في المناقصة أدناه

No. no	Tender Ref. الرقم المرجعي	Tender Title عنوان المناقصة	Tender Fee OMR. الرسوم
1	SIPC 2022/083	Auditorium Video Wall LED Screen for SOHAR Port and Freezone	26.250

- The above-mentioned tender fees including the VAT 5%.
- Tenderers can request to receive the electronic tender documents from 9:00 am Monday, 19/09/2022 until 4:00 pm on Thursday 29/09/2022.
- Tenderers to follow the below procedures and steps to obtain the electronic tender documents:

- تشمل الرسوم المناقصة المذكورة أعلاه ضريبة القيمة المضافة وفهرها 5٪
- يمكن للمقدمي العطاءات طلب استلام وثائق المناقصة إلكترونياً ابتداءً من يوم الاثنين الموافق ٢٠٢٢/٩/١٩ م الساعة ٩ صباحاً وحتى يوم الأحد الموافق ٢٠٢٢/٩/٢٩ م الساعة ٤ مساءً.
- على مقدمي العطاءات اتباع الإجراءات والخطوات التالية للحصول على مستندات المناقصة إلكترونياً.

الخطوة الأولى: يجب على مقدمي العطاءات سداد رسوم المناقصة وفقاً للتفاصيل المبينة أدناه

Account Name
اسم الحساب

Account Number
رقم الحساب

Bank Name
اسم البنك

SWIFT
رمز التحويلات كود

Sohar Industrial Port Co
شركة ميناء صحر الصناعي

3101-007970-500

Oman Arab bank SAOC – Main Br
البنك العربي عمان شارع بن عيسى - الفرع

OMABOMRXXXX

Note: Bank transfers is the only mode of payment accepted
ملاحظة: التحويل البنكي هي الطريقة الوحيدة المقبولة للدفع

Step 1: Interested Tenderers should remit the stated tender fees as per the below bank details:

الخطوة الثانية: يتعين على مقدمي العطاءات تقديم المستندات التالية:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents

All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc_procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الثالثة: سوف يستلم مقدمي العطاءات نسخة إلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة عبر البريد الإلكتروني.

- يحق لشركة ميناء صحر والمنطقة الحرة قبول أو رفض أي مورد بدون الإفصاح عن الأسباب.
- يلتزم على جميع المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة تقديم بطاقة زيادة إلى جانب مستندات الشركة.
- في حال وجود أي أسئلة أو استفسارات تتعلق بالمناقصة الرجاء التواصل معنا عبر البريد الإلكتروني: sipc_procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 2: Tenderers to send the following documents:

- A request for the electronic tender documents
- Scanned bank transfer
- The firm's commercial registration documents

All shall be communicated to the following e-mail address:
sipc_procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الرابعة: مستندات المناقصة

- طلب الحصول على النسخة الإلكترونية من مستندات المناقصة
- نسخة من إصال التحويل البنكي
- أوراق السجل التجاري للشركة

على أن يتم إرسالها إلى:
sipc_procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

Step 3: Tenderers will receive the electronic Tender Document by e-mail.

- SOHAR reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reasons
- All SMEs are requested to provide their Green Card along with the required documents

For any clarification regarding the tenders please send an e-mail to:
sipc_procurement@soharportandfreezone.com

الخطوة الخامسة: It all starts here

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National Museum board meets

MUSCAT: The Board of Trustees of the National Museum held its 9th meeting under the chairmanship of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the National Museum. During the meeting, the Board's members reviewed the 2022 semi-annual report for departments of administrative and financial affairs, the Museum Learning and Community outreach, the Collections department and the Media and Communication department.

INVITATION TO TENDER

Sohar Aluminium LLC (SA), PO Box 80, PC- 327, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:

Tender No. :	MM22-007
Tender Title :	SA Port Scrap sale
Scope :	Bidder shall bid for buying of Sohar Aluminium Port's assorted scrap.
Tender No. :	2022-ENG-SOW-0031
Tender Title :	Replacement of Coke Silo Access Lift
Scope :	Supplier shall do turnkey supply, installation, testing and commissioning of a fit-for-purpose replacement of Coke Silo access lift.
Document Issue Date :	27 September 2022
Last Date For Applying :	26 September 2022

Kindly send your email and company profile to: tender@sohar-aluminium.com

For list of active tenders visit: <https://www.sohar-aluminium.com/en/content/tender-listing>



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3



Scientific conference highlights development march of ROP

NIZWA: The scientific conference of the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences kicked off here on Monday under the theme “50 years: accomplishments and aspirations”.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. Present during the event was Lt Gen Hassan bin Mohsin al Shuraig, Inspector General of Police and Customs.

The conference aims to review the march of development of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) in various fields. It also highlights the latest technologies and training techniques used in preparing police personnel.

On the sidelines of the conference a cooperation programme was signed between ROP, represented by the Sultan



The conference highlights the latest technologies and training techniques used in preparing police personnel

Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences, and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The cooperation programme aims to provide the Oman Research Repository “Shuaa” with scientific papers that are published in the “Al Amana” journal, as well as many books, reports, audio and visual materials. — **ONA**

Call for improving medication safety

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH), represented by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Centre (DGQAC) in cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), on Monday organised the National Patient Safety Conference at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre under the theme “Medication without Harm: Medication Safety”. The conference was inaugurated by Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs. About 200 participants from all medical and para-medical categories attended the Conference.

The conference coincides with World Patient Safety Day, which falls on September



17 every year. It aims to raise global awareness of the significant burden of harm caused by medications due to making mistakes and unsafe therapeutic practices. It also calls for taking urgent actions to improve medication safety and involve the stockholders and key partners to prevent making medication mistakes and

reduce the damages caused by them.

In addition, the Conference touched upon engaging patients and families in co-designing medication safety interventions successfully.

Dr Ahmed bin Salim al Mandhari, WHO Regional Director, delivered a recorded speech during the Conference.

The Conference included a scientific exhibition on patient safety and medication safety. Around 15 authorities from various health sectors in the Sultanate of Oman participated in the exhibition. A group of medical professionals from Oman and abroad delivered lectures highlighting medication safety issues in order to promote this concept among the medical staff.

Second ship made in Duqm launched

DUQM: Asyad Group announced the inauguration of the second ship built at ASYAD Drydock in Duqm ‘MEFK Pearl’, a 24 metres long boat that will be operated at the Port of Fujairah. This new milestone in the Group’s shipbuilding journey further solidifies ASYAD’s position on the logistics world map as a hub, supplying regional markets with high-tech technologies and turnkey steel and aluminium ships.

Dr Ibrahim bin Bakhit al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping and Asyad Drydock, said, “This step complements the strategies developed by the Group to support the growth of the shipbuilding industry in Oman, and expand its portfolio to meet the needs of its customers in both regional and global markets.”

He added, “By using aluminium, we have been able to advance our shipbuilding capabilities at the Drydock. Together with our industry know-how and local engineering and design talents, we have been able to provide high-quality manufacturing services to our clients. Our ambitions don’t stop there, taking it one step further, we are also building specialised vessels for transportation, modern fishing and marine research.”

Al Nadhairi went on to explain that Asyad is working hand in hand with various government organisations and

the private sector to advance the shipbuilding industry in Oman. The partnership with the private-public sector aims to provide and meet the needs of the local market for multipurpose boats and ships for operations, navigational services, fishing and recreational purposes, in addition to maintenance.

Speaking about the partnership with the private sector, Hritik Khimji, Board Member of Khimji Ramdas Group, said: “Against the backdrop of building the first-ever modern boat in Oman, ‘Hulm Al Behar’, we are part of another joint cooperation with Asyad to build ‘MEFK Pearl’ which is designed with world-class specifications to facilitate docking support services and crew transportation in the Port of Fujairah. We are here to provide the best services to customers and contribute to the Sultanate of Oman’s efforts to advance the competitiveness of its logistics sector.”

Dr Abdulsalam bin Omar al Rabaani, Acting Chief Operating Officer of Asyad Drydock, added: “The Dock’s production workshop encompasses an area of more than 400,000 square metres and is equipped with world-class logistics capabilities and technical equipment, assuring an optimal working environment to construct high-quality vessels with fast delivery times.”

US Central Command Chief of Staff received



MUSCAT: Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo), received Maj Gen Patrick D Frank, Chief of Staff of the United States (US) Central Command on Monday. The two sides discussed several matters of common interest. The meeting was attended by Air Commodore Yousef bin Mohammed al Shuhi, Commander of the Air Defence Force at Rafo.

18th OCA ‘Towards Life’ Walkathon on November 1

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The 18th Annual Walkathon titled ‘Towards Life’, to support cancer patients, will take place on November 1 at Qurum Nature Park, announced Oman Cancer Association on Sunday at a press conference held at OCA headquarters.

The event will take place between 4 pm and 6.30 pm.

“As always, this symbolic walk demonstrates support to all cancer patients and showcases that they are not alone. Also, as part of

our policy to introduce cancer awareness among the younger generation, there will be a kid’s corner with a range of exciting and educational activities.”

As a mark of unity for the cause of cancer, the participants will wear high-quality T-shirts provided at the time of registration at OCA headquarters in Al Ghubra.

October is dedicated to breast cancer awareness. The month will see many awareness programmes by the OCA in support of the Global Pink Ribbon initiative in all the malls, some during weekdays and others during weekends.



The Mobile Mammography Unit will offer free mammogram services to all ladies above 40 in some of the malls. In addition,

there will also be free clinical breast examinations and daily programmes to teach young women how to undertake the self-

breast examination as part of the screening for breast cancer.

“It is important to note that breast cancer cases are very high in the Sultanate of Oman, mainly affecting young women under 40.

Oman Cancer Association had to suspend the awareness programme and annual Walkathon in 2019 due to Covid-19. In 2021 they successfully organised the 17th Walkathon virtually.

“People tend not to talk about cancer when going through it, but we want to talk about life. So we are sending a message according

to our theme — ‘Towards Life’. We want to tell people that there is life after cancer. This is very important, and we can only achieve that if we have early detection. So repeated early examination gives it an early diagnosis and total cure. There is life after cancer...we are walking towards life. We do not like to speak about death from cancer. That’s number one.”

“Number two, since cancer is increasing, we have to be careful, and we have to find a solution to get to the people, the community at large, and the grassroots of the country.”



GREEN ECONOMY



H O W G O O D I S I T F O R O M A N

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The transition towards a green economy has emerged as a necessity for a country like the Sultanate of Oman. It should be propagated at the national level through competitiveness, localising qualitative investments in this field, and adopting sustainability standards in the business environment, experts said.

However, it is necessary to list the possibilities, challenges and tools to implement a green economy.

Awareness is important to manage the transition as it is necessary to change the mindset of the general public. Omani companies have great opportunities to adopt the green economy policy. Basically, a Green Economy requires economic, social, and environmental pillars of sustainable development to build the concept. It cannot be done single-handedly but requires efforts by all factors together.

Experts suggest it should touch upon unsustainable consumption patterns, the introduction of green production processes in manufacturing, product development or environmentally friendly services, and the recruitment of qualified cadres that contribute to the promotion of sustainable practices, and keep pace with rapid and growing changes in this field.

Maymouna al Adawi, Director of the Office of the Oman Forum for Business and Partnership with the Private Sector at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), said, "The transformation towards a green economy is an important step towards achieving sustainability and growth for our national economy and the protection and effective management of environmental resources and the adoption of practices aimed at benefiting from the resources promoting sustainable use of green energy is an essential pillar of Oman's Vision 2040."

In a green economy, public and private investments are crucial to support the growth in employment and income. And this will contribute in such economic activities, infrastructure and assets that allow reduced carbon emissions and environment pollution, enhanced energy and resource efficiency, and prevention of the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is planning to organise the fifth session of its annual 'Trade Hours' initiative.

'The Oman Business Forum' on Wednesday (September 14, 2022) discussed the requirements of the transition to a green economy and global practices with the participation of a group of representatives from the public and private sectors.

"Adopting practices that support the green transformation approach must go through an integrated chain, starting with the sector government by supporting environmental sustainability policies and contributing to the rehabilitation and development of Omani cadres in the fields of the circular economy," adds Maymouna.

The onus lies on all parties. This should pass through the private sector through the production and manufacture of environmentally friendly products, and the transformation of line production in factories to support this trend, and ultimately to the consumer through changing daily consumption habits. However, shifting towards green economy is not without any challenges, even when there is a solid economic, environmental and social case for investing in greening trade.

According to her, they are related to limitations in financial and human resources, the absence of timely regulatory frameworks, and the absence of an enforcement system.



Ukraine says Russia strikes Pivdennoukrainsk N-plant

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy vowed there would be no let-up in Ukraine's fight to regain its territory as Kyiv said its troops had crossed a major river, paving the way for an assault on Russia's occupation forces in the eastern Donbas region.

Reflecting the dramatic change in momentum since Ukrainian forces routed Russian troops earlier this month in the northeast, US President Joe Biden offered his strongest prediction so far that the Ukraine would win the war. "They're defeating Russia," Biden said in an interview with CBS's "60 Minutes".

Victory would come only when Russian forces were completely driven from Ukrainian territory, and the United States would support Ukraine "as long as it takes", Biden said.

"Russia's turning out not to be as competent and capable as many people thought they were going to be."

Crossing the Oskil River is another important milestone in Ukraine's counter-offensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region. The river flows south into the Siversky Donets, which snakes through the Donbas, the main focus of Russia's invasion.

