

Eco-friendly alternative to charcoal

A team of students from University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Shinas developed an eco-friendly alternative to charcoal named Sakhma. It is 100 per cent natural comprising 64 per cent coffee waste, 25 per cent sawdust and 11 per cent expired olive oil. The product solves two problems in one shot and it saves use of highly polluting charcoal in barbecuing, cooking and recycles waste materials. **DETAILS ON P2**



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OMAN U-19 TEAM ALL SET FOR ARAB CUP CHAMPIONSHIP



P14

BANKING CREDIT TO PRIVATE SECTOR CLIMBS TO RO 23.6 BILLION



P20

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN THE ORIENT AND THE OCCIDENT



TROPICAL DEPRESSION CHANGES COURSE IN ARABIAN SEA

Authorities on alert to deal with tropical depression

MUSCAT: Readings from the latest weather charts and numeric predictions of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) point to the fact that the tropical depression forming in the Arabian Sea is changing course and heading northwest towards the Sea of Oman.

The precipitation is expected to make landfall over the next two days as it gradually dissipates near Pakistan-Iran coastline.

CAA meteorological specialist Younis Hussain al Shizawi told Oman News Agency (ONA) that Oman will experience heavy to moderate rainfall during

this period.

Meanwhile, light to heavy rains are experienced in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Muscat and Al Dakhiliyah, said Al Shizawi.

He added that the impacts include overflowing of wadis and winds measuring 20 knots. The sea will be rough, with waves expected to reach 4 metres along the Arabian Sea and 2 metres along the Sea of Oman, he said.

Al Shizawi pointed out rains on Monday will be more comprehensive and will cover most of the governorates of Oman, notably North and South



Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Muscat, Al Dakhiliyah, North and South Al Batinah, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and Musandam with chances of light to moderate rains throughout the governorates.

MEETING

Meanwhile, the sub-committees of emergency management in governorates that are expected to be affected by the tropical depression in the Arabian Sea held extraordinary meeting on Sunday.

The meeting, headed by Royal Oman Police (ROP) directors in those governorates, comes within the framework of measures taken to deal with the expected impact of the tropical depression.

The sub-committees reviewed the preparedness of all sectors and are put on state of alert to alleviate any impact.

TURN TO P3

INSIDE



INDIA'S COVID VACCINATIONS HIT 2 BILLION AS CASES RISE

P7



VARIETIES OF CLIMATE-DRIVEN MEDICAL RISKS TO HUMANS

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No work visas for expats in 207 professions

VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The Minister of Labour has issued a decision No 235/2022 on Sunday regulating the practice of some 207 professions.

The decision was based on the Labour Law issued by Royal Decree No 35/2003 and Royal Decree No 89/2020 establishing the Ministry of Labour, defining its specialisations and endorsing its organisational structure.

The decision is in line with several ministerial decisions that regulate the recruitment of expatriates over a wide range of sectors. Article 1 of the decision said that expatriates will be prohibited from practising these professions and they can continue until the expiry of the current work permits.

It may be noted that in 2018, the Ministry of Labour has banned 87 professions spread across over nearly 10 sectors.

Some of the professions which were included in the prohibited list released on Sunday are administrative manager, director/manager of staff affairs, human resources manager, public relations manager, manager of

the CEO's office, employment manager, follow-up manager, security supervisor, director for students affairs, career guidance manager, manager and deputy managers, HR and recruitment specialists, librarian, store supervisors, librarian, water and electricity meter readers, travel ticket officers, delivery agents, security guards, bus drivers, public car drivers (transport), head of departments and trade unions, psychology/ social specialists, legal clerk, payroll and wage accountants, insurance, reinsurance and risk insurance specialists, occupational safety inspector for oil and gas, public relations writer, tourist reservation clerk, tour guide, ticket clerk, shipping services clerk, flight operations inspectors, car rental clerks, transport supervisors, freight risk insurance, real estate insurance, auto insurance, factories insurance and customs clearance brokers, salesmen in commercial complexes, sale of vegetable and fruits, grocers, sweet sellers, drivers of refrigerated trucks, ambulances, fire trucks, water trucks, gas trucks, scrap trucks and drivers of all vehicles.

Bank Muscat CEO Waleed Al Hashar named among Top 100 CEOs in the region for the second consecutive time by Forbes Middle East



Sheikh Waleed Al Hashar



MUSCAT - Bank Muscat's Chief Executive Officer, Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar, has been ranked amongst the Top 100 CEOs in the region in 2022 by Forbes Middle East. This is the second consecutive time that the Bank's CEO has been named in this prestigious list. The Top CEOs list represents 26 nationalities from a range of sectors including energy, aviation, banking and finance, logistics, real estate, construction, tourism etc. It was released by Forbes Middle East after a detailed study of stock market disclosures, industry reports, annual reports and financial statements of companies across the Middle East. The CEOs' impact on the region, their country, and the markets that they serve; overall experience and time in their current role; size of their respective companies in terms of revenues, assets, and market cap; and achievements, innovations and initiatives of the respective CEOs were some of the main criteria on which the Top 100 CEOs were finally chosen.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, said: "It is a great privilege

to be named in this prestigious list and I take this opportunity to thank Forbes Middle East for recognising Bank Muscat's entire leadership team for their various achievements in the recent past, and its keen partnership in nation-building through increased community engagements; support for Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs); focus on financial inclusion and its pioneering Corporate Social Responsibility programs (CSR) and Sustainability initiatives. Having enjoyed great success in the service of the nation over the last 40 years, the Bank will aim to constantly improve its products and services and financial growth in the coming years."

Under Sheikh Waleed K. Al Hashar's leadership, Bank Muscat improved its financial performance across different parameters during the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021 and recorded its highest ever net profit in its 40 year history of RO 189.63 million in FY 2021. The vision for the Bank to be a leader in everything it does, based on the key pillars of Customer Centricity, Market Leadership, Efficiency & Productivity, and

Agility & Innovation, has been successfully cascaded to all business lines and divisions.

Bank Muscat always endeavours to participate in the development of Oman's banking sector. In particular, the Bank's customer-centric vision is now reaping rich rewards in the form of rising Net Promoter Scores (NPS) and customer referrals. The Bank has also recently undergone a successful organisational restructuring by putting in place a vibrant and young Management Team in key positions, further motivating the leadership pipeline and positioning the Bank for its next stage of achievements and milestones. The prestigious list also took into account the expansion of the Bank's CSR and sustainability programmes over the last 2 years despite COVID-19 related challenges.

Bank Muscat has been previously recognised by Forbes Middle East as one of the Top 100 Companies in the Middle East, and by Global Finance, Euromoney, EMEA Finance and Oman Economic Review as the Best Bank in Oman.



DOCUMENTING METEORITES

After installing meteorite detection devices in key areas around the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism succeeded in documenting a number of meteorites over the first four months of this year. This comes as part of the ministry's efforts to protect meteorites that fall on Omani lands. **SEE ALSO P5**



Al Suwaiq Port a vital route for food supplies



AL SUWAIQ: The Port of Al Suwaiq in the Governorate of North Al Batinah assumes great significance due to its strategic location between the Governorate of Muscat and the Port of Sohar, in addition to its vicinity to Khazaen Dry Port.