Further beyond lies Luhansk province, the base for Russia's separatist proxies since 2014 and fully in Russian hands since July after some of the war's bloodiest battles.

Ukrainian troops "have pushed across the Oskil. From yesterday, Ukraine controls the east bank", the Ukrainian Armed Forces wrote on Telegram late on Sunday.

Serhiy Gaidai, Ukrainian governor of Luhansk, wrote on



A Ukrainian serviceman gestures near a captured Russian tank with installed Ukrainian flags, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, near the town of Izium, in Kharkiv region. — Reuters

Telegram: "Luhansk region is right next door. De-occupation is not far away."

Gaidai said Ukrainian forces had regained full control of the town of Kreminna and the village of Bilohorivka. The two settlements are located on roads on the northern approach to the city of Lysychansk, whose fall after weeks of grinding battles in July put Luhansk wholly under Russian control.

Bilohorivka, the nearer of the two to Lysychansk, is located just 8 km from the city's outskirts.

Ukrainian forces swept through the Kharkiv region this month after bursting through the front line, sending thousands

Russia endangers the whole world. We have to stop it before it's too late

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY
President

of Russian troops fleeing and abandoning their tanks and ammunition. In recent days, the pace of the Ukrainian advance has again slowed, but Zelenskiy said this was only because the forces were consolidating and preparing

for further offensives.

"Perhaps it seems to some of you that after a series of victories we now have a lull of sorts," he said in his regular nightly address on Sunday. "But there will be no lull. There is preparation for the next series ... For Ukraine must be free. All of it."

Ukraine accused Russian forces on Monday of shelling near the Pivdennoukrainsk nuclear power plant in the country's southern Mykolaiv region.

A blast occurred 300 metres away from the reactors and damaged power plant buildings shortly after midnight, Ukraine's atomic power operator Energoatom said in a statement. — Reuters

2 killed as typhoon batters Japan with record rain

TOKYO: Typhoon Nanmadol brought ferocious winds and record rainfall to western Japan on Monday as one of the biggest storms to hit the country in years killed at least two people, disrupted transport and forced manufacturers to suspend operations.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delayed his departure to New York, where he is due to deliver a speech at the UN General Assembly.

"I postponed my scheduled departure from today to take stock of the damage caused by the typhoon and to take all possible measures for recovery," Kishida told reporters on Monday evening. "Circumstances permitting, I will leave tomorrow morning."

Japan's 14th typhoon of the season made landfall near Kagoshima city late on Sunday before battering the western island of Kyushu and roaring onto the main island of Honshu on Monday morning.

A river in Kyushu's Miyazaki prefecture overflowed, flooding fields and roads, footage from state broadcaster NHK showed. Other video showed a riverside house half hanging over a torrent, the tin roof ripped off a gas station, and a toppled billboard leaning over a street from the top of a building.

"We need to remain highly vigilant for heavy rains, gales, high waves and storm surges," a Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) official told a news conference.

NHK said one man was found dead inside his car, which was submerged to the rooftop in the middle of a field, while another man died after being caught in a landslide. One other person remains missing, and at least 87 people have been injured, NHK



High waves triggered by Typhoon Nanmadol are seen at a fishing port in Aki, Kochi Prefecture, western Japan. — Reuters

said.

About 340,000 households, most of them in Kyushu, were without electricity early on Monday, the trade ministry said, while Kyushu Railway Co said it had halted operations on Kyushu and Japan Airline Co Ltd and ANA Holdings cancelled about 800 flights, public broadcaster NHK reported.

The storm made landfall again in Shimane prefecture in western Honshu after tracking the coastline earlier on Monday, and was heading east at about 35 km per hour, the JMA said. The storm will veer into the Japan Sea for a second time and track the coast to the north of Honshu into Tuesday before crossing overland and moving northeast out into the Pacific, the agency projected.

— Reuters

US aircraft carrier to visit S Korea for first time



SEOUL: A US aircraft carrier will visit South Korea this week for joint drills for the first time in about four years, officials of both countries said on Monday, as the allies seek to deploy US nuclear-capable "strategic assets" to deter North Korea. USS Ronald Reagan will arrive at a naval base in the southern port city of Busan on Friday, South Korea's Navy said.

"By conducting combined drills, the Navies of the two countries plan to strengthen their military readiness and demonstrate the firm resolve of the South Korea-US alliance for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula," the statement said.

North Korea has denounced previous US military deployments and joint drills as rehearsals for war and proof of hostile policies by Washington and Seoul. — Reuters

US confirms release of US engineer from Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday confirmed the release of American engineer Mark Frerichs in exchange for senior Taliban figure Haji Bashir Noorzai, a senior Biden administration official said on Monday. Biden granted clemency to Noorzai after he spent 17 years in US government custody, the official said.

Mark was working as a civil engineer on construction projects in Afghanistan when he was "taken hostage", Washington previously said.

"After long negotiations, US citizen Mark Frerichs was handed over to an American delegation and that delegation handed over (Bashar Noorzai) to us today at Kabul airport," Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi said at a press conference.

"We are happy that at Kabul International Airport, in the capital of Afghanistan, we witnessed the wonderful ceremony of one of our compatriots returning home."

Noorzai was welcomed with a hero's fanfare by the



government of the newly-styled Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). Photos show he was greeted by masked Taliban soldiers bearing floral garlands.

"If the IEA had not shown its strong determination, I would not have been here today," Noorzai told reporters at the press conference.

"My release in exchange for an American will be a source of peace between Afghanistan and Americans," Noorzai is the second Afghan inmate released by the United States in recent months. In June, Assadullah Haroon was released after 15 years of detention in the

United States' notorious Guantanamo Bay prison.

Haroon was accused of links to Al Qaeda but languished without charge for years at the US detention centre in Cuba, after his arrest in 2006 whilst working as a honey trader. He was not released under the terms of a deal with the Taliban.

Afghan security analyst Hekmatullah Hekmat said Noorzai's release was a "major achievement" for Kabul's new rulers. "The Taliban can tell their foot soldiers and Afghans that they are able to bring back their people held by opposition groups," he said. — AFP



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No. (35/2022)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following biddings :

Serial	Bidding No.	Bidding Description	Document Fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquires submission	Deadline for submission
1	AB/05/2022	Building & Operating of Luxury Camping Tenets in Hawiyat Najim "Bimmah Sinkhole" at Wilayate Qurayat in Muscat Governorate	360/- OMR	22/12/2022	15/12/2022	26/12/2022
2	AB/07/2022	Managing & Operating of Innovative Activities in Hawiyat Najim "Bimmah Sinkhole" at Wilayate Qurayat in Muscat Governorate	360/- OMR	22/12/2022	15/12/2022	26/12/2022
3	AB/08/2022	Investing Plot Number (6089) at Al Amerat	355/- OMR	22/12/2022	15/12/2022	26/12/2022

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bids are invited to participate as per the following procedures starting from Sunday 25/09/2022:

- Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:
Bank Muscat | 0423010702710024
- A copy of the transaction's receipt MUST be send to the following e-mail (**MM.PC@mm.gov.om**), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name, office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commercial registration number of the company).
- The tender document will be provided to the company via email.
- 2:00 PM** on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered, even if the fee of the document is paid.

Submitted offers must be accompanied with a bond mentioned in the tender document valid for a period not less than (90) days issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. Bidding that do not meet the required bond **will not be accepted**.

Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and drop in the box located in Third floor at Directorate General of Quantity Surveying and Contracts in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

- Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website (**www.mm.gov.om**). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (**crm@mm.gov.om**).
- If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (**MM.PC@mm.gov.om**).
- 10:00 AM** on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.
- Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om



Britain's Prince George of Wales gets into a car after a service at Westminster Abbey on the day of the state funeral and burial of Britain's Queen Elizabeth. — AFP



Members of the public react as the State Gun Carriage carries the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II in the Ceremonial Procession following her State Funeral at Westminster Abbey, London. — Reuters



Britain's King Charles III salutes as he and Britain's Camilla, Queen Consort make their way by car to Windsor after the State Funeral Service of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. — AFP



Members of the public line up on The Long Walk in Windsor to see the coffin of the late Queen Elizabeth II making its final journey to Windsor Castle after the State Funeral Service of Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. — AFP

BRITAIN AND THE WORLD BID ADIEU TO QUEEN ELIZABETH II

WINDSOR CASTLE, UNITED KINGDOM: Britain said farewell to Queen Elizabeth II on Monday at a historic state funeral attended by world leaders, before a ceremonial journey past hundreds of thousands of mourners to her final place of rest.

Huge crowds gathered in London to watch as the queen's flag-draped coffin, topped with the Imperial State Crown, her orb and sceptre, was carried slowly to a gun carriage from parliament's Westminster Hall where it had lain in state since Wednesday.

To the tune of pipes and drums, the gun carriage — used at every state funeral since Queen Victoria's in 1901 — was then drawn by 142 junior enlisted sailors in the Royal Navy to Westminster Abbey.

The thousand-year-old church's tenor bell tolled 96 times at one-minute intervals -- one for every year of her life — and stopped a minute before the service began at 11 am.

In his funeral sermon, Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby praised the queen's life of duty and service to the UK and Commonwealth.

"People of loving service are rare in any walk of life. Leaders of loving service are still rarer," he told the 2,000 guests, who included US President Joe Biden and Japan's Emperor Naruhito.

The coffin was then borne, to the rhythmic strains of funeral marches, on a three-hour journey through the streets of London to Windsor Castle, west of the capital.

All along the route, a sea of arms were raised aloft, clutching mobile phones, to record the choreographed display of

military precision.

The last chants of "God save the queen" were heard as onlookers scattered flowers on the road, and muffled church bells rang in the distance.

Corgis: Army veteran Robert MacDonald, 48, was among the dense crowd lining the three-mile Long Walk leading up to Windsor Castle.

"I was in the infantry for 26 years, so the queen was my boss," he said, adding he wanted to "salute one last time as the hearse passed by".

On the Long Walk, the military cortege passed by the late queen's Fell pony, Carltonima Emma, standing without a rider. It was met at the castle by her last two corgi dogs, Muick and Sandy.

The queen — the longest-serving monarch in British history — died at Balmoral, her Scottish Highland retreat, on September 8 after a year of declining health.

Her eldest son and successor, King Charles III, dressed in ceremonial military uniform, followed the solemn processions in London, alongside his three siblings.

They were accompanied by Charles's eldest son Prince William, William's estranged brother, Prince Harry, and other senior royals.

William's two eldest children, George, aged nine, and Charlotte, aged seven, who are next in line to the throne, also walked behind the coffin in Westminster Abbey.

Late on Sunday, Charles, 73, and his wife, Queen Consort Camilla, 75, said they had been "deeply touched" by the public's flood of messages.

Queen's coffin lowered into vault ahead of burial

Monarchs and leaders gather in London for state funeral

Thousands line streets for display of pomp and pageantry

Queen Elizabeth was widely revered in Britain and beyond

Death comes as Britain faces risk of economic crisis



EMOTION, MAJESTY AT FUNERAL

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II's funeral service at Westminster Abbey on Monday ebbed between moments of triumph and peace, lament and emotion — and awesome majesty.

Inside the imposing Gothic church, royalty and government leaders said farewell to a monarch whose longevity and omnipresence made her — in the words of French President Emmanuel Macron — "The Queen". It was at the abbey in 1953 that she was crowned. It was there that she married Prince Philip, in 1947.

The service contained touches referencing that history. The hymn "The Lord's My Shepherd" was sung at her wedding to Philip; the choir's anthem "O Taste and see how gracious the Lord is", was composed for the coronation.

Thunder of drums The hubbub as people took their seats quietened down a full hour before the service, then fell silent as foreign royalty slowly entered the abbey. The coffin was borne in procession from nearby Westminster Hall and the thunder of the approaching drums and sound of the massed pipes reverberated in the church as the procession passed outside.

Westminster Abbey's tenor bell tolled every minute for 96 minutes, signifying the age at which Britain's longest-reigning sovereign died on September 8. — AFP

"I wanted simply to take this opportunity to say thank you," he said.

Britain, a country much changed since the queen's coronation in the same abbey in 1953, has dug deep into its centuries of tradition to honour the only monarch that most of its people have ever known.

'Moment of history' "It's once in a lifetime," said student Naomi Thompson, 22, camped out in the crowds at London's Hyde Park.

"It's a moment of history," said engineer Alice Garret, 28.

John MacKinnon, a 49-year-old insurance broker from London, added: "The ceremony was perfect in every way.

"Very spectacular, as it should be for a great queen."

Others unable to be in London gathered in cinemas and churches around England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to watch the service and procession on big screens.

Auto engineer Jamie Page, a 41-year-old former soldier, stood on Whitehall to observe the funeral procession, wearing his military medals from service in the Iraq war.

"She means everything, she was like a gift from God," he said.

But on Charles, the oldest person yet to ascend the British throne, Page added: "Who knows, time will tell."

The funeral — watched by the crowds in silence — lasted just under an hour.

It ended with trumpeters playing "The Last Post", two minutes of silence in memory of the queen and the reworded national anthem, "God Save the King". Oscar-winning actor and Royal Shakespeare Company

veteran Kenneth Branagh was in attendance, telling AFP it was "very solemn and done with great compassion".

"The music was very beautiful. It felt beautifully judged, respectful and sensitive," he said.

Driven to Windsor

The long procession filed past Downing Street, government buildings in Whitehall, through Horse Guards Parade and up The Mall, the tree-lined avenue that leads to Buckingham Palace decked out in red, white and blue. At nearby Wellington Arch, 6,000 members of the armed forces who had marched in hypnotic lockstep halted and the coffin was transferred to the royal hearse.

Charles saluted and the national anthem played again before the hearse headed by road to Windsor Castle.

The queen will be buried alongside her father king George VI, her mother queen Elizabeth and sister princess Margaret, reuniting in death the family who once called themselves "us four".

The coffin of her husband, Prince Philip, who died last year aged 99, will also be transferred to lie alongside her.

Elizabeth's funeral could not be more different from Philip's at St George's Chapel, Windsor, in April 2021.

Coronavirus restrictions limited mourners to just 30, led by the queen, a solitary figure in mourning black and a matching facemask.

In contrast on Monday, the abbey was packed with dignitaries and some ordinary Britons who were honoured for their military or community service, especially during the Covid pandemic.

— AFP/Reuters



Grenadier Guards escort the coffin as the Procession of the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, aboard the State Hearse, travels inside Windsor Castle ahead of the Committal Service for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II. – AFP

World says goodbye to Queen from cafes and consulates



People light candles during the funeral of Britain's Queen Elizabeth, outside the British Consulate-General in Hong Kong. – Reuters

HONG KONG/SYDNEY: In Hong Kong, hundreds kept up with Queen Elizabeth's funeral on their phones as they queued for hours to pay their tributes. In Sydney, Australia, customers packed into pubs to watch the ceremony on screens.

And in Paris, France, bar owner Thibaud Dupont showed off his new tattoo of the monarch on his forearm.

"She was not our queen, but she reigned over Britain for 70 years. The only other one that reigned longer was Louis XIV. And so that's a common history," he said.

Across the globe, crowds gathered outside British embassies and consulates and at cafes, bars

and other public places to bear witness to the pageantry unfurling thousands of miles away from their homes.

"Her presence is literally everywhere," IT professional Victor Lai said outside the British Consulate General in Hong Kong, where people have queued for the past 10 days to sign a memorial book.

"You've got the hospitals, the schools, and even the road names which are still under her name," the 30-year-old added.

Nearby, visitors had piled up flowers, hand-written notes, photographs, candles and other mementos in the centre of a city still marked by its 156-years of

British colonial rule.

The event had more than a historical resonance there.

The queen served as Hong Kong's head of state for 45 years, presiding over a period of fast development which some consider to be a golden age.

Since the territory was returned to Chinese rule in 1997, Britain's government, if not its monarch, has continued to play a role, sometimes angering Beijing by criticising its rule.

WE'RE LOSING A LEGACY

In the United States, the funeral received wall-to-wall coverage on cable channels and was a highlight on morning television talk shows.

Further afield, people turned up and switched on to wonder at the foreign ceremony. Others had more personal, national and constitutional ties to the late monarch, her family and the whole institution.

In Bahrain, British expatriates paid tribute to Elizabeth at a service at St Christopher's Cathedral in the capital Manama.

At the Lord Dudley Hotel in Sydney's eastern suburbs, Nina Whitfeld looked on with other customers.

"This is a moment in history. She's a steadfast for the monarchy and she's the glue that kept them together and she'll be missed. She meant a lot to me," Whitfeld said.

In a pub in Auckland, New Zealand, some customers felt the queen's death marked the end of an era. "I think we're losing a legacy more than anything," Christopher Wilken said.

"We are losing someone that has dedicated pretty much their entire life to the Commonwealth as a whole," he added, referring to the club of 56 countries that evolved out of the British Empire after World War Two.

In the Costa del Sol town of Mijas in southern Spain, Britons watched the funeral procession at a cafe and in a nearby bar.

"We have a big expat community in this area of Andalusia, and we are very proud today that a lot of people turned out to come and show their respects to our queen," said 59-year-old bar worker Mark Driver. "It's a sad day today but we are also here to celebrate our queen's 70-year reign." — Reuters

IN TEARS



Britain's Catherine, Princess of Wales, during the State Funeral Service for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in London. – AFP

BIRDS PAY RESPECT



Seagulls are seen in front of a large screen displaying a broadcast from London of the funeral procession for late Britain's Queen Elizabeth II at the Waterfront in Cape Town. – AFP

Do we have to diet or go for healthy eating?



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician and content creator

Even though many of us are struggling to lose weight yet cutting down on food is not a welcoming choice as the word ‘dieting’ has a certain element of negativity attached to it. While so many diets keep on circulating on the Internet guaranteeing successful weight loss results; people are still sceptical that dieting may cause more harm than good which is true to a certain extent. So, what you should be opting for your health goals? Dieting means restrng with certain foods for a certain period to lose weight. Moreover, what about the plethora of diets and their credibility that are circulating?

People are picking up tits and bits of dieting info randomly and implementing it assuming to bear fruitful results without any expert advice which is quite concerning. Rather than going for fad diets or some fancy diets, sustainable and healthy eating habits should be incorporated as a part of our lifestyle. The hardcore truth is that nobody can diet forever or you cannot restrict or deprive your body of certain nutrients just to get in the size you desperately want. Hence, healthy eating is about transforming food habits that can be adapted smoothly and not as a burden where all the nutritional body requirements are met.

HEALTHY EATING IS ABOUT TRANSFORMING FOOD HABITS THAT CAN BE ADAPTED SMOOTHLY AND NOT AS A BURDEN WHERE ALL THE NUTRITIONAL BODY REQUIREMENTS ARE MET

What we don’t realise is that our food habits have become so distorted over the years that even returning to healthy eating seems so invincible let alone dieting. Either our meal platters are flooding with excess and unhealthy carbs or we are not aware of the balanced portions to provide the right amount of nutrition needed.

According to research published in Nature, diets and restrained eating are often counterproductive and may even enhance the risk of long-term weight gain and eating disorders. A promising new perspective entails a shift from food as pure nourishment towards a more positive and well-being-centered perspective of human eating behaviour. In this context, a paradigm shift from “food as health” to “food as well-being” has been advocated. In the world we live, food is an emotion. There are countless choices to pick and satiate our taste buds until the alarm is rung by some lifestyle disease such as diabetes, obesity, or any cardiac

issue. But by then, our eating behaviours have become so spoilt that healthy eating sounds more like torture. Some think they can never eat rice, while others start believing their life totally on tasteless soups and smoothies from now onwards. Nevertheless, we never fully explore the option of healthy eating instead of depriving; where there are still innumerable and delectable options to savor. How big the foodie you might be, as you imbibe in your behaviour the practice of healthy eating, you will begin relishing the lost energy and vitality back in your life and of course, weight loss goals are successfully met.

Anti-immigrant rhetoric belies Italy’s foreign labour dependence

GILDAS LE ROUX

Italy’s far-right has put anti-immigrant rhetoric at the heart of its campaign for the September 25 election, despite the fact the eurozone’s third largest economy would freeze up without overseas labour. Brothers of Italy leader Giorgia Meloni and the League’s Matteo Salvini have pursued a nationalist “Italians First” agenda that looks set to propel them to power, with pledges to end mass migration a central part of their programme. One of Salvini’s first campaign stops was to the tiny island of Lampedusa, the landing point for many of the tens of thousands of migrants who reach Italian shores each year from North Africa. He said Lampedusa could not become “Europe’s refugee camp”. “Only those with permission should enter Italy,” he told a mass gathering of his League party on Sunday. Meloni has insisted she differentiates between people fleeing conflict and irregular economic migrants. But she drew criticism last month for reposting a video of a woman being raped, allegedly by an asylum seeker in an Italian town, which was later taken down for violating rules on social media networks. “Unfortunately our political debate associates immigrants with landings... creating the idea of huge flows... while the actual number of immigrants has been stable for a decade in Italy,” said Maurizio Ambrosini, a sociologist at Milan University. The political leaders’ views are in line with that of many Italians. Seventy-seven per cent of the population say immigration levels are “too high”, according to a YouGov survey last December for several newspapers across Europe — 10 points above the European Union average. Their biggest concern about immigration was the fear of a rise in crime. This was cited by some 53 per cent of the Italians surveyed, rising to 76 per cent of Brothers of Italy voters and 67 per cent of League voters. By contrast, the centre-left Democratic Party and the centre “see immigrants as a resource for the Italian economy”, said Ambrosini. But they often have difficulty explaining this to their voters “because it is an unpopular subject, and it is easier to have a debate about exclusion and hostility, which are immediately understandable”. Yet migrants are a potential lifeline for Italy, which could lose more than 20 per cent of its population in the next 50 years due to a declining birth rate, according to official figures. This decline is accompanied by a general ageing of the population. — AFP

A Welsh village embraces its bond



Patrick Kingsley

The writer is a British journalist and an international correspondent for NYT

As Queen Elizabeth II’s funeral held on Monday, Gaynor Madgwick has been of two minds: Should she watch the ceremony from her home in South Wales or join the crowds in London to pay her respects in person? Her brain says stay. Madgwick, 64, has feared crowds and confined spaces since an avalanche of slurry — a mixture of debris from a coal mine and water — cascaded down the hillside above her village of Aberfan in 1966. One of the worst civilian disasters in contemporary British history, the avalanche crushed the village school; killed 144 villagers, 116 of them children; and left Madgwick trapped, but alive, beneath the rubble. Her heart says go. The queen built an unusually strong relationship with Aberfan, beginning in the days after that very disaster and extending through four visits the queen made to the village. “She was the guardian angel of Aberfan,” Madgwick said one afternoon last week. “It was a lifelong friendship.” To many Britons, the death of Elizabeth — the ever-present backdrop to a century of dramatic social change — has felt like a rug snatched from beneath them, even if they never met or saw her. The mood in Aberfan, with its rare connection to the queen, is an acute illustration of that feeling. To be sure, the queen’s death and the resulting pageantry, set against fast-rising costs of living, have also been met by some in Aberfan with relative indifference and even frustration. As in other parts of Britain, it was a jolt that has awakened in some people a sense of alienation from the monarchy; frustration at the central government in London; and a gentle reassessment of national identity that, in Wales, includes calls for an independent Welsh state. But the dominant mood in Aberfan — a village of gray roofs and sandstone walls in a narrow Welsh valley — is one of quiet loss. The four visits the queen made are an almost unimaginable number for a village of roughly 3,500 residents. In the process, she made many villagers, hundreds of them still traumatised from the devastation of 1966, feel blessed and recognised by the highest person in the land, even as they felt betrayed by other arms of the

British state. “She looked over us; she protected us; she had sympathy; she had empathy,” Madgwick said. “The queen has never let us down.” The queen first arrived in Aberfan, a village built mostly in the 19th century to serve the local coal mine, in October 1966. Her visit was later reenacted in “The Crown,” the television series inspired by the queen’s life. Eight days earlier, waste from the mine, dumped for years on the hilltop above the village, had suddenly slipped down after a period of heavy rainfall. It was shortly before 9:15 am on the last day before the school year’s half-term

TO MANY BRITONS, THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH HAS FELT LIKE A RUG SNATCHED FROM BENEATH THEM, EVEN IF THEY NEVER MET OR SAW HER

break, and the students, ages 6 to 11, had only just arrived. Madgwick was 8 at the time. As her class began a math lesson, a wave of debris — almost 10 yards high in places and roughly the volume of 15 Olympic swimming pools — thundered through the school and the houses near it, killing just under half of

the children there that day. Madgwick survived, her leg broken by a dislodged radiator. Her sister and brother, Marilyn and Carl, both died. The scale of the disaster quickly made it a moment of national introspection and trauma, and the queen soon decided to visit. One of the biggest regrets of her reign was that she did not go sooner, a leading aide later said, and some villagers say the eight-day delay rankled the community at the time. But today, the residents largely remember her arrival as a moving gesture of solidarity from someone they never expected to lay eyes on. Citing eyewitnesses, villagers say she briefly cried after receiving a bouquet of flowers from survivors — immortalising her in village folklore by appearing as a mortal. “When I close my eyes, I can see her,” said Denise Morgan, 67, who lost a sister in the disaster and was among the crowd that welcomed the queen. “She didn’t come as a queen — she came as a mother,” Morgan said. “The loss, and the anguish, was just etched on her face.” That alone would have been enough to guarantee the queen a place in the folklore of most villages. But she returned in 1973 to open a community centre, in 1997 to plant a tree on the site of the disaster and in 2012 to open a new school. Throughout those decades, changes to the economy and social fabric of Aberfan epitomised wider shifts in the country at large. — New York Times



Tributes in memory of Queen Elizabeth II in the Aberfan Memorial Garden, in the Welsh community that the queen visited four times after an avalanche of coal slurry in October 1966 killed 116 children and 28 adults.

Education
for all —
#LetMeLearn



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior
journalist and a
radio anchor

Education is a whole process of an intake of what is not just there in the books but learning to be a part of a society and knowing to be part of the worldwide communities and having the ability to connect.

Private schools in Oman seemed to have this advantage as they seemed to have students of various nationalities enrolled.

A young Omani school student said how he has been intrigued by sushi, a

dish his classmate from Far East enjoys. Is it really uncooked fish, he had asked.

That is the beauty of getting to know other cultures at an earlier age. One can imagine how accepting and understanding children would be. In the past youngsters used to have pen pals, where we wrote letters and exchanged information. There was definitely mental growth and not to forget a pride in having a friend so far away.

Of course today social media is open to all, but the magic of pen pals seems to be missing. Look into WhatsApp groups of students and there seems to an attempt to be cool at the cost of politeness.