The Port of Al Suwaiq serves as a vital passage for foodstuff and other commodities exchange between regional markets in the Indian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa.

Manager of Marafi’ Company at Al Suwaiq Port, said that, over the first six months of 2022, the multipurpose hub received 290 commercial vessels, loaded with 400,000 tonnes of general commodities and 1,670 cool containers (of fruits and

The port serves as a vital passage for foodstuff and other commodities exchange between regional markets in the Indian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa

vegetables). He added that the port targets foodstuffs, steel, cement, livestock and ceramics.

During the past few years, the port saw active container traffic, thanks to efforts undertaken by ASYAD (Oman’s global integrated logistics service provider) to improve the quality of services and training of operating personnel, said Al Hinai in a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA).

He explained that ASYAD group joined hands with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to speed up the execution of the deep section of the Port of Al Suwaiq.

— ONA

Registration open for Manafaa programme

MUSCAT: Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre (Mawarid) — affiliated to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation — has declared open the registration of applicants wishing to contest the annual innovative challenge programme (Manafaa). The programme, being organised for the fifth year in a row, runs till December 22, 2022.

The programme seeks to encourage innovation in addressing challenges such as air pollution and climate change. It focuses on artificial intelligence applications, medical and curative products, clean energy, sufficiency in energy consumption, environment-friendly systems of air sanitation techniques and innovation systems for the reduction of emissions and climate change.

The participants can access the electronic website of the programme through Mawarid portal: www.mawarid.gov.om/manafaa.



RAFO shows its prowess at airshow



The Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) concluded its participation in the International Airshow at Fairford Air Base in the United Kingdom, which started on July 15. The participation, through his pavilion with an exhibition, included a display of aircraft and different sections which showcase various aspects of development and modernisation in the Rafo and highlighted the Oman-British historical relations.

Here is an eco-friendly alternative to charcoal



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 17

A team of students from University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Shinas developed an eco-friendly alternative to charcoal named Sakhma. It is 100 per cent natural comprising 64 per cent coffee waste, 25 per cent sawdust and 11 per cent expired olive oil. The product solves two problems in one shot; it saves use of highly polluting charcoal in barbecuing and cooking, and recycles waste materials. Dates kernels and agricultural waste can also be used to make this product.

The student team’s Mawqed Company faced many challenges in developing this product

including difficulty in obtaining raw materials and the lack of a suitable place for production. They also had to manage the time between working in the project and studying at the university. However, the team’s unity and coordination helped them to reach the goal. UTAS- Shinas’s Innovation and Entrepreneurship Club pitched in with laboratories and meeting rooms. It helped organise workshops, camps and provide consultants and experts in the field of innovation in addition to the logistical support. The students want Mawqed Company to be the leading supplier to of sustainable and alternative charcoal products and become consumer’s first choice.

Ahmed bin Amer al Badi, a volunteer with a company, said: “The product goes through several stages, the most important of which is the collection of raw materials, then transporting them to the workshops, getting rid of impurities, mixing the materials, pressing them, putting them into the ovens, and finally packaging them. The product targets the shops that sell travel accessories. The product’s heat capacity is 20 per cent more than ordinary wood and it is easily flammable without the use of chemicals. This makes it user-friendly”

This product sounds promising for a green economy and good for environment as it recycles waste and reduces emissions.



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DEPRESSION TO BRING IN HEAVY RAINS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Sunday saw rains in Al Sharqiyah South with Sur, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Ras al Hadd receiving heavy showers, while Muscat experienced light rain over Yiti and other places.

“Many places in different governorates are to receive rains because of the presence of medium clouds over all of the Sultanate of Oman. But the most of the impact is expected on Monday and Tuesday”, said the official from Oman Met Office on Sunday.

The statement from Oman Met Office said, “The distance from the centre of the system to Oman coast is currently at 620 km and the distance of clouds of the system is 300 km away. The direction of the system is towards the coastal areas of Sea of Oman which chance of dissipating in a Pakistan — Iran coasts.”

The wind speed around the depression's centre, at the time of the report, is estimated to be between 17 to 27 KT.

The latest weather maps and



analysis of the National Multi-Hazards Early Warning Centre indicate that a tropical depression

is located north east of the Arabian Sea near the coastal areas of Gujarat, India at latitude 23 N and

longitude of 67 E.

On Sunday heavy and dark clouds gathered over most of the

Sultanate of Oman with chances of rain showers with different intensity in South Al Sharqiyah,

North Al Sharqiyah and parts of Muscat and Al Wusta. The rainfall is expected to range between 10 and 40 mm.

On Monday, the impact the system is expected to gradually extend to the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah and Al Wusta with varying rainfall ranging between 30 and 80 mm.

While the cloud cover is expected over the Sultanate of Oman, isolated rain is to be experienced over parts of Muscat, North Al Sharqiyah, Al Dakhiliyah, South Al Batinah, North Al Batinah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi with rainfall of 10-30 mm.

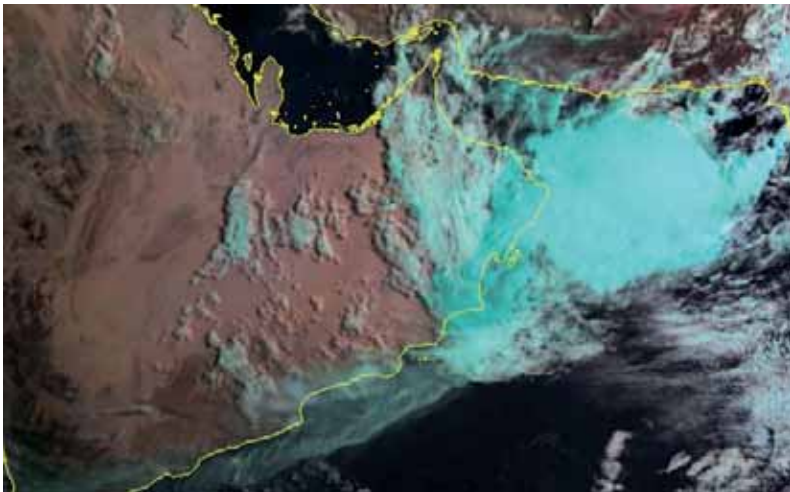
The expected impacts are flow of wadis, wind between 10-30 knots which is 20 to 60 km/hr. There could be decrease in horizontal visibility during heavy rainfall. The sea state is termed as rough along the coastal areas of the Arabian Sea with maximum height of 4 metres and slight to moderate along Sea of Oman with a maximum height of 1-2 metres. On Monday there are chances of sea water extending over some parts of low coastal areas.

Authorities on alert to deal with tropical depression

FROM PAGE 1

Authorities in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah continued preparations to deal with the tropical depression which is expected to directly affect some governorates of Oman on Monday.

Lt Col Salim bin Mohammed al Kaf, Director of Operations at the Royal Oman Police (ROP) Command in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah, said that coordination is made with all sectors to prepare for dealing with the coming tropical depression. He pointed out that the departments concerned are keeping the relief and shelter sector, as well as health and main services ready.