The fact however remains that it could be a phase teenagers go through and there is also no way other than letting the child understand this side of life too hoping one does parenting right enough for the teenager have the ability to discriminate from what is suitable and what is not.

The world today is a melting pot and how much ever we become universal the only way to success is good manners and attitude. Nevertheless, it goes without saying education is of at most importance. Currently the situation of education is going through the toughest phases ever. With the #LetMeLearn campaign happening on full swing with the Transforming Education Summit the reality of education globally is in focus.

There is a drastic need for teachers, 69 million teachers are needed to achieve universal basic

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education by 2030.

According to Unesco, qualified teachers shape the future of children and better world, “They must be supported, better paid and respected.”

Only one in three 10 year olds globally can read and understand a simple story. Unicef USA also tweeted, “We must face an uncomfortable truth: children are in school but not learning.”

Gordon Brown, during the summit, spoke about the 153 million children that are suffering from as shortage of food, famine and malnutrition. “School lessons are not enough, there has to be schools meals as well”, he said.

According to him the UN pledge to achieve universal education by 2030 can only be realised, “If we focus our attention and our funding on the needs of the crisis — affected, of refugees and of displaced children and young people throughout the world.”

On the other hand, according to Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, “In 2021, 244 million children and young people were out of school,” and this is being referred to as education crisis.

Unesco also has pointed out that too many girls globally are still denied their fundamental right to education. The figure is huge — 118.5 million girls globally out of school. That is not all about 771 million adults lack basic literacy skills. When we are young we may not comprehend the importance of education. As a teenager we dream about independence but the reality is education is true independence.

On the the other hand time does not stand still and the days that pass by will never return. The mind is eager for knowledge and with education our prospects grow. Education provides us the potential and we still need to further it with skills. Most importantly, education expands our mind and when it does the possibilities are endless. Dreams do not remain there, they become achievable.

If you are in school today, and you have been educated — you know it is a blessing.



WORLD'S
LARGEST
ROSTI

Chefs cook during a record attempt of the world's largest rosti (a Swiss dish consisting mainly of sauteed or shallow-fried potatoes) frying in a pan in the shape of a Swiss cross, during an event marking the 125th anniversary of the Swiss Farmers' Union (SBV) in Swiss capital Bern, on Monday. An estimated 1,300 kg of potatoes were used for the event. — AFP

With Queen Elizabeth II, 20th
century is also laid to rest

LUCIE PEYTERMANN

The laying to rest of Queen Elizabeth II, whose 70-year reign witnessed the aftermath of World War II, the Cold War and dizzying technological change, marks a further step in a leave-taking with the 20th century.

The British monarch exercises little real power but Elizabeth was a titanic figure on the 20th-century stage, whose first prime minister was wartime leader Winston Churchill, met the first man in space Yuri Gagarin, and made landmark visits to newly independent nations as the British Empire fell apart.

Her death at the age of 96 was even more symbolic coming just over a week after the passing of former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, 91, another among increasingly few surviving icons of the last century, who let the USSR dissolve and eastern Europe escape Moscow's grip.

Their disappearances comes as the world is still recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, shaken by Russia's war on Ukraine, which has revived fears of nuclear war, and waking up to how climate change could wreck the hopes of this and future generations.

“These were absolutely central figures whose like we will be hard-pressed to see again,” said Gilles Gressani, director of the French geopolitical journal Le Grand Continent.

“We are living in an interregnum — a space between two reigns, two eras,” he added.

“We often have this angst and anxiety; we know well that the world is changing because of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, terrorism, economic crises and

the climate crisis.”

Queen Elizabeth II was buried on Monday alongside her father, King George VI, and other family members at Windsor Castle outside London, after a state funeral attended by world leaders in the heart of the British capital.

Gradually, the world is losing the threads that still tied it to the 20th century, and just a few iconic figures remain alive. The great cultural giants are also taking

THEIR DISAPPEARANCES
COMES AS THE WORLD IS
STILL RECOVERING FROM
THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC,
SHAKEN BY RUSSIA'S WAR ON
UKRAINE, WHICH HAS REVIVED
FEARS OF NUCLEAR WAR, AND
WAKING UP TO HOW CLIMATE
CHANGE COULD WRECK THE
HOPES OF THIS AND FUTURE
GENERATIONS

their leave — Jean-Luc Godard, one of the most influential film-makers of the 20th century and the father of the French New Wave, died last week by assisted suicide.

Nelson Mandela, who campaigned to end apartheid in South Africa and then became its first majority-rule president, died in 2013. Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who led his country for half a century and was an icon of the Cold War, died in 2016.

Jimmy Carter, 97, is the sole former US president still alive to have ruled

exclusively in the 20th century, during a convulsive single mandate that saw the overthrow of the shah in the Islamic revolution in Iran.

His successors Ronald Reagan and George H W Bush died in 2004 and 2018 respectively.

The current Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetans based in exile in India since 1951, is 87 and still working.

Some of the greatest bridges now retained with the 20th century are cultural.

Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger, 79, still performs with his group while Beatles icon Paul McCartney, 80, continues with an illustrious solo career that included a rapturously received set at the Glastonbury Festival this year.

The queen herself was a symbol of a shift to modernity, with her coronation in 1953 the first major event televised around the world, and her first televised Christmas message in 1957 blazing a trail for other world leaders.

But above all, the death of the queen represents a major rupture with the memory of World War II, a conflict that her father King George VI endured along with his daughters and other Londoners in bomb-scarred London.

“The queen participated directly in the victory of 1945. Being one of the victors of 1945 left a strong mark on the identity of the United Kingdom and the queen embodied that until her death,” said Thomas Gomart, director of the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

“For me, the death of Elizabeth II, in a way, marks an end point for World War II,” he said. — AFP



A woman sheds a tear during the State Funeral Service for Britain's Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey in London on Monday. — AFP



OMAN POWER INTO U20 ASIAN CUP FINALS

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Oman confirmed their spot in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 finals after edging Thailand 1-0 on Sunday at Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah.

Ahad al Mashaikhi goal in the 21st minute delivered a significant triumph and raised Oman's record to six points to top their qualifying group G. The national team boys ended their qualifying campaign with two victories against the Philippines and Thailand and suffered a loss against Afghanistan 1-0. They scored four goals and conceded one.

The runners-up of the group, Thailand, will have to wait until completion of remaining group qualifying to know if they will advance to the finals as one of the five best second placed. In the same group, Philippines defeated Afghanistan 1-0 to finish third.

The above victory meant, Oman will attend to the AFC U20 Asian Cup finals for the third time and after an absence of many years. Oman team had qualified to the Asian event in 2000 and 2014.

Oman national head coach, David Gordo, said post the final match in the group that the team's objective was to advance into the finals. "The qualifiers were not easy to progress as we faced tough matches. The players showed top performance and managed to snatch one of the tickets to the finals. Thailand was a strong opponent and we suffered a lot in the match," the Spanish coach said.

"There were quite delay in the substitutions due to the physical condition of the players. When we ask the players on their physical status they respond that



they are well and can play. Our players had full capability and enthusiasm to qualify. I did not feel full satisfaction but I am fully responsible for the team. Work, work and work is the motto for the next period," he ended.

Nine teams confirmed their places in the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 Finals after finishing top of their qualifying groups on Sunday including: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Japan, Jordan, Korea Republic, Oman, Indonesia, Tajikistan and Iran. The other five best second-placed teams are still awaiting their berths to be confirmed following the conclusion of Group H which will be played in October.



360 participants in first edition of Suhar marathon

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Running enthusiasts will be on a date with excitement on Friday when the 'Excellence Performance', which specialises in running and cycling races, organises the 'Suhar Half Marathon' at the Suhar city in North Al Batinah Governorate with 360 participants from various sectors of the society.

The race categories are a half marathon for a distance of 21 km for men and women, the second race for a distance of 10 km for under 21 years men and women, while the third will be a dedicated 4 km race for school students and the fourth category will be a fun race, targeting school students for 1 km.

The marathon will start from the Sohar Sports Complex, passing through the Bahjat Al Anwar farm, Beach Street, the Friday market roundabout, and then returns to the starting point of the sports complex for all groups participating in the race.



The first edition of the half marathon in the Wilayat of Suhar comes due to the large number of marathons that were held during the last period in the Governorate of Muscat such as: The Wave Muscat Marathon, the Ironman Race, and the Dhofar Governorate Marathon in the autumn days. Therefore, the idea came to give the Al Batinah North Governorate an opportunity to organise such important races that enjoy wide participation. Also, it is an opportunity to allow the local participation, who find it difficult to travel for long distances.

Husam al Kindi, marketing director of Excellence Performance, indicated that the Suhar race will be held in September of each year, stressing that after the completion the race, a report will be made and submitted to the Oman Athletics Association as well as to the international federation to recognise the race, to be on the international racing calendar, to attract the largest number of international athletes.

REAL TRIUMPH AT ATLETICO IN SPIKY DERBY



MADRID: Rodrygo and Federico Valverde scored to earn Real Madrid a 2-1 win over neighbours Atletico Madrid in a heated derby on Sunday to return to the top of La Liga.

Carlo Ancelotti's side have started their title defence in perfect fashion, with a 100 per cent record from six games. This victory took Real two points above Barcelona, who had leapfrogged into first on Saturday.

The game was marred by racist chants aimed at Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior outside the stadium before the game, sparked by criticism of his dancing goal celebrations and a subsequent debate over whether that criticism was racist.

Fans also threw objects at Vinicius after a Real goal and aimed racist chants at him in the closing stages.

After another Brazilian, Rodrygo, broke the deadlock in the 18th minute, he danced

SPANISH LA LIGA RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Osasuna 0 Getafe 2 (Iglesias 30, Sosa 76)
Villarreal 1 (Baena 51) Sevilla 1 (Torres 8)
Real Betis 2 (Iglesias 15, 71) Girona 1 (A. Martinez 7)
Real Sociedad 2 (Sorloth 17, Mendez 29) Espanyol 1 (Exposito 19)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Hermoso 83) Real Madrid 2 (Rodrygo 18, Valverde 36)

Played Saturday

Real Mallorca 1 (Maffeo 25) Almeria 0
Barcelona 3 (Lewandowski 34, 48, Depay 41) Elche 0
Valencia 3 (Castillejo 37, Marcos Andre 82, Almeida 90+3) Celta Vigo 0
Athletic Bilbao 3 (I. Williams 14, Sancet 28, N. Williams 33) Rayo Vallecano 2 (Trejo 5, Falcao 80)

Played Friday

Valladolid 0 Cadiz 1 (Negredo 90+2)

what happened during the week," said Rodrygo.

"We responded on the pitch, and I only talk for myself. I am very happy to play well and to score another goal."

Madrid were missing the injured Karim Benzema while the hosts picked Antoine Griezmann in the starting line-up for the first time this season, and they were on top in the opening stages.

Spurred on by the rowdy atmosphere, Diego Simeone's side pressed high up the pitch and put Los Blancos on the back foot, with Felipe heading over and Dani Carvajal deflecting a Yannick Carrasco shot into the side netting.

Geoffrey Kondogbia launched an effort at goal which missed narrowly, but with Atletico dominant, Madrid landed a sucker-punch.

Aurelien Tchouameni scooped a delightful pass over the defence and Rodrygo smartly dispatched it past Jan Oblak.

KILLER BLOW

Atletico tried to fight back, with a fierce drive from Griezmann flying past the post and Thibault Courtois denying Carrasco, before Madrid struck another killer blow.

Vinicius, persistently whistled by Atletico fans, combined with Luka Modric before hitting the post and Fede Valverde followed up to slam into the net from close range after 36 minutes.

The Uruguayan has four goals and two assists in seven games across all competitions, cementing himself as an essential presence on the right flank for Ancelotti.

"(Valverde) and Rodrygo are very special players, because they are what the modern footballer has to be," said Ancelotti.

"They can play in various positions, they have something that stands out, technique, physique, we are delighted with them." — AFP

Oman players gear up for Asian Amateur chess in Muscat



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

With less than 10 days to go, the national chess squad is under an intensive training preparatory programme ahead of 2021-22 Asian Amateur Chess Championship which will run in Muscat during September 29 until October 6 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher.

Twenty players from national chess team began their final preparation in Al Amal club under watchful eyes of the Yemeni head coach Basheer al Qudaimi. The training camp will end on September 27.

"The training sessions are open for all the team members including junior, senior and women categories in the evening session. Each session will last for a period of four hours daily. The goal of the training programme is to enhance the technical performance of the players. Also, to assist them in developing critical thinking capacity and solve the common mistakes which may occur in the games," the head coach said.

The camp witnessed training the players on different techniques and strategies. The head coach focused in the previous session on providing a

detailed analysis on the player's performance during their participation in the regional and international events.

"Our objective in this camp is to train the players on long games which are played in an international events. This step will help the players to upgrade their technical level and to be adapted with international level practices," the Yemeni coach concluded.

As many as 186 players from 21 countries confirmed their attendance in the Asian Amateur tournament which is under organisation of Oman Chess Committee (OCC) in corporation with the Asian Chess Federation.

The participating players are from Bahrain, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Palestine, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, and the hosts Sultanate of Oman.

In the men's section, top three ranked players are Kyrgyzstan's Asan Kushof, Lebanon's Mahmoud Maasrani and Pakistan's Junaid Sohail. In the women's category, UAE's Rawda al Sarkal, Palestine's Iman Swan and Salma al Khelaifi from Qatar are in the top three respectively.

■ 'SAFWA' CLAIMS SECOND AT FRENCH BORDEAUX TRACK



Royal Cavalry's horse 'Safwa' won the second place in the seventh round competitions, at the French Bordeaux track. 'Safwa' was led by jockey Gary Senchaz, and coached by Elizabeth Bernard in the race allocated to purebred Arabian horses for a distance of 1,400 metres. 'Samala' owned by Sheikha Reem bint Mohammed al Thani of Qatar clinched the top honours, while 'Razak Tut' owned by Davi al Marri, came in third place.

Sri Lanka part ways with Moody ahead of World Cup

COLOMBO: Australian former international Tom Moody is set to leave his post as Sri Lanka's director of cricket, officials said on Monday, weeks before the T20 World Cup.

The 56-year-old's three-year contract is being terminated by "mutual agreement", Mohan de Silva, secretary of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), said.

A senior cricket source who did not wish to be named said that SLC "could not afford his fees in the long run", despite having savings of over \$40 million.

"We also feel we need a person who is more hands-on, who can spend more time in Sri Lanka," the source added.

The source said that the former Test player was paid \$1,850 a day plus expenses for the 100 days a year he was expected to spend in the country, which is suffering its worst economic downturn.



Moody will leave by the end of this month or before the T20 World Cup starts in Australia next month, another source said.

Former Sri Lanka head coach Moody was appointed director of cricket in February last year to help prepare the team for the T20 World Cup and the 50-over version in India in 2023.

There was no immediate comment from the Australian, who last month said that he was taking a similar director of cricket post at Desert Vipers in the newly

formed UAE-based International League T20.

Under Moody, Sri Lanka emerged earlier this month as surprise winners of the Asia Cup, seen as a tune-up for the World Cup.

As director of cricket Moody drew up a performance-based pay structure which was resisted by the national squad.

But they were eventually forced to cave in following threats that they would be dropped unless they agreed.

Sri Lanka has faced acute shortages of food, fuel and medicines since late last year, but Sri Lanka Cricket remains flush with cash, according to board officials.

Last week it donated half a million dollars to a cancer hospital which is desperately in need of life-saving medicines and medical equipment. — AFP

ODM NOW WILL PROVIDE RANKING POINTS FOR ATHLETES

OMAN DESERT MARATHON GETS ITRA APPROVAL

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

The eighth edition of the Oman Desert Marathon has been recognised by the International Trail Running Association (ITRA) so that the athletes will get international ranking points for their participation.

The Oman Desert Marathon now qualifies as the international race with ranking points.

The world trail running body has approved the race with 3 ITRA points, 1 Mountain point, and confirming the distance of 164.40 Km with a positive 1570 m elevation gain.

Earlier, seven-time Oman Desert Marathon winner Rachid El Morabity of Morocco had confirmed his participation in the race.

Rachid, one of the top world ultra-runner, has won the Marathon de Sables nine times to his credit.

The Moroccan athlete will be the major attraction for the eighth edition of the Oman Desert Marathon that will take place from January 21 to 23, 2023.

Now with the ITRA ranking points, the marathon will attract more top runners.

“This is a good international recognition for the Oman Desert Marathon as it runs into an eighth edition. We hope to get more elite athletes joining the marathon after getting the ranking points,” ODM race owner Said al Hajri, told the *Oman Daily Observer*.

About the preparations of the



marathon, Al Hajri said registrations would continue until one month before the competition.

“We have so far got good response from several athletes and more trail runners are expected now after the ITRA approval,” he said.

First held in 2013, the Oman Desert Marathon is a 165-kilometre race of self-sufficiency in four stages, including one night stage, through the spectacular Omani landscape with all its variety, from the Al Wasil oasis, crossing the desert to the Al Jawharat resort. The race is held in January to assure runners the best weather conditions.

The Oman Desert Marathon has now run up seven previous editions and in 2023 presents a 165-kilometre route in four stages through one of the most spectacular deserts in the world. The course in which the sand is present in every stage, offers the discovery of a very rich country in culture and landscape, while still being a tough challenge for those who want to enjoy a race through the desert.

In this edition, the stage distances will be 47, 55, 42 and 21 kilometres, thus offering the runners a spectacular route, an epic stage of 55 kilometres followed by a marathon distance, and a more relaxed last day for a good end to the party.

The last edition of OSD happened in 2019, in which the brothers Rachid and Mohammed El Morabity claimed the top two podium spots.

OMAN FM 90.4

SUNSET DRIVE

WEEKDAYS AT 4PM

WITH CHASE & BUBBA YU

Emotional Murray hopes to play in Davis Cup again

LONDON: Britain's Andy Murray said he felt "a bit emotional" over the idea he may have made his last appearance in the Davis Cup but the three-times Grand Slam champion added that he hopes to be selected again.

Murray defeated Kazakhstan's Dmitry Popko 6-3, 6-4 in Sunday's dead rubber following Britain's losses to the United States and the Netherlands.

The 35-year-old led Britain to their first Davis Cup title for 79 years in 2015, but has struggled to regain top form since undergoing two hip surgeries and is currently ranked 43rd in the world.

Murray said he felt emotional in the final moments of Sunday's match in front of his home crowd in Glasgow.

"I only thought about it at about 5-2 today, to be honest, in the second set," Murray told reporters when asked whether he thought it could be his last Davis Cup match.

"I wasn't thinking about it before the weekend or during any of the doubles matches or anything ... I lost my focus a bit and felt a little bit emotional about that."

The former world number one said getting the opportunity to play for Britain again would be difficult due to



the competition for places in the team.

"It's obviously not going to be easy with the players that we have... Then obviously don't know which way the captain will go with the doubles after the results here, as well," Murray said.

"Don't know what the future holds ... But if I'm selected, yeah, I'll definitely be involved," he added. — Reuters

business

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CRUDE
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Oman Crude \$90.37
Brent Crude \$89.11
Light Crude \$82.79



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Rollout of mandatory health insurance scheme to start in 2023

Key forum: Oman Health Exhibition and Conference to take place during September 26-28

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Implementation of the mandatory health insurance scheme for the private sector, also known as ‘Dhamani’, will commence in 2023, according to a key official of the healthcare sector. Dr Waleed al Zadjali, President of the Omani Medical Association (OMA), made the announcement at a press briefing on the upcoming Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC).

He said the scheme will be rolled out in phases to cover different categories of private companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman.

Under the the Dhamani scheme, private sector employees and their dependents will be covered by mandatory health insurance. Tourists and visitors to Oman will be brought under the purview of the programme as well. Health insurance is one of the fastest growing segments of the insurance industry in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the audited financial statements of the insurance sector, health insurance premiums rose 5.6 per cent to RO 164 million in 2021, and the value of compensation related to health insurance activity dipped 0.5 per



cent to RO 120 million. The data also showed an increase in the health insurance policies by 88 per cent to 23,000 policies.

Also in attendance at Monday’s press conference were Dr Rashid al Abri, OMA Vice President and Oman Health Conference Scientific Committee President; and Maha al Maskari, Risk Management Officer in the Directorate General of Private Health Establishments (Ministry of Health).

It was revealed that the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) is scheduled to take place during September 26 – 28, 2022 at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre in Hall Number 5. The event will be inaugurated by His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik bin Fahr al Said.

The event, organised by

CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company LLC) and conducted in partnership with Oman’s Ministry of Health (MoH), will be supported by the Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and Drug Control (PADCC), the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Center (DGQAC) and Directorate General of Private Health Establishments. Co-located at the event will be the Oman Health Conference organised by the Oman Medical Association (OMA), which is accredited by the Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) and CPD certification.

Cigna, the renowned healthcare and insurance company, will be the Silver Sponsor for the event. The timings for the exhibition are from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm,

while the conference will follow a predefined agenda from 9:00 am to 4:15 pm on all three days.

The exhibition has registered over 150 local and international exhibitors and expects to welcome more than 5,000 visitors.

According to Dr Waleed al Zadjali, the conference will feature presentations on a range of topics of critical importance to healthcare, including improvements to medical services, future of medicine, quality in hospitals, treating critical and emergency cases, and anaesthesia in surgeries. Other presentations will emphasise the importance of digital tools and electronic devices to enhance health services, reduce errors, maintaining efficient patient documentation, and therapeutic protocols.

Drones to undertake oilfield surveillance, inspections and surveys

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) signed on Monday a contract with Esbaar Artificial Intelligence Technologies and Drones to provide Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) Services for routine surveys, inspections, and surveillance tasks across PDO’s operations areas.

These systems will help reduce exposure to health, safety, and environment hazards, increase the efficiency of the related activities and enhance production through increased monitoring and better data assessment abilities, said PDO in a post.

A group of Omani youth will take over the operation and control of the drones after passing the training period, it further noted.

The use of remotely piloted aircraft and artificial intelligence techniques is widely accepted in the world as an ideal alternative to traditional methods of rugged inspection that require scaffolding or using lines of rope and sending inspection personnel to dangerous areas for imaging and examination.

By employing modern technologies in inspections, it has become possible to achieve the highest rates of rapid response in emergencies, aerial mapping, as well as close monitoring of projects and the surrounding environment.

According to a recent report by the World Economic Forum, remote drones and robotics are expected to be the most widely used and growing technologies in the oil and gas sector over the next three to five years.



PDO plans new solar project with battery storage in Oman

Energy transition: First wind farm in Block 6 targeted for commissioning in Q1 2024

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 19

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the country’s biggest producer of Oil & Gas, plans to set up a new utility-scale solar-based power project, along with a first ever battery storage system, in the northern part of its Block 6 concession in the Sultanate of Oman.

The proposed Independent Power Project (IPP) will be second of its kind in PDO’s concession after the successful launch of its 105 MW Amin Renewable Energy plant near Nimr in 2020. Procured as an IPP, the Amin project also recently secured the

European Union’s carbon credit registration – an achievement that will help PDO deliver on its energy transition and decarbonisation efforts.

“PDO is now considering the development of a second 100-MW solar storage IPP plant. The facility would have the option of an additional 30-MW battery storage system charged by an additional solar capacity to maintain PDO grid stability and safeguard power distribution,” the majority government-owned energy company said in its latest Sustainability Report.

“It would be monitored by the Yibal Central Power Control Centre with energy produced from the PV plant dispatched into the company’s transmission system at 132kV via the existing Saih Nihayda Depletion Compression Substation,” the report further noted.



Separately, PDO plans to bring into operation its first wind farm in 2024. The first of these projects, titled ‘Riyah-1’, is proposed to come at one of six locations identified as promising candidate sites for the installation of wind turbines.

During a year-long pre-feasibility study, the company collected data on wind speeds

and direction, atmospheric temperature and pressure to ascertain the suitability of the six locations for wind power projects.

“All six sites showed strong potential and legal and technical proposal documents are being drawn up for the first project, titled Riyah 1. Soil, topographical and logistics surveys are to be completed before the contracting

PDO IS NOW
CONSIDERING THE
DEVELOPMENT OF A
SECOND 100-MW SOLAR
STORAGE IPP PLANT

strategy is finalis`ed and tenders sought. The aim is to commission the first PDO wind farm by Q1 2024,” said PDO.

Several small-scale solar PV-based initiatives are also planned as well. They include solar rooftop and ground-mounted systems for installation in Mina Al Fahal and Ras Al Hamra complex.

Significantly, the green energy investments are in line with a commitment by PDO to become a net-zero emission energy company by 2050. In support of this goal, PDO has pledged to embrace energy transition objectives, reduce greenhouse gas

(GHG) emissions associated with its oil and gas operations, develop alternative GHG sinks to offset residual emissions, and pursue energy efficiency measures, especially around artificial lifting and water management which account for more than half the power it consumes.

Further, as a member of the National Hydrogen Alliance (Hy-Fly), PDO is supporting efforts to develop a hydrogen supply chain for the clean fuel industry.

“We are now playing an active role in this enterprise and the immediate goal is to produce green hydrogen at megawatt scale via water electrolysis for two main applications: the injection of H2 into the gas grid to minimise natural gas consumption; and the replacement of conventional heavy-duty vehicles (in the mid-long term) with hydrogen fuel cell vehicles,” the company added.

Food and Hospitality Oman 2022 to be held at OCEC

MUSCAT: Recognising the food and hospitality industry as a critical contributor to the national economy and in a continuous endeavour to develop the sector, the Sultanate of Oman is set to host a national-level event dedicated to the industry.

Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organising Company LLC), the Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO) exhibition is being held under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and hosted by Nitaj, at Hall 4 of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), on September 26-28, 2022. The event will be inaugurated by Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

With over 100 local and international exhibitors and an anticipated footfall of over 5000 attendees, the event will run

from 10 am to 7 pm every day. Meanwhile, an exclusive workshop will also be held on the same dates from 10:30 am to 4:00 pm.

The main sponsors of the event include Nakheel Oman Development Company, Oman Flour Mills Co. SAOG and Mazoon Dairy along with keen support from the Muscat Municipality. Acting as the Food and Technology Sponsor is Foodics, while the National Hospitality Institute (NHI) will participate as the Hospitality Partner. Co-located at the exhibition will be the free-to-attend FHO Workshop, which is accredited by CPD certification.

Commenting on the event, Nasiba al Rashdi, Corporate Development and Sustainability Manager, Nitaj said, “The continued success of this highly anticipated industry event reflects the growing importance of the food and hospitality sector. It is



also a celebration of Oman’s deep-rooted sense of hospitality and its intrinsic values that revolve around promoting a multicultural, inclusive and vibrant society.