On the preparations of the relief and shelter sector in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah, Lt Col Al Kaf said that the Directorate General for

Social Development has arranged a number of shelter homes in the governorate and are equipped them with all necessary materials.

— ONA



2 citizens drown; 4 children saved from drowning

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Four children were saved from drowning in Athaiba beach on Sunday by citizens and a team of Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, while two citizens were drowned in Wadi al Himli in the Wilayat of Rustaq in South Al Batinah as the Sultanate of Oman braced for the impact of depression.

CDAA officials urged people to be cautious while driving during rains and avoid crossing wadis.

“We have been receiving many incidents of calls for rescue after rains flooded the wadis, ponds inside the farmhouses and rest houses which were attended to effectively”, he said, adding that brigades were sent to rescue people since Saturday evening.

Many people have been rescued to safer areas from flooded vehicles and low-lying areas in different wilayats after heavy rains made landfall.

The CDAA further warned both citizens and residents to be watchful of the weather conditions and to pay close attention and to protect children in the water logged areas.

CDAA statistics show that the major reasons behind drowning are crossing flooded wadis, swimming in undesignated areas such as dams and other water bodies, leaving children unattended near water bodies and non-abidance of safety instructions.



One more body recovered from Al Mughsayl

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

The body of a person, part of a family of 8 who were washed away to sea at Al Mughsayl beach was recovered on Sunday by a team of the Royal Air Force of Oman. The body was handed over to the authorities.

Of the 8 members, 3 were rescued immediately after the incident, while a search is ongoing for the remaining, three of whom have been found dead so far.

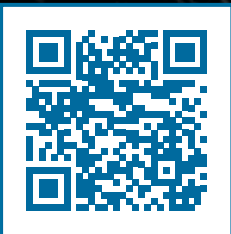
Al Mughsayl beach remained closed as search was still on for missing persons, Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority tweeted on Thursday.

The rescue teams are continuing efforts to search for the remaining three people from the



missing family in the Al Mughsayl in addition to one of the missing expatriate workers in the Raysut area in the Dhofar Governorate.

The Royal Air Force of Oman aviation is supporting the rescue teams to search for the missing after they were swept into the sea.



File picture

IN THE EYE OF STORMS

SAMUEL KUTTY

[@samkuttyvp](#)

Climate change is posing serious threats to the natural resources and infrastructure in the Sultanate of Oman, costing the country billions worth of damage in different tropical storms.

The threats have increased in recent years, evidenced by changes in the number, duration, and intensity of tropical cyclones, which are active from May to July and October to November.

On-shore southwesterly monsoon currents occur from June to September and bring humid conditions to much of Oman accompanied by frequent drizzle, fog, mist, and rain during the khareef season in Dhofar coast and bordering mountain areas.

Occasionally, the monsoon currents penetrate further inland to produce powerful convective storms. The monsoon season in the Dhofar Governorate brings about 100–400 mm of rainfall.

Cyclones formed in the Arabian Sea account for one per cent of all hurricanes in the world's oceans but do account for very high losses and damages.

From 2007 to 2021, Oman

witnessed different adverse weather conditions with a continuous increase in intensity and impact on the land. The country experienced 22 extreme weather events during the period, six of them cyclones.

Al Batinah North is considered the most exposed of the coastal governorates to tropical storms. Muscat, Sur, and Salalah are no exemptions.

“Tropical cyclones are not uncommon over the Arabian Sea. However, many of these storms rarely reach the coastal areas of Sultanate of Oman with tropical cyclone intensity, and from historical data, they very rarely enter the Sea of Oman. Gonu was the first destructive tropical cyclone to affect Muscat after the 1890 cyclone,” reveals the Tropical Cyclone Research and Review.

Since then, the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, and Dhofar have been on the frontline in the battle against the low-pressure systems, the cyclone Gonu and even the recent Cyclone Shaheen have shown that the northern parts of the country are not spared from extreme weather conditions.

In “Scientific Insights”, Dr Ahmed Hadidi, an assistant professor at the Department of Applied Geosciences

**ON-SHORE
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AND BORDERING
MOUNTAIN AREAS**

at GUTech, said: “Oman’s location between the Tropic of Cancer and the Equator makes it vulnerable to cyclones developing in the ocean, and climate change does not play a major role in this phenomenon,” he revealed.

In the newsletter, which is published periodically by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, Dr Hadidi, said that climate change may increase

the frequency and intensity of these events.

In its Second National Communication submitted to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Oman revealed that Climate change is projected to lead to changes in the physical and chemical properties of the western Arabian Sea.

“Such changes are expected to pose important threats to the future sustainability of the annual catch of sardines and yellowfin tuna, two species that are central to the commercial fishing industry of Oman”, it said.

Climate change poses enormous risks to the future sustainability of Oman’s agricultural sector.

As agricultural productivity depends entirely on groundwater, rising sea levels will lead to seawater intrusion into aquifers, thereby degrading the quality of water extracted for irrigation. Sea level rise also implies a steady decline in cropland available for cultivation as cultivatable land becomes inundated.

Among other measures, effective adaptation should focus on raising public awareness of the detrimental effects of climate change on human health, expanding knowledge

of the science of climate change and its effects on human health, and developing preparedness and response strategies at the institutional level.

Over the period from 2015 to 2019, Oman developed a national strategy for adaptation and mitigation of climate change during 2020-2040 to accelerate climate action’s pace and scale. The strategic context for adaptation is rooted in Oman’s ineluctable exposure to intensifying tropical cyclones, increasing temperatures, and rising sea levels.

The Omani leadership continues protecting its vulnerable cities from the devastating impacts of tropical cyclones and flash flooding and takes several adaptation measures.

They include continuous improvement of the storm drainage network infrastructure through the construction of large dams, elaboration of a comprehensive National Spatial Strategy 2020-2040 to anticipate the impact of climate change on urban areas and infrastructures, and incorporation of adaptation and mitigation measures into new developments where necessary while ensuring future flexibility and responding to climate change.



This sink hole is now the star in social media

Al Khabah Al Zarka in the village of Al Bada'ah is trending in social media after the recent rains and many liken it to Hawiyat Najm or the sink hole in the Wilayat of Qurayat

TEXT & PHOTO
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Al Khabah Al Zarka in the village of Al Bada'ah is trending in social media after the recent rains and many liken it to Hawiyat Najm or the sink hole in the Wilayat of Qurayat. The pool occupies an area of more than 1,000 square metres. Recent rains have filled the pool set against the majestic mountains.

The rainfall, which lasted for several weeks, led to overflowing of Wadis. The rains have recharged aflaj and artesian wells that bode well for the agricultural crops. The village of Al Bada'ah received a large share of the water that flowed into Wadi Al Huqain in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. Whoever visits the village today will notice the abundance of water in this small village nestled among the mountains.

This pool is surrounded by various trees including date palm, mango, lemon and other native trees and plants. The residents of this small village are also interested in planting henna and alfalfa trees and types of vegetables such as carrots, garlic, onions, radishes and others. All of these agricultural produce find its way to the Al Rustaq markets and the markets in the neighbouring wilayats.

This unique site attracts tourists,



especially after the pond is filled with water, which gives a beautiful aesthetic view to this remote village.

“We expect more tourists here for photography and mountain climbing. There are those who liken this pond to Hawiyat Najm (The Sink Hole). Visitors must be

carefull as the soil on the edges of the pond are loose and may collapse any time, especially after rainfall. So, everyone must be careful as neither safety measures nor rescue team are available. One should avoid diving in this very deep pool. Previously, this pool was not known to tourists, but after

the spread of pond's photos in the social media, many are flocking to see it real time,” locals told the Observer.

For trekking enthusiasts, there is beaten track to explore the mountains near the village. This path leads to the mountain heights where one can see the panoramic

view of the village. The tourists must adhere to wearing modest clothes, because access to this water pond requires them to walk through the farms owned by the people of the village.

The pond is also a watering hole for wild animals and birds, which in turn maintains the biodiversity

of the village.

“A lot of wild animals flock to this village including foxes and deer, and there are dozens of species of birds, the most important of which are sparrow, Indian roller and the bulbul. Some of the villagers are interested in raising honey bees,” villagers said.

■ MINISTRY DOCUMENTS METEORITES



MUSCAT: After installing meteorite detection devices in key areas around the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism succeeded in documenting a number of meteorites over the first four months of this year. This consummates the ministry's efforts to inventory and protect meteorites that fall in the Sultanate of Oman. The meteorites detection project was realised in cooperation with the Natural History Museum of Berne, Switzerland, and Curtin University of Australia. It documented specimens of the meteorites that entered the Sultanate of Oman's airspace and indicated their precise sites as they penetrated the sphere.

Shortage of water likely in parts of Sur

MUSCAT: Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Haya) has reported malfunctions in the main pipeline feeding Sur City and called for the rationalisation of water consumption. The company pointed out that shortage in water supplies is expected to occur in the areas served by the pipeline (Sur Assahil, Al Aija, Al Murtafa, Al Shar'ya, Al Shaabiya and Bilad Sur). Haya affirmed that operation and maintenance teams are embarked on repair works, despite adverse weather conditions. — ONA



ABQ Seeb student wins award for exceptional service

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

Anabia Raqueebuddin, a Grade 5 student at ABQ Seeb International School, was awarded the BSME (British Schools in the Middle East) Ed Goodwin Award for Exceptional Service.

The award is named in honour of Ed Goodwin OBE, who had been BSME Chairperson for 12 years. To ensure that his commitment to service is honoured and continued, the BSME Ed Goodwin Award for Exceptional Service is an annual award recognising the exceptional contributions of students in BSME schools to their local or global community.

Throughout the school year, many students in BSME schools devote their time and resources to service. This service takes on many forms, however, the underlying principle is clear: the award recipients are all committed to serving others.

The awards are presented at the BSME Annual Conference to Head Teachers, who then receive the awards on the students' behalf. Anabia's award was presented during the recent BSME Conference in Dubai.

Anabia was nominated by her teacher, Vaishali Arora. Arora explained: “Technology literacy is one of many 21st century skills our students learn as part of



Anabia Raqueebuddin

ABQ's unique Discovering You Programme. I was aware that Anabia made fantastic videos on a specific digital video creation and editing application and asked her to teach me how to use the platform.”

Anabia said, “I was very excited

to have an opportunity to teach a teacher. I wanted her to be able to refer back to my explanations, so I decided to create a tutorial video on how to produce or edit a video using this specific computer programme. I won this award because of my creativity, but also because of my amazing teacher who recognised my talent and encouraged me to share my knowledge with others.”

The teacher shared the tutorial video with some of her other students and they all started creating their own videos for various academic subjects. Whenever a student got stuck or required further guidance with the programme, Anabia assisted them

during break time.

The school principal, Sharl Prinsloo, is also extremely proud of Anabia's success and said, “This is a perfect example of mastering the 21st century skills of creativity, communication, collaboration, information literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity, as well as social skills, which all form part of ABQ's Discovering You Programme.”

The Discovering You Programme (DYP) provides a platform for students and parents to engage with experienced mentors to create a dynamic plan for each student's future.

ABQ has developed this two-

part (Grades 3-7 and 8-12) market-leading mentorship programme with a focus on 21st century skills, educational goal setting and career guidance.

This personalised education and mentoring programme produces a holistic picture of each student's academic and non-academic capabilities, whilst also identifying specific areas for potential growth and development.

ABQ Seeb International School forms part of the ABQ Education Group, the largest international school operator in Oman. The other schools in their portfolio are ABQ Azzan Bin Qais International School and ABQ Sohar International School.



Sri Lankans prepare for more protests

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka’s protest movement reached its 100th day on Sunday, having forced one president from office and now turning its sights on his successor as the country’s economic crisis continues.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled his palace shortly before demonstrators invaded it last weekend and on Thursday resigned from the presidency.

His mismanagement is blamed for Sri Lanka’s financial turmoil, which has forced its 22 million people to endure shortages of food, fuel and medicines since late last year.

The campaign to oust Rajapaksa, organised mainly through posts on social media, drew people from across Sri Lanka’s often unbridgeable ethnic divides.

United by economic hardships, minority Tamils and Muslims joined the majority Sinhalese to demand the ouster of the once-powerful Rajapaksa clan.

It began as a two-day protest on April 9, when tens of thousands of people set up camp in front of Rajapaksa’s office — a crowd so much larger than the organisers’ expectations that they decided to stay on.

“When I heard the news and saw what was happening here, I decided that I should come and help them”, Nilu, a teacher from a beach town on Sri Lanka’s southern coast, said.



Sri Lanka’s Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has ordered the military and police to do whatever it takes to ensure order. — AFP

The 26-year-old took up residence in the camp last month and is among dozens of volunteers working in the patchwork of tents now lining a section of the seafront boulevard.

A communal kitchen serves food for needy crowds visiting the site in the evenings, who queue next to signboards detailing the numerous accusations of graft and violence directed at Rajapaksa’s family.

“We need a change and we

are the change”, said Nilu, who declined to give her surname.

“We want our president to represent the whole country. Not somebody who robs the public.”

Under Sri Lanka’s constitution, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe was automatically installed as acting president following Rajapaksa’s resignation.

He is now the leading candidate to succeed him permanently in a parliamentary vote next week.

But the veteran politician is despised by the protesters as an ally of the Rajapaksa clan — four brothers who have dominated the island’s politics for years.

FAR FROM ANY CHANGE

Social media activist and protest campaign supporter Prasad Welikumbura said Wickremesinghe too should go.

“It’s been 100 days since it started”, Welikumbura said on Twitter.

Iraq asks Turkey to release more water along Tigris, Euphrates

Parliament set to replace the president with another politician despised by protesters

“But, it’s still far from any concrete change in the system.”

Rajapaksa’s elder brother Mahinda resigned as premier in May and he appointed Wickremesinghe to replace him — his sixth-term in the post — despite his being an opposition MP representing a party with only one seat in parliament.