FHO will not only provide an excellent networking platform for businesses in the sector but will also showcase innovations in the segment and the latest products

and services. Meanwhile, the series of competitions will be a fine demonstration of the skills, competencies and talents of various professionals in the field. We are confident that the event will provide an engaging experience for all.”

She further stated, “Oman has been an ardent supporter

of micro, small and medium enterprises, acknowledging them as engines of economic growth. Through its various endeavours, it has also provided the needed encouragement to aspiring professionals to make their mark in the industry. FHO is, therefore, in strong alignment with the nation’s strategic development plans and Oman Vision 2040.”

With a strong emphasis on promoting quality, the central theme of FHO’s workshop will be “Together for safe food”. Featuring leading local and international speakers, it will provide invaluable insights to stakeholders in the food ecosystem, including manufacturers, packers, transporters, hotels, restaurants, retailers, food safety professionals and food delivery partners and aggregators.

Promising to be an entertaining event for attendees, FHO will also

host a series of competitions to honour industry experts. While the 8th edition of the Oman Barista Competition will showcase the talents of the Sultanate of Oman’s finest baristas, the Professional Chef Competition will demonstrate the culinary excellence achieved by leading chefs in the country, thereby also boosting the HORECA industry.

In addition, Medina Ilyas and Al Roofoof Hotel Supplies & Trading will present the first Oman Qahwa Championship 2022 at the event. Participants will be judged based on their knowledge of Qahwa history, its preparation techniques, serving etiquette and taste. Exclusive competition for the waiters, the Waiter’s Race will provide an exciting opportunity for visitors to witness a display of skill, speed, technique and teamwork that waiters are trained to exhibit on the job daily.

CMA seminar to focus on Climate Risk Insurance Supervision

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) of the Sultanate of Oman and the Supervisory Authority of Insurance and Social Welfare of Morocco will jointly host the ‘The Middle East and North Africa Regional Seminar on the Supervision of Climate Risk Insurance Protection Gap’ in Muscat during September 27-28, 2022.

The event will be held within the framework of the MoU signed between the two regulators of the insurance sectors in the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Morocco in Q1 2022. The seminar will be conducted in collaboration with the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS), Access to Insurance Initiative (A2ii) and Sustainable Insurance Forum (SIF).

The seminar targets insurance supervisors in the MENA region and insurance industry specialists and professional and will discuss issues related to management of natural calamities to explore a



road map prepared by the IAIS on climate risk and the opinions of the regulators on the challenges facing insurance markets in the region as well as the issues facing the insurance regulators in the region in addition to the activities of A2ii and SIF on closing the climate risk insurance protection gap.

The forum will contribute to increasing the awareness on the importance of setting up hedging programmes and policies and enhancing the insurance’s

industry’s ability to face the challenges caused by climate change.

In recent years, the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed a number of exceptional climate conditions that can be described as natural calamities caused by climate change the most recent was Cyclone Shaheen.

Climate change is one of the most importance issues in our era with consequences on weather patterns, food production, sea level rise and catastrophic floods.

Bank Muscat continues to upskill its human resources



MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues to upskill its human resources by providing a range of learning and development opportunities to its employees. Recently, the bank commenced the training of new batches of Branch Managers through its Jadara Branch Manager Development Programme for 2022.

Thirty-nine employees from Bank Muscat and Meethaq Islamic Banking are taking part in the 8-module long programme, in two training batches being conducted by the bank’s Jadara Academy along with subject experts from 3 eminent training institutes.

The development of human resources is always a top priority at Bank Muscat, which makes substantial allocations in its annual budget for training and development of staff at all levels.

The regular training provided to its employees are part of the bank’s efforts to further strengthen its leadership pipeline and nurture internal talent take up additional responsibilities in the coming years.

A number of Bank Muscat employees who are taking part in the training expressed their happiness and appreciation for the various efforts made by the bank to develop Omani cadres in the banking and financial sector.

The Jadara Branch Manager Development Programme

is designed to be at par with “in class” branch manager development programmes and has over the years provided the bank with well-developed and talented branch managers. It blends online learning, classroom workshops and reliable assessments.

Siham bint Khalfan al MughaiZWiyah from Al Mulladdah Branch of Bank Muscat said: “Bank Muscat has always accorded top priority for human resources development and I am grateful for this training and learning opportunity, which will be crucial in performing to the best of my abilities especially that it focuses on strengthening the skills and capabilities of employees and give them an opportunity to discover their strength.

Completing this programme will have a major impact and help each one of us present here today to move up in our respective careers. This programme was enriching because it included topics such as administration, decision-making and taking on new responsibilities.”

Abdul Aziz Saif al Raisi from the Sohar branch of Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat said: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bank Muscat for providing its employees with continuous learning and training opportunities. Since I joined the bank in 2011, I received support through different training programmes.

This programme, which was developed by Jadara Academy, went a long way in improving our professional performance.

Such programmes are important because they help providing a work environment, which helps us perform our duties in the best way possible.”

As one of the top employers in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat constantly invests resources and time to further develop the skills of its employees and help them reach their peak potential.

From the moment of joining the bank, suitable training and development opportunities are provided to make employees skilled with work-related processes and procedures such that they can deliver to the best of their abilities.

In 2021, the bank provided over 15,000 learning opportunities to over 3,800 employees across various functional and knowledge areas. It also provided 13 external scholarships and 68 internal scholarships to its best talents as part of the efforts to contribute to the overall growth and development of a knowledge-based economy in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

It is a matter of great pride that most of Bank Muscat’s senior and middle management have reached their current positions rising within the bank’s ranks over the years after being provided ample learning and development opportunities.

VFS Global enters into strategic partnership with Oman Post

MUSCAT: Oman Post has entered into a strategic partnership with VFS Global, the world’s largest outsourcing and technology services specialist for governments and diplomatic missions worldwide, to offer a range of consular and citizen services on behalf of various government entities.

VFS Global will work with Oman Post, leveraging its advanced technology-driven solutions, professional expertise, and on-ground operations, to offer consular services through its extensive global network, namely Attestation related services, on behalf of Omani embassies worldwide. Sayyid Nasr al Busaidy, Vice-President for Retail and Customer Experience, Oman Post said, “Our partnership with VFS Global is the start of a strong collaboration to bring the residents of Oman quality service. I have full faith that



VFS Global’s expansive network and domain expertise will be truly beneficial to our customers.”

Atul Marwah, Chief Operating Officer - Attestation, Verification, Tourism & Value Added Services, VFS Global, said, “We are excited to begin this new partnership with Oman Post and give these

services a wider geographical reach over time. I am confident that customers in Oman will benefit greatly from the ease and convenience of the services offered through VFS Global.”

VFS Global offers visa services in Oman on behalf of 16 client governments.

Bonus cap
scrap would be
dubious Brexit
dividend

UK finance minister Kwasi Kwarteng wants to make the City more competitive. One idea, according to the Financial Times, is scrapping an old European rule that restricts bonuses to 200 per cent of fixed pay. It's an odd place to start and may make more meaningful changes less likely.

Granted, there are strong arguments for repealing the cap, which came into force in 2014 and means that a banker earning 1 million pounds can earn a maximum 2 million pound bonus.

The Bank of England in 2016 said that lenders simply increased base salaries to offset smaller bonuses, meaning overall compensation stayed the same. In other words, Barclays and the UK operations of Goldman Sachs and JPMorgan simply ended up with higher fixed costs and less flexibility to claw back payments. But it doesn't follow that scrapping the rules would deliver a major boost.

First, London-based advisers and traders will resist having their base salaries cut in favour of bigger bonuses, which effectively forces them to share more of the pain when markets are quiet and deals dry up.

Europeans like BNP Paribas and Deutsche Bank would still be subject to the bonus cap and would therefore be offering the comfort and security of higher fixed pay. That means UK banks and foreign ones operating in London might have to keep their compensation policies broadly the same to retain staff.

Second, making an apparent concession on the politically controversial topic of banker bonuses risks a public backlash.

The new government under Prime Minister Liz Truss favours a "more British style of regulation", and is keen to boost the City by tearing up old European rules. But bank chief executives generally favour continuity, and balk at measures that would provoke a regulatory tit-for-tat with Brussels. Their policy wish list involves tax relief and getting rid of ringfencing rules – both of which have nothing to do with Europe. Britain's post-Brexit Big Bang is shaping up to be more like a Big Flop. — Reuters

Europeans would still be subject to the bonus cap and would therefore be offering the comfort and security of higher fixed pay.



LIEF GOES ON

An elderly couple buys fruits at a local market in Kryvyj Rih, amid the Russian attack on Ukraine. Between missile strikes and unemployment, life is tough in Kryvyj Rih, but inhabitants keep their will to go on, following the President's advice, in his hometown.

– AFP

Will the Federal Reserve strangle
Latin America again?



ERNESTO TALVI

The writer, a former minister of foreign affairs of Uruguay, is a senior fellow at Real Instituto Elcano in Madrid.

In the 1980s, the Federal Reserve's dramatic interest-rate hikes led to a lost decade of economic growth in highly indebted Latin American countries. Today, however, the US itself is highly leveraged, which will make the Fed hesitant to pursue measures that imply severe collateral damage elsewhere.

Thirty-five years after former US Federal Reserve Chair Paul Volcker left office (and nearly three years after his death), the mere mention of his name still gives shivers to Latin Americans who remember the economic devastation caused by his battle against runaway inflation in the 1980s.

With US inflation near a 40-year high, at 8.3 per cent in August, Fed Chair Jerome Powell recently signalled policymakers' commitment to hiking interest rates further, prompting many to wonder if Latin America is adequately protected against the collateral economic damage of another "Volcker Moment".

In April 1980, consumer prices in the United States increased at an annual rate of 14.6 per cent, and the Fed under Volcker responded aggressively. The benchmark federal funds rate rose from 9.9 per cent in July 1980 to 22 per cent by the end of that year, leading to a sharp and protracted

recession in 1981 and 1982.

The US unemployment rate soared, and it took three years to return to its level before Volcker began his anti-inflation crusade. The US dollar appreciated 50 per cent against the Deutsche Mark – then Europe's predominant currency – and commodity prices plummeted. It worked: the Fed's drastic measures ultimately tamed inflation.

But the Fed's victory cost Latin America dearly, thanks to the quadruple whammy of sky-high interest rates and recession in the US, dollar appreciation, and the decline in commodity prices. Over-indebtedness, sovereign defaults, bank failures, and depressed investment led to a "lost decade" of negative growth in GDP per capita and widespread human suffering, with more than 20 million people falling into extreme poverty.

The region started to recover only in 1989, following a massive external-debt restructuring promoted by then-US Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady. Of course, Latin America's lost decade was not solely the Fed's doing.

External debt among the region's countries had risen significantly since the mid-1970s, owing to global banks'

recycling of petrodollars following the fourfold increase in oil prices in 1973. In 1980, as US interest rates went through the roof, external debt in Latin America stood at 1.8 times the value of annual exports.

Today, Latin America's ratio of external debt to exports is identical to the 1980 level and twice as high relative to GDP. But jitters about the Fed's monetary policy are unfounded, owing to the US economy's own vulnerabilities in that regard.

Whereas the total debt of US households, corporations, and the federal government was equivalent to 100 per cent of GDP in 1980, today that ratio stands at a whopping 220 per cent.

Despite Powell's tough rhetoric, the Fed will not engineer the aggressive interest-rate hikes that many experts think are needed. Faced with a choice between allowing inflation to overshoot its target and increasing interest rates substantially above current inflation levels, the Fed will choose the former.

The reason is straightforward: Choosing the latter might trigger a domestic financial and economic crisis. In 1980, highly indebted Latin American countries paid a high price for the Fed's anti-inflationary measures. © Project Syndicate, 2022

‘Crippling’ energy bills force Europe’s factories to go dark



LIZ ALDERMAN

The author is the Paris-based chief European business correspondent for The New York Times, covering economic and inequality challenges around Europe.

The furnace, heated to 1,500 degrees Celsius, was glowing red. Workers at the Arc International glass factory loaded it with sand that slowly pooled into a molten mass. Nearby on the factory floor, machines transformed the shapeless liquid with a blast of hot air into thousands of delicate wine glasses, destined for sale to restaurants and homes worldwide.

Nicholas Hodler, the CEO, surveyed the assembly line, shimmering blue with natural gas flames. For years, Arc had been powered by cheap energy that helped turn the company into the world's largest producer of glass tableware — and a vital employer in this working-class region of northern France.

But the impact of Russia's abrupt cut-off of gas to Europe has doused the business with new risks. Energy prices have climbed so fast that Hodler has had to rewrite business

forecasts six times in two months. Recently, he put one-third of Arc's 4,500 employees on partial furlough to save money.

Four of the factory's nine furnaces will be idled; the others will be switched from natural gas to diesel, a cheaper but more polluting fuel. "It's the most dramatic situation we have ever encountered," Hodler said, shouting to be heard over the din of clinking glasses. "For energy-intensive businesses like ours, it's crippling." Arc is not alone.

High energy prices are lashing European industry, forcing factories to cut production quickly and put tens of thousands of employees on furlough. The cutbacks, though expected to be temporary, are raising the risks of a painful recession in Europe.

Industrial production in the euro area fell 2.3 per cent in July from a year ago, the biggest drop in more than two years. The whirlwind has unnerved the inhabitants of Arques, a town

whose fortunes have been tied to glassmaking for more than a century. The modern-day Arc was founded in 1825 as the Verrerie Cristallerie d'Arques, then a small local maker of fine crystal goblets.