The move did little to assuage the protesters’ anger and when they stormed Rajapaksa’s tightly guarded 200-year-old Presidential Palace they also set Wickremesinghe’s private home ablaze.

Now the Rajapaksas’ SLPP party — which has more than 100 MPs in the 225-member parliament — is backing Wickremesinghe in the vote due on Wednesday.

A spokesman for the protesters said: “We are now discussing with groups involved in the ‘Aragalaya’ (struggle) on turning the campaign against Ranil Wickremesinghe.”

Numbers at the protest site have diminished since Rajapaksa’s exit, and the demonstrators have vacated three key state buildings they occupied — the Presidential Palace, the Prime Minister’s official Temple Trees residence and his office. — AFP

BAGHDAD: Iraq has asked Ankara to increase the flow of water downstream along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as both countries face droughts and tensions over resource management.

Baghdad regularly complains that dams constructed in neighbouring countries impact its river levels.

Water Minister Mehdi al Hamdani and the Turkish president’s special representative for Iraq, Veysel Eroglu, discussed “quantities of water arriving in Iraq through the Tigris and Euphrates” from Turkey, an Iraqi statement said.

Hamdani asked Turkey via videoconference “to re-examine the amounts of water released, in order to allow Iraq to overcome the current water shortage”, it added.

Eroglu said he would pass on the request to water authorities in Ankara to “increase the amounts of water released in the coming days, according to (Turkey’s) available reserves”, according to the Iraqi statement.

Both sides agreed that an Iraqi “technical delegation” would visit Turkey and allowed to “evaluate Turkish dam reserves on site”. — AFP

War-ravaged areas in Syria turned into movie studio

HAJAR AL ASWAD: A ghost town since a 2018 operation to flush out militants, Hajar al Aswad near the Syrian capital has come back to life as the location of a Jackie Chan-produced action movie.

“Home Operation” is inspired by China’s 2015 evacuation of Chinese and other foreign citizens from the war in Yemen, an operation that was seen as a landmark for Beijing.

Yemen was deemed too dangerous a venue to shoot and some scenes of the film, which is also backed by an Emirati production company, are being shot in Syria, although the script only mentions a fictional country called “Poman”.

The ruins of Hajar al Aswad were filled with a motley crew of actors in Yemeni tribal attire, Syrian extras in uniform and



A ghost town since a 2018 Hajar al Aswad has found a new purpose as the setting for the Jackie Chan-produced action movie. — AFP

polo-wearing Chinese film crew members.

Jackie Chan is the main producer, although there are no plans for him to visit Syria.

The film pitches itself as a blockbuster that will glorify the role of the Chinese authorities in

a heroic evacuation. Speaking to reporters as his crew installed their equipment and tanks in hastily altered livery moved into position, director Yinxi Song confirmed the film’s propaganda credentials.

“It takes the perspective of diplomats who are Communist

Party members, who braved a hail of bullets in a war-torn country and safely brought all Chinese compatriots onto the country’s warship unscathed”, he said.

The ambassador of China, one of few countries to have maintained good diplomatic relations with the regime of Syria President Bashar al Assad, was present to launch the Syria shoot, which is expected to last several days.

A red banner in three languages was unfurled for the small ceremony and another that read “Peace & Love” was propped up on the front of a tank.

LOW COST STUDIO

Hajar al Aswad, which means “black rock” in Arabic, was once a densely populated Damascus suburb that lies next to the Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmuk. — AFP

■ WATER JOUSTING



Participants try to knock each other into the lake with lances during the ‘Fischerstechen’ (Fishermen’s jousting) at Starnberger See near Munich on Sunday. — Reuters

SOFIA

Deal paves way for EU membership talks

EU member Bulgaria and North Macedonia on Sunday signed a deal in Sofia opening the way for European Union membership talks for the tiny Balkan nation and its Albanian neighbour.

North Macedonia’s Prime Minister Dimitar Kovacevski announced on Saturday that Skopje had reached a compromise with Bulgaria in a long-running dispute, allowing them to start the membership talks.

EU member Bulgaria had until



recently blocked any progress for such talks because of a dispute between the countries over linguistic and historical issues. The dispute also stalled Albania’s bid to join the 27-nation bloc.

JOHANNESBURG

Gunmen open fire at group of gamblers

Gunmen opened fire on a group of men playing dice on a street corner in a Johannesburg suburb, killing four of them and injuring two others, police said on Sunday.

The attack on Saturday evening in Lenasia came a week after two separate shootings killed 20 people — 16 at a bar in nearby Soweto and four others at a a tavern in South Africa’s eastern city of Pietermaritzburg.

“Preliminary investigation



suggests that a group of men were playing dice at a street corner when they were attacked by unknown assailants who shot at them”, police said.

— AFP

KHARTOUM

Police disperse hundreds of protesters

Sudanese police fired tear gas in the capital Khartoum on Saturday in an attempt to disperse hundreds of pro-democracy protesters demonstrating against General Abdel Fattah al Burhan.

Security forces had erected road blocks on bridges crossing the Nile river linking Khartoum to its suburbs to deter protesters who had vowed to take to the streets in large numbers. The demonstrators oppose Burhan’s October power-grab and are also highlighting heavy fighting



in Sudan’s southern Blue Nile state, about 450 kilometres south of Khartoum. They accuse the military leadership and the rebel leaders who signed a 2020.

— AFP



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In brief

■ LONDON



UK CLIMATE CHIEF COULD QUIT AS TORY RACE HEATS UP

Britain's climate minister has indicated he may resign as some Conservative leadership contenders equivocate on the government's net zero target, ahead of a crunch TV debate on Sunday and the final rounds of voting by MPs this week. The intervention by COP26 president Alok Sharma came as a poll of Tory rank-and-file members, who will have the final say out of the two finalists, gave a surprise double-digit lead to outsider Kemi Badenoch. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss was second, narrowly ahead of former grassroots favourite Penny Mordaunt and ex-finance minister Rishi Sunak, according to the unscientific poll by the ConservativeHome website.

■ MADRID



PRINCESS LEONOR MAKES FIRST SOLO ENGAGEMENT ABROAD

The heir to the Spanish throne, 16-year-old Leonor and her 15-year-old sister Sofia have made their first official appearance abroad on behalf of the crown without their parents, who remained at home in Spain. The two daughters of King Felipe and Queen Letizia watched Spain defeat Denmark at the Brentford Community Stadium in London on Saturday evening in the Women's European Championship. They were seen cheering the last-minute goal by Marta Cardona to deliver Spain a 1-0 victory. They were joined in the VIP stand by Spain's Culture and Sports Minister Miquel Iceta, among others.

■ VATICAN CITY



POPE CALLS CANADA TRIP A 'PENITENTIAL PILGRIMAGE'

Pope Francis said on Sunday a visit to Canada, where he will meet Indigenous survivors of abuse committed at residential schools run by the Catholic Church, was "a penitential pilgrimage". "Next Sunday, God willing, I will leave for Canada," he said at the end of the Angelus prayer, in an apparent reference to a knee problem which caused him to postpone a trip last month to Africa. The pontiff is expected to use his July 24-30 visit to Edmonton, Quebec and Iqaluit to repeat an apology he delivered to Canadian delegations who visited the Vatican in April.

Russia preparing for next stage of offensive

* Zelensky says Russia continues to sow grief on Ukrainian soil



A local boy stands with a Ukrainian serviceman near a military vehicle not far from the front line in the Donbas. — Reuters

KYIV: Russia is preparing for the next stage of its offensive in Ukraine, a Ukrainian military official said, after Moscow said its forces would step up military operations in "all operational areas".

As Western deliveries of long-range arms begin to help Ukraine on the battlefield, Russian rockets and missiles have pounded cities in strikes that Kyiv says have killed dozens in recent days.

"It is not only missile strikes from the air and sea," Vadym Skibitskyi, a spokesman for Ukrainian military intelligence, said. "We can see shelling along the entire line of contact, along the

entire front line. There is an active use of tactical aviation and attack helicopters.

"Clearly preparations are now under way for the next stage of the offensive."

The Ukrainian military said Russia appeared to be regrouping units for an offensive toward Sloviansk, a symbolically important city held by Ukraine in the eastern region of Donetsk.

The British defence ministry said on Sunday that Russia was also reinforcing defences across areas it occupies in southern Ukraine after pressure from Ukrainian forces and pledges from Ukrainian leaders to force Russia out.

EIGHT YEARS ON

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said Russia was continuing to sow grief and death on Ukrainian soil eight years on from the shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine by what international investigators have said was a Russian surface-to-air missile likely fired by Russian-backed militia in the region. "But nothing will go unpunished!" he said. "Every criminal will be brought to justice!"

Donetsk region governor Pavlo Kyrylenko also accused Moscow of shelling "civilian infrastructure, especially education institutions".



Officers of Biochemic war on the way to the debris of the crash site of an Antonov An-12 cargo aircraft a few kilometres away from Kavala. — AFP

Plane transporting 'dangerous material' crashes, eight dead

ATHENS: A Ukrainian cargo plane carrying munitions from Serbia to Bangladesh crashed near the city of Kavala in northern Greece late on Saturday, Serbian authorities said on Sunday.

Drone images from the scene showed debris from the bulking Antonov An-12 aircraft strewn in fields. Greek authorities said there were eight crew members on board and a Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman said they were all Ukrainian citizens.

Serbia's defence minister said the plane was carrying 11.5 tonnes of products made by its defence industry and the buyer was Bangladesh defence ministry.

He said the crew members were killed.

Greek authorities could not provide information on the aircraft's cargo but the special disaster response unit and army experts were been dispatched to investigate the scene.

Serbia's Defence Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said the cargo included illuminating mortar shells and training shells. It had taken off at 18:40 GMT from Nis. "The plane carried 11.5 tonnes

of products made by our defence industry. The buyer was the Bangladesh defence ministry", Stefanovic said.

He added that the plane's cargo was owned by Serbian company Valir, a trade company registered to perform foreign trade activities of armament military equipment and other defence products.

State TV ERT said that the signal of the aircraft was lost soon after the pilot requested an emergency landing from Greek aviation authorities due to an engine problem.

Amateur video footage uploaded on ertnews.gr showed the aircraft in flames descending fast before hitting the ground in what appeared to be an explosion.

A senior source at Jordan's civil aviation regulatory commission (CARC) denied initial reports that the plane was headed to Jordan.

The wider area in Greece where the aircraft crashed has been cordoned off since Saturday night. Residents nearby have been advised to keep windows and doors shut and avoid the area of the incident. — Reuters

More people brought to safety as wildfires ravage Europe

PARIS: French authorities were forced to save more people from a large forest fire burning near Bordeaux on Sunday as high temperatures continue to scorch southern Europe.

The fire in Teste-de-Buch has intensified and threatened campsites, the local authority said in a statement. More than 14,000 people in the area have already had to leave their homes or holiday residences because of the fire.

The flames destroyed 10,500 hectares of land and are being driven by high winds and extra dry land. Firefighters have been trying to control the flames since Tuesday.

Neighbouring countries are

suffering similar situations with environmentalists blaming climate change for temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius. Media reports say hundreds of people have died in Spain and Portugal because of the high temperatures, with wild fires also causing big problems. A pilot of a firefighting aircraft also died in a crash in north-eastern Portugal on Friday.

In Italy, firefighters again battled blazes across the country.

Three simultaneous fires are burning in Sicily in different locations following an extreme drought in recent weeks. Two planes and a helicopter are helping to try to quell the flames.

— dpa



A forensic inspector inspects a house where a fire killed five people in Ville-sur-Haine, Belgium. — AFP

India Covid vaccinations hit 2 bn, new cases at four-month high

NEW DELHI: The Indian government's Covid-19 vaccinations hit 2 billion on Sunday, with booster doses under way for all adults, as daily infections hit four-month high, official data showed.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi extolled the vaccination milestone, celebrating the world's largest and longest-running inoculation campaign, which began last year.

"India creates history again!" Modi said in a tweet. The prime minister has faced allegations from the opposition of mishandling the pandemic that experts claim killed millions.

The government rejects the claims.

Health ministry data shows the Covid death toll at 525,709, with 49 deaths recorded overnight.

New cases rose 20,528 over the past 24 hours, the highest since February 20, according to data compiled by Reuters.

The country of 1.35 billion people has lifted most Covid-related restrictions, and international travel has recovered robustly.

Some 80% of the inoculations have been the AstraZeneca vaccine made domestically, called Covishield.



A policeman reacts as he receives a booster dose of the Covishield vaccine against the coronavirus at a vaccination centre in Mumbai. — Reuters

The country of 1.35 billion people has lifted most Covid-related restrictions, and international travel has recovered robustly

Others include domestically developed Covaxin and Corbevax and Russia's Sputnik V.

The federal government has been accelerating its booster campaign to avert the spread of infections, edging higher in the eastern states of Assam, West Bengal and Karnataka in the south. — Reuters

Teaching children the power and beauty of nature



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Prof, Dept of English Language and Literature, Sultan Qaboos University

The recent climactic developments all over the world, unfortunately, led to irreplaceable suffering and loss for families who were effected by death and personal injury during adverse weather conditions.

This is, as we now know, not a freak incident but a recurring one across the world, largely due to unseasonal weather conditions. Yet, we as society remain unconcerned. It is time we took up the issue of educating children about climate change, and the power of nature, more seriously.

Of course, it is not only children who need to be aware of the swift changes in weather patterns and their impact, but children are ideal targets for education because they are aware, and in fact, worried about

these changes, and because the largest impact is going to be on their future lives.

Known at times as ‘eco-anxiety’, young adults are rightly concerned and worried about the swift way in which climate change is so obviously impacting our world. According to the BBC, youngsters are also anxious about what they can do to minimise these impacts.

An important suggestion by environmentalists and educationists is to make climate and disaster management an inclusive part of the curriculum and not just a one-off lesson on a light school day.