Today, Arc's operations are enormous, spanning an area nearly half the size of New York's Central Park. Its mass is such that Arc indirectly generates another 15,000 or so jobs in the region, from cardboard factories that package its glass to transport companies ferrying its products.

Arc's other factories are in China; Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and New Jersey. "The shutdown of the furnaces is bad news," said one worker, a 28-year veteran of the factory, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of compromising his job.

"Sure, high energy prices are having an impact," he added, "but it's scary how fast it's happening." To some extent, the crisis is a blowback from European sanctions

that were intended to punish Russia for its invasion of Ukraine. The pain has undermined confidence at European companies and their ability to plan.

European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, proposed offsetting the hit by capping revenue from low-cost electricity generators and forcing fossil fuel firms to share the profit they make from soaring energy prices.

But the solutions may not be fast enough. Costs have already soared beyond what many manufacturers can afford. Thousands of European companies are near the end of fixed energy contracts signed when prices were cheaper, and must renew them in October at current prices.

Year-ahead electricity prices, which are tied to the cost of gas, are around 1,000 euros (about \$1,000) per megawatt-hour in Germany and France, while natural gas is at record highs of around 230 euros

per megawatt-hour.

Hodler is labouring to steer Arc away from trouble, following years of financial difficulties linked to over-expansion and, more recently, pandemic lockdowns.

In December, shortly after Holder took over in a management shake-up, Arc received an emergency 45 million euro loan backed by the French state and is now asking the government for additional relief from high energy bills.

The site, which consumes as much energy as 200,000 homes, makes "arts de table," including Luminarc dinner plates and Cristal d'Arques-branded table and barware. All told, Arc produces 4 million glasses a day, as well as items like candle holders for Bath & Body Works and promotional glasses for Heineken and McDonald's. Doing so requires intense heat to melt sand into glass in furnaces that must stay lit 24 hours a day.

— The New York Times

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#Living_with_COVID19



Becoming Violetta and what to expect in ROHM's new season

The Royal Opera House Muscat will open its new season this Thursday with La Traviata, a Giuseppe Verdi opera performed by Teatro Carlo Felice Di Genova and headlined by Placido Domingo. These are the things to expect and learn more about Georgian operatic soprano Nino Machaidze who will be performing as Violetta Valery... **P20**

Spielberg's 'The Fabelmans' wins Toronto festival top prize

STEVEN SPIELBERG'S deeply personal new movie "The Fabelmans" secured its position as an early Oscars frontrunner on Sunday by winning the top prize at the Toronto International Film festival.

"The Fabelmans," out in theaters in November, is a semi-autobiographical drama based on Spielberg's childhood, covering his parents' troubled marriage, anti-Semitic bullying and his early efforts directing zero-budget movies with his teenage friends. It earned a raucous

standing ovation from the audience at its world premiere last weekend at the Toronto festival, known as TIFF.

"As I said on stage the other night, above all I'm glad I brought this film to Toronto," Spielberg said in a statement on Sunday.

"This is the most personal film I've made and the warm reception from everyone in Toronto made my first visit to TIFF so intimate and personal for me and my entire 'Fabelman' family."



Voted for by audiences, the People's Choice Award at North America's biggest film festival has become something of an early Oscars bellwether, predicting eventual Academy Award best-picture winners such as "Nomadland" in 2020.

Spielberg, considered one of Hollywood's greatest living directors, has won three Academy Awards: best picture and best director for "Schindler's List,"

and best director again for "Saving Private Ryan."

He has been nominated for 19 Oscars to date, and will be expected to add to that tally at next year's Academy Awards, on March 12 in Los Angeles.

The last 10 winners of the Toronto People's Choice Awards were all nominated for best picture at the Academy Awards, with three winning the Oscar, including

2019's surprise victor "Green Book."

"12 Years a Slave" (2013), "The King's Speech" (2010) and "Slumdog Millionaire" (2008) all began their journeys to Oscar glory with the Toronto prize.

At its premiere last weekend, Spielberg told a rapturous audience how he had long wanted to make such a deeply personal movie, but had eventually been motivated by the "fear" of the pandemic.

"I don't think anybody knew in March or April of 2020 what was going to be the state of the art, the state of life, even a year from then," said Spielberg.

"I just felt that if I was going to leave anything behind, what was the thing that I really need to resolve and unpack about my mom and my dad and my sisters?"

"It wasn't now or never, but it almost felt that way," said the 75-year-old director.

Toronto runners-up included "Women Talking" by Sarah Polley and "Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery" by Rian Johnson.

The top documentary prize went to Hubert Davis's "Black Ice," a Canadian movie about historic racism in the world of professional ice hockey.

The Toronto festival, known for its large cinephile crowds and A-list stars, was hit badly by the pandemic, but this year saw the return of packed audiences and red carpets. — AFP

READ

THE MARRIAGE PORTRAIT

BY MAGGIE O'FARRELL

In 1550s Florence, the future of the third daughter of the grand duke seems uncertain after she is thrust into a marriage.



TRAVEL TALES

A giant 30-metre high bronze statue representing an Amazon is seen in central Cotonou as a symbol of national identity and key part of its rich history to showcase in a bid to attract tourists to the country. Benin's historic female warriors known as the Amazones of Dahomey are legendary across West Africa, but a Hollywood production is bringing them again to the limelight. The Woman King, released last Friday and shown at one Cotonou's rare cinemas on Saturday, is inspired by the story of the Agojie women who protected the ancient Kingdom of Dahomey and fought against French colonial troops in the 18th century. — AFP



MOVIE TIME

Bollywood actors Radhika Apte (L), Rohit Saraf (C) and Yogita Bahamian pose for pictures during the song launch of the upcoming Indian Hindi-language action thriller film 'Vikram Vedha' in Mumbai. — AFP





London Fashion Week opens in mourning for queen

A SCALED-BACK LONDON Fashion Week opened with catwalk shows on Friday but without after-show parties following the death of Queen Elizabeth II and with a pause planned for her funeral next week.

The twice-yearly event had planned to get fully back on track after two years of Covid disruption that predicated virtual shows.

But the death of the queen, aged 96, on September 8 has seen the industry showpiece scaled-back, with high-fashion brands including Burberry and Raf Simons cancelling their shows.

"We are in a period of national mourning," Caroline Rush, chief executive of the British Fashion Council, which organises the event, told AFP.

Rush noted the importance of being "very mindful... of what's happening in the country and of course, recognising the passing of our monarch, who has been a fantastic champion of our industry for so many years".

Britain will hold a minute's silence on Sunday at 1900 GMT and LFW plans to take part.

The queen, seen as a fashion icon during her 70 years on the throne, launched the QEII Award for British Design at LFW in 2018, presenting Richard Quinn with the inaugural award.

With parties postponed, this season's London event will focus on the business side of securing orders for the clothes featured on the runway for next spring.

Shows that had been scheduled for Monday, when Britain will hold a state funeral for the late queen, have, where possible, been postponed until Tuesday.

Quinn will close out the catwalk schedule on Tuesday.

"That image of when the queen came to London Fashion Week was actually at Richard's first fashion show and it was a fantastic way to celebrate his brilliant creativity and the impact he was already having back then in 2018," Rush said. — AFP



CHANGING WORLD

The Wedding Photographer Favoured by High Society and Fashion Royalty



GERMAN LARKIN HAD never photographed a wedding when he booked his first job, at the Palace of Versailles in May 2017.

In the past year, he has taken pictures at the April wedding of celebrity Generation Z couple Nicola Peltz and Brooklyn Beckham; the February nuptials of Edward Enninful, British Vogue's editor-in-chief, and Alec Maxwell, a film-maker; and the November marriage of Paris Hilton and venture capitalist Carter Reum.

But were it not for a chance encounter, Larkin might have never become a wedding photographer.

Larkin, who is 41 and lives in Milan, was out one night in Florence, Italy, in June 2016, when he bumped into his friend Natalya Maximova while she was having dinner with Leslie Cohen Amon, a swimwear designer. Cohen Amon at the time was planning her wedding to Ronen Chichportch, who works in the diamond industry. Maximova, knowing that Larkin had been photographing at parties and fashion events, saw an opportunity.

"Natalya knew I was looking for a photographer to shoot my wedding and mentioned how talented he is when she introduced us," Cohen Amon said. "I was specifically looking for someone different, who had never shot a wedding but had a connection with fashion — more an artist than a photographer."

With no formal portfolio to show her, Larkin scrolled through his Instagram account for Cohen Amon, who then asked on the spot if she could book him for her nuptials at Versailles in France. "His images were strikingly good," she said. "He had a way to use flash like no one else."

That Larkin had no previous experience or even an interest in photographing weddings did not matter once Cohen Amon mentioned her venue. Of the opportunity, Larkin had one thought: "Versailles? Yes, please!"

After the wedding, Larkin's photographs appeared with an article about the event on Vogue.com. (The article was written freelance by this writer, who did not know Larkin or the couple when she pitched it after seeing photos of the wedding shared on Instagram by Giambattista Valli, the fashion designer who made Cohen Amon's dress.)

It wasn't long before other couples took notice of Larkin's career pivot.

High-profile nuptials he has since photographed also include the July 2021 wedding of Princess Diana's niece Lady Kitty Spencer and Michael Lewis, the chair of fashion conglomerate Foschini Group; the September 2020 marriage of model and charity founder Natalia Vodianova and fashion executive Antoine Arnauld; the January 2020 nuptials of Dasha Zhukova, an entrepreneur in the art and magazine worlds, and shipping heir Stavros Niarchos III; and the July 2019 wedding of Elie Saab Jr., the CEO of his father Elie Saab's namesake fashion company, and Christina Mourad.

A WINDING PATH TO WEDDINGS

Larkin, who was born in Semey, Kazakhstan, to a German father and Russian mother, did not professionally pick up a camera until he was 30.

At 13, his parents divorced and he moved to Nuremberg, Germany, with his father. Three years later, at 16, he moved to Moscow to live with his mother and at 19, he moved to Milan, where he graduated from Bocconi University with a bachelor's degree in sociology in 2003. Larkin then sought opportunities to "do something in media," as he put it.

He spent six years working in press offices for fashion companies including Aeffe, an Italian business that owns Moschino and other labels, before starting to write freelance for publications including Style.com, Russian Tatler, Grazia and Elle Ukraine.

As a writer, Larkin gravitated towards covering fashion shows and other events that drew "a cool gathering of people," he said. For certain assignments, he would have to suggest pictures to run with a story, but often struggled to find photos that he liked on wire services.

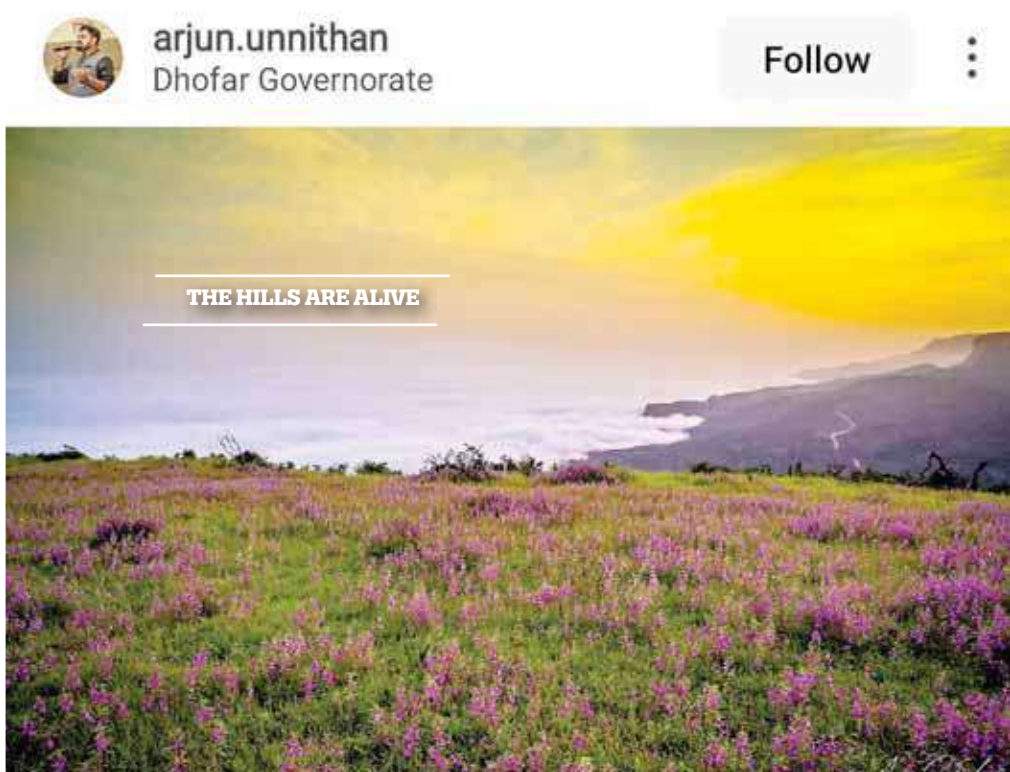
"That's when my artist-photographer friend Timofey Kolesnikov showed me this small Leica D-Lux camera, which was really impressive," said Larkin, who in early 2011 bought his own Leica camera so he could photograph events that he wrote about. (Leica remains his preferred brand to this day, although he also uses a Canon camera.)