Terms like climate, greenhouse effect, and species extinction and desert barrenness are important ones that can be woven into any

CREATING SPACES FOR DIALOGUE AND CREATIVE INTERACTION HELPS TO MAKE CLIMATE CENTRAL TO A CHILD’S EDUCATION. THIS CAN BE IN THE FORM OF SHORT SKITS, DEBATES, WRITING OR EVEN DRAWING ABOUT THE FUTURE

subject, including sciences and mathematics, and not only social sciences.

Nor does this have to be so gloomy. There are various initiatives which can be taken up, by teachers and parents, which will encourage children to care about the environment and actually see

a speedy positive change. Creating spaces for dialogue and creative interaction will help to make climate central to a child’s education. Creativity can be in the form of short skits, debates, writing or even drawing about the future. There is no area of education where nature is left out.

More than this, it is also important to inculcate civic sense within children. Parents, of course, remain the primary role models but schools can encourage basic values like environmental cleanliness and regard for others as part of their larger project to develop thinking and responsible adults.

Nature is regenerative and needs only the slightest nudge to come to life again. Witness the sprouting

greens on the otherwise dark brown hills around Muscat. A bit of rain is all it needs to make the shoots come out. The lesson in that is of hope, not despair.

It is a valuable lesson for children, and a therapeutic one. Being one with nature, sitting still for a while, and responding to thoughts and feelings that occur in that stillness is an irreplaceable lesson, one that cannot be taught but encouraged.

So is going back to stories of our grandparents, of folktales and oral tales, all of which revolve around the beauty and wisdom of animals, trees, mountains and rivers – nature itself talking to human beings about its power and beauty. It is a lesson we urgently need to share with our children.

‘True balance’: Japan’s quiet telework revolution

ETIENNE BALMER & NILS MARIE

Posted far from home for his job at Japanese conglomerate Hitachi, father of two Tsutomu Kojima was “really lonely” until he began working remotely during the pandemic for the first time. Covid-19 has upended office routines worldwide, but in Japan -- where punishing hours and reliance on paper files, ink stamps and fax machines has long been the norm -- some say the shake-up was sorely needed.

Pre-pandemic, just nine per cent of the Japanese workforce had ever teleworked, compared with 32 per cent in the United States and 22 per cent in Germany, according to Tokyo-based consultancy firm Nomura Research Institute.

But a quiet revolution in the country’s rigid business culture is under way, with firms working to digitise operations and offer more flexibility to staff who were once expected to stay late, go drinking with the boss and accept far-flung transfers.

Kojima used to live alone in accommodation provided by Hitachi near Tokyo, an hour and a half by bullet train from his family in Nagoya.

Back then he would return only twice a month, but now the 44-year-old works exclusively from home, and says he is more productive and closer to his teenage daughters. “I have more time to help them with their studies. My youngest told me she hopes things stay like this,” he said.

“I used to feel really lonely” in Tokyo, Kojima said, but he has since realised that “true balance means not giving up on family”.

Nearly a third of jobs in Japan were done remotely during the first Covid wave in spring 2020, the Japan Productivity Center says, even though the government never imposed strict stay-at-home orders.

The rate has since fallen to 20 per cent, but that is still far higher than before the pandemic, according to quarterly surveys by the non-profit organisation. To encourage telework, the government and some companies made efforts to phase out personalised ink stamps used to certify documents, as well as the ubiquitous fax machine.

Often in Japan, “business has to be done in person, on paper”, habits dating back to the 1970s and 80s, when the Japanese economy was booming, said Hiroshi Ono, a professor at Hitotsubashi University specialising in human resources.

“One of the things Covid has done is bring those barriers down: work doesn’t have to be done at the office, men can work at home,” he said.

Companies are realising that new ways of working can be more efficient, he added.

— AFP

A new Palestinian leader rises in the West Bank



Patrick Kingsley

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

For years, Hussein al Sheikh has overseen the fraught day-to-day relations between Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and the Israeli military — a role that has made him unpopular with the public but has drawn him close to the Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas.

Then in May, Abbas, the president of the Palestinian Authority, appointed Al Sheikh to one of the highest posts in his political movement.

Though Abbas is 87, he has never designated an heir apparent to lead the Palestinian Authority, which administers parts of the West Bank and the 2.7 million Palestinians who live there. Now, Al Sheikh’s sudden ascent has led analysts and diplomats to wonder whether he is being groomed as the successor.

At the same time, Al Sheikh, who recently met for a rare interview with The New York Times, has become the focus of a debate among Palestinians about the vision and legitimacy of their leaders.

His rapid promotions, his regular interaction with Israeli officials, and his wealth — his family owns a lucrative real estate and trading business — have made Al Sheikh a target of Palestinian criticism. One meme that circulated on social media showed a doctored photograph of his face superimposed on the body of an Israeli general.

The caption in Arabic read: “Spokesman for the occupation.”

Polls suggest that Al Sheikh would struggle mightily to win an election. Just 3 per cent of Palestinians want him to be their next leader, according to the most recent one.

Another suggested that nearly three-quarters of Palestinians opposed his May promotion to the No 2 position in the Palestine Liberation Organization, the group that nominally oversees the Palestinian Authority.

But to his supporters, Al Sheikh is the right man for a difficult moment — a pragmatist who can improve daily life for Palestinians in an era when the grander goal of an independent state seems as remote as ever. He said in the interview that he does not think Israel is serious about ending the occupation, so Palestinians have no option other



Hussein al Sheikh has become the focus of a debate among Palestinians about the vision and legitimacy of their leaders.

AL SHEIKH’S SUDDEN ASCENT HAS LED ANALYSTS AND DIPLOMATS TO WONDER WHETHER HE IS BEING GROOMED AS THE SUCCESSOR

than to keep working within the current arrangement.

Ending relations with Israel or disbanding the Palestinian Authority might end in a security vacuum that would leave Palestinians even worse off than they are now, he said, speaking in his office in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

“If I were to dismantle the Palestinian Authority, what is the alternative?” Al Sheikh said. “The alternative is violence and chaos and bloodshed,” he added. “I know the consequences of that decision. I know the Palestinians would pay the price.”

Among other roles, his office works with Israel to process Palestinian applications for Israeli work permits and coordinate the passage of goods

between the West Bank, Gaza, Israel and Jordan. Both those things provide much-needed income for West Bank residents.

Although he was appointed, not elected, to his new position, Al Sheikh said his background and track record give him the legitimacy to lead.

He was born in Ramallah in 1960 when Jordan controlled the West Bank. His family, who came from a village near Tel Aviv, were among some 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes during the wars surrounding Israel’s creation in 1948 — a mass displacement that Palestinians call the nakba, or catastrophe.

He was 6 when Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East war. As a teenager, he joined Fatah, the leading Palestinian militant group at the time. As a result, he spent much of the 1980s in Israeli jails, winning him street credibility.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the 1990s, he became a colonel in the newly formed Palestinian security services amid hopes that Palestinians were on the cusp of statehood. “You are talking to someone whose entire history is about the struggle of the Palestinian people,” Al Sheikh said. “I know exactly how to lead my people to the right path.”

— The New York Times

Risk it to ride
or cut out!