Larkin, who had no formal photography training, said that his approach to the medium was influenced by his background in sociology. "I was really studying society with my lens," he said, "to capture the rawness of what was happening behind the scenes at very glamorous events." From the start, he was less interested in staged photo ops than he was in seeking out what he described as "real life," or what was going on "at the tables, on the tables and under the tables." — NYT



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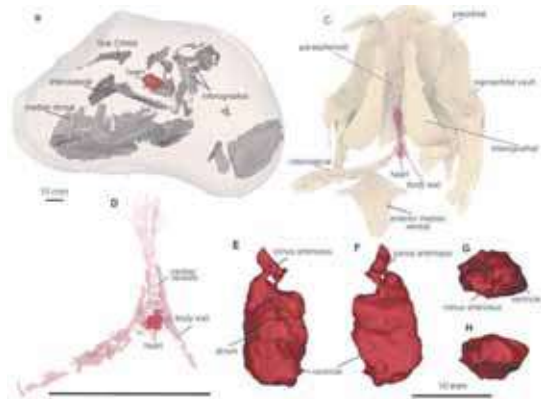
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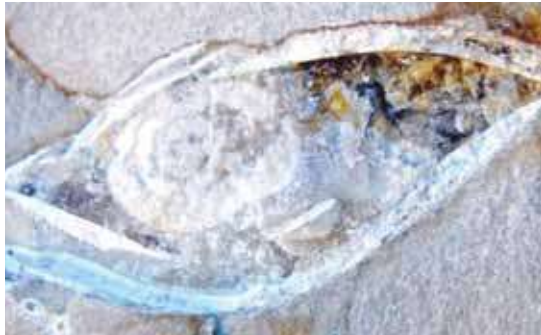
AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

380m-year-old 'beautifully preserved' fish heart is oldest ever found



SCIENTISTS BELIEVE they have discovered what could be the oldest heart ever, dating back 380 million years. The muscular organ comes from a fossilised jawed fish that swam in the waters during the Devonian period, between 419 million and 359 million years ago. Alongside the "beautifully preserved" heart, researchers also found a separate fossilised stomach, intestine and liver. According to the scientists, the findings, published in the journal *Science*, suggest the organs come from the body of a fish from the arthrodire family — an extinct group of armoured fishes which have anatomies similar to a modern shark. The hope is that the discovery could shed light on how creatures, including humans, evolved. Lead researcher Professor Kate Trinajstić, from Curtin University in Australia, described their finding as "remarkable" as it is very rare to find soft tissues of ancient species so well preserved. Prof Trinajstić said: "As a palaeontologist who has studied fossils for more than 20 years, I was truly



amazed to find a 3D and beautifully preserved heart in a 380-million-year-old ancestor. "Evolution is often thought of as a series of small steps, but these ancient fossils suggest there was a larger leap between jawless and jawed vertebrates. "These fish literally have their hearts in their mouths and under their gills — just like sharks today." Based on what they uncovered, the researchers created 3D models of the jawed fish, which showed the heart was made up of two chambers, with the smaller one sitting on top. Prof Trinajstić said their findings offer a "unique window" into how the head and neck region began to evolve to accommodate jaws. She said: "For the first time, we can see all the organs together in a primitive jawed fish and we were especially surprised to learn that they were not so different from us. "However, there was one critical difference — the liver was large and enabled the fish to remain buoyant, just like sharks today. "Some of today's bony fish such as lungfish and bichirs have lungs that evolved from swim bladders but it was significant that we found no evidence of lungs in any of the extinct armoured fishes we examined, which suggests that they evolved independently in the bony fishes at a later date." The fossils were found in the Gogo Formation in the Kimberley region of western Australia, a reef which preserves unique fauna and flora from the late Devonian period. — **PA Media/dpa**

DINING

Thai pop-up wins fans with crunchless cricket burgers



THERE'S NO CRUNCH or crackle, but crickets are on the menu at one Bangkok pop-up serving fusion bug burgers, demonstrating the latest way to incorporate the protein-rich meat into food — direct from Thailand's farms. Already catching headlines as a meat alternative, the edible insect market is expected to grow into a billion-dollar global industry in the coming years with many adopting creepy-crawlies into their diets as a result of climate damage. Thailand's Bounce Burger is the newest cricket kid on the block with its cricket-beef burgers, sausages, cricket balls and even power bars and cookies. "Crickets don't have to be on street vendor's stalls that are served only with soy sauce," said Poopipat Thiapairat, co-owner of Bounce Burger Restaurant. "They can be burgers, bakery, soft cookies or even paprika seasoning used to flavour french fries — these are all possible."

IMAGE MAKEOVER

Crickets are a source of protein, as well as containing a host of beneficial vitamins, and are among the most commonly eaten insects by humans globally. Despite this, Poopipat admitted the spindly arthropods were in need of an image makeover as they were "not really consumer-friendly." "If we open a restaurant and serve cricket-based food that doesn't look like crickets then the consumers might be more open to trying," he said. "The problem with crickets is that they get stuck in your throat," he said, explaining his firm removes the "hard" parts

of the insect — like the wings and legs — leaving the fleshy body. "It's the same concept as beef or pork where we don't



eat the bones." While Thais have long eaten bugs as a tasty snack, Pawan Thedthong — nibbling on a bug at a Bangkok fried stall — acknowledged others might be put off. "You can see foreigners walking past and they wouldn't dare try the insects," the 24-year-old said. "If they are processed into something more appealing then people could eat them more."

LESS MOO, MORE CHIRP

Among the biggest appeals of cricket farming is that its environmental impact is far less than rear-

ing cows or pigs. One 2017 study suggested chicken production in Thailand was responsible for 89 per cent more carbon emissions than insect industries. While some parts of the world are only now discovering the benefits, Thailand already has thousands of insect farms. Many of those farms cater to animal feed needs, but some are now focused on edible insects for humans — such as Cricket R&D Cricket Farm, established in 2019. On the outskirts of Bangkok, the farm supplies 160 kilograms (353 pounds) of crickets monthly direct to the Bounce kitchens. The process is carefully controlled, with the insects chilled to sleep, washed, and then harvested for meal prep, explained managing director Thanaphum Muang-learn. While for the burgers the crickets are laid on top, for sweeter items the Bounce chefs use a powder taken from the insects and baked into the goods — from power-bars to biscuits.

AS FOR THE CUSTOMERS?

"The taste is good. The sauce blends over the smell of the crickets," 53-year-old customer Anut Sottthibandhu commented as he munched. "I don't feel like there are insects in my burger," he added with a grin. — **AFP**

A WINDOW INTO CONTEMPORARY OMANI LITERATURE



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An Audience with Sultan Said

THE FOLLOWING is my English translation of excerpts from "A Soldier from Oman: Memory's Nectar" by (ret.) Inspector-General Said bin Rashid Al Kalbani

Catching up with the Khareef, we returned to Resut Port, where we patrolled the exits of valleys day and night. Before receiving an order to go back to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, we had to pay a visit to the Hosn Palace to salute Sultan Said bin Taymur. We marched into the yard before the palace, where the sultan inspected the company. I was in the second row, on my left stood Corp. Homud al Manzari, on my right Private Amir al Mamri. After the parade, the Sultan presented our regiment with a sliver of coffee mug as a trophy. We returned to the Resut Camp, where we received a vehicle carrying banana, halwa, and papaya as gifts for us. We then started our return journey to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Our plane took us to the runway in Farq, from where we returned to the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Camp through Wadi Ma'adin.

Our regiment stayed in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar for a considerable period of time, and I joined a course for lance corporals and came out as the first in the platoon. I remember we had a night exercise in Izki, in "Tawai al Nasf". We had to face a dummy enemy. Though we executed the exercise, we were ambushed at night, due to lack of caution. After returning to the Company, I was promoted to lance corporal.

THE GUARDS OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THE FORT

After a period of time, our company moved from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar to the town of Belaad Set, Nizwa, where there was

a tower named the "ASantari Tower", meaning the "guard tower". Our mission was to prevent smuggling of weapons to Jabal Shams and its neighbouring areas and to coordinate with the elders of the region. Salim al Kalbani and I once visited Sheikh Al Waleed bin Zahir al Hinai (who later took the responsibility of the ministry of education, and subsequently of religious affairs and then his Majesty's adviser till he died in the 1990s.) He was the shaikh of Belaad Set. When we met him, he greeted us with traditional Arabic hospitality, and, as customary, asked us, "To which Arabs do you belong?" We replied, "From the Bani Kalban". He immediately said, "You must be either from Miskan or Hayyal". With his characteristic wit, he knew us from our accent, as Salim was from Hayyal and I from Miskan. When we moved from Belaad Set to the Nizwa Fort, Sayyid Hilal bin Hamad al Sammar was the wali of Nizwa. (He subsequently occupied different ministerial positions, and became the minister of justice). According to the system in place in the fort, all the seven doors of the fort should be closed after the soldiers entered, no soldier would be allowed to go out for two weeks. We were tasked to prevent any aggressor from getting in, and the prisoners from getting out and to attend the barza, when and if required. Interestingly, there was an old woman by the name of Khadija al Anqudi. She would fasten and unfasten the heavy iron chains on the legs of the prisoners. It happened once that she made a mistake and broke the leg of one of the prisoners, who was subsequently taken to the Nizwa Camp hospital.



Becoming Violetta and what to expect in ROHM's new season

By Yeru Ebuén
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As the Royal Opera House Muscat opens the season this Thursday with *La Traviata*, a Giuseppe Verdi opera performed by Teatro Carlo Felice Di Genova and headlined by Plácido Domingo, ROHM Director General Umberto Fanni shared that they are continuing the mission of providing Omani society and its youth access to world-famous productions and arts, demonstrating the potential of creative and cultural interaction.

"Faced with devastating challenges in recent years, we turn to art and culture now more than ever to inject hope and courage into our lives, to spark joy. It is our duty to nourish the light, to fuel it and keep it burning," he shared during the media meet-up at noon of September 19.

"We present the season celebrating tradition, innovation and talent, a season designed to extend a welcome to all of society, with family performance and engagement at its heart. The programming is defined by a diverse range of genres, a global embrace and the promotion of national music heritage," he said.

ROHM's return this season is powered by more than fifty events which are broken down into 90 performances, six operas, nine Arab concerts, three ballet shows, nine concerts, two jazz stars, four world music celebrations, three spectacular shows, two exhibitions and education and outreach events.

"With such programming,



ROHM continues to position Oman and Muscat on the map as a centre of excellence in global cultural engagement presenting the world's best artistic and cultural expression," he said.

Addressing several key topics, Fanni pointed out there are numerous opportunities for Omani involvement in opera

events. He shared that they continue to push for Omanisation and that out of the more than 200 people that work at ROHM, the Omanisation level is already at 80 per cent thereby providing the younger generation experience and expertise in an industry that is very demanding and complicated.



He added that even in the actual performances and production, the Omanis are very involved with some of the extras coming from the local community and the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra and other musicians and talents tapped to perform different roles in different productions.

He also excitedly built up the season opener and was accompanied by Georgian operatic soprano Nino Machaidze who will be performing *Violetta Valery* on the September 22 and 24 shows, he is confident that Oman will see a world-class performance that Machaidze without a doubt will be able to pull off easily.

"Nino is one of the biggest soprano stars in the world with an incredible career. She has starred in major opera houses and festivals from around the world and we are fortunate that she is available to come again," he said.

BECOMING VIOLETTA

It's not Nino's first time in Oman. In fact, this is her third visit to the country. She first came to ROHM to perform *Romeo and Juliet* several years back.

"I like coming back to Oman. This opera house is very beautiful and the acoustic is wonderful. In addition, all the people working

here are so kind and so nice that I feel there's no other opera house like this. For us, we come to opera houses where we know that working is such pleasure and there's always happiness," she shared.

"I truly like the place. I like the city. Whenever I am here, I always wanted to visit everything," she shared.

For her role as *Violetta*, she said, "I have performed many *Violettas*. I love it very much because it is a beautiful role. It's the kind of role that allows us to show all our abilities," she shared.

She added, that performing the role "is not just about the vocal. If you can sing the technical parts, you also have to be physically prepared as well. Even emotionally. You have to try to feel the character as much as possible but at a distance," she shared.

"*Violetta* is not a part that you can do when you are just starting your career as a singer. You can damage yourself. You can damage your voice. You can also suffer mentally. When you're not ready, it can actually result in not being able to perform again," she said.

According to Fanni, the role usually required three different singers because *La Traviata* has three acts all requiring different nuanced performances, especially on the vocal technique. He said that Nino is a gifted singer who can do justice to the three different parts.

"Your role as a singer is to be convincing. This kind of opera, the theatrical ones, it's not only coming and singing or acting comical. This is drama. You know, as the performer, how the story goes. In the beginning, it might start happy, so you have to show that part of the act. Performing this role, you must have a good experience so you know what to give, the maximum one you can, but not overdo it," Nino said.

Asked how she knew if she's done a good job after the performance, she said that when people feel goosebumps, it means that you did a believable performance, something emotional and that the audience connected with it.

"Over the years, I realised how much I love this job, how much I feel happy to be able to do this job," she said.

La Traviata will run from September 22 to 24 at 7 pm at the Royal Opera House Muscat. Plácido Domingo will perform as Giorgio Germont on September 22 with Roman Burdenko taking over on the 23rd and 24th performances. Vittorio Grigolo will perform as Alfredo Germont on September 22 and 24 while Sergey Romanovsky will take over the role on September 23. Viktoria Karkacheva will perform as Flora Bervoix for the three shows.