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An author, columnist,
creative writer,
translator and a
communications
professional

The land has been dry for long; it feels like just waiting to explode! Trees want their blossoms to burst and the grass wants to grow with lush green colour. All plants are trying hard to push through the dry dirt. The image of a dry and thirsty land symbolises those who sincerely longing and appealing for a blessing from God. Just as the rain comes, refreshes, washes, and makes the ground fruitful, this blessing

brings the same qualities into humans' life. What do you personally think about when you see rain falling from the sky? Do you think about God's gracious granted to the world? Do you feel really refreshed and spiritually empowered? Have you ever thought of rain as a symbol of the love of God to His creatures? When was the last time that you thanked God for you being blessed with rain? Like all other blessings, rain should be valued and thank God, in return, for such a blessing.

Rain usually signifies freshness, happiness, hope and love. It falls to refresh people and land alike; it recovers cheerfulness in the dull spirit of people and brings life to the land that is dry as a bone. Whether it rains cats and dogs or just drizzles;

people get thrilled by rain. It energises their spirit and fuels their emotions. When it rains, they spring up like grass in a green field and learn to grow again.

People overwhelmingly cheer when it rains as it is regarded a perfect moment to release the pain of sadness, despair and life stress. It is time for relief and purification for many, to tell the truth! Others consider it a chance to make their wish and ask for more blessings, prosperity and success in life. In fact, as the sky pours

its water, it marks one of the best times to get your prayers answered by the Almighty Allah. Thus, one has to grab this opportunity and make a wish as it rains.

Rain has been used, in literature, to give a higher level of perception into one's emotional feelings. It is also used to symbolise a new life or renewal and rain comes within everyone's realm of experience. The Almighty Allah has several intentions for releasing rain upon earth, some of which include empowerment, refreshment, restoration and a refresh of human's souls.

At other times, rain is used to punish as in the historical narrative of Prophet Noah when his subjects were drowned in the sea for not believing in him as a messenger of Allah. Instead they were making fun of the Prophet for building a huge ship and sailing it on land. Hence, they were punished by being left behind to drown in the flood, produced by heavy rainfall. Here comes the danger of rain and its flood, causing damages and tragedies to people, which shouldn't be always regarded a form of punishment. Rather, it happens as a coincidence or due to people's carelessness.

In this context, the flood of rain could turn a blessing into a tragedy as some people might drown in an overflow of rain. A recent example of such scenarios is what happened in the last week's diverse weather condition and heavy rainfall. The number of drowned cases was very high with almost daily incidents reported. Seriously, the number of children-related fatal drowning incidents were the most and taking place everyday unfortunately.

Despite the frequent warnings and instructions communicated by Royal Oman Police to have extra caution during rain and when visiting wadis, floods and waterflows. Carelessly, some people of different age groups are even swimming on strongly flowing floods. Some less-watchful parents also lost their children while swimming in rainwater pools or on a sight watching wadis and floods. What a pity indeed to experience such tragic incidents every time it rains.



The varieties of climate-driven
medical risks to humans



Aditi Hazra

An assistant professor at Harvard Medical School, is a cancer genomics researcher and humanitarian with training as an EMT and experience in refugee health.

When natural disasters force people to pack a bag and flee to safety, important items are often forgotten. Following California's 2007 wildfire season, it was estimated that "at least one family member per household left prescription medication behind during evacuation." Likewise, when Hurricane Harvey threatened to flood my own mother's Texas home in August 2017, she forgot to grab her medication in her rush to escape the storm's path – even though she was normally meticulous when packing for a trip.

With climate change contributing to the increased severity and frequency of such disasters, preventing interruptions in health care and meeting displaced people's unmet health needs will become an increasingly urgent task. We already know that extreme weather drives migration and statelessness, displacing 21.5 million people per year – 41 people per minute. Hurricanes, cyclones, floods, and wildfires regularly disrupt access to preventative services (such as routine cancer screening), mental-health services, and treatments for chronic diseases. Owing both to a severe drought and civil war, many Syrian refugees lost access to healthcare and were later found to be suffering from chronic diseases such as cancer, hypertension, and diabetes.

Climate-driven disasters pose both direct and indirect threats to the continuity of healthcare. According to a 2019 study in the Journal of General Internal Medicine, the ten-year survival rate of breast cancer patients whose treatment was directly interrupted by Hurricane Katrina was markedly worse than that of a control group.

Likewise, indirect exposures to chemicals, water- and airborne pathogens, and particulate air pollution from natural disasters are known to increase the risk of cancer. During Hurricane Harvey, for example, chemical

CLIMATE CHANGE POSES BOTH DIRECT AND INDIRECT THREATS TO PEOPLE'S HEALTH, OFTEN IN WAYS THAT REMAIN UNKNOWN OR UNDERAPPRECIATED. TO STAY AHEAD OF THESE RISKS WILL REQUIRE ENSURING CONTINUITY OF CARE, NOT JUST IMMEDIATELY AFTER EMERGENCIES BUT ALSO OVER THE COURSE OF AFFECTED PEOPLE'S LIFE SPANS

plants and oil refineries were flooded, releasing cancer-causing substances into the surrounding environment. And researchers warn that currently inert chemicals like the insecticide lindane may become carcinogenic as the planet warms.

Wildfires pose similar threats, not only by destroying homes and healthcare facilities but also by churning out harmful ambient particulate matter that increases the risk of death from lung, breast, and liver cancers. Heart attacks, strokes, and respiratory conditions such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease often follow in the wake of the flames. New research, conducted over the course of 20 years, shows that people living within 50 km of wildfires in Canada had a 10 per cent higher risk of incident brain tumours and a 4.9 per cent increased risk of incident lung cancer compared to people living farther away.

While relief efforts necessarily focus on the immediate aftermath of disasters, these direct and indirect health effects tend to persist. Without greater efforts to maintain continuity of care, the annual wildfire season may come to be known as cancer season.

We urgently need more equitable approaches to address the heightened risks of cancer and chronic disease following climate emergencies. Mobile alerts and checklists for chronic-disease care can help save lives during emergencies and evacuations. In addition to ensuring safe shelter, disaster-preparedness protocols should also include measures to provide common prescription medicines, telehealth, virtual mental-health services, virtual crisis training for healthcare providers, and resource-stratified treatment guidelines.

Among the many tragedies of the climate crisis is that those who contributed the least to the problem stand to bear the brunt of the costs. To address this inequity, the Union for International Cancer Control (and its partners) has launched the Access to Oncology Medicines Coalition to improve access to cancer medicines in low- and lower-middle-income countries.

A related issue is the health sector's carbon footprint. Here, surgical care is notable for its contributions to greenhouse-gasemissions. Administering the anesthetic sevoflurane for one hour is tantamount to driving an internal combustion vehicle 20 miles, and an hour's worth of desflurane is approximate to driving 400 miles. As a result, the Michigan Medicine Department of Anesthesiology has introduced a Green Anesthesia Initiative to explore ways to reduce the field's emissions, such as by promoting greater use of sevoflurane instead of desflurane. Recently, healthcare leaders have pledged to cut greenhouse-gas emissions.

Finally, though we know that people displaced by climate change are subject to a range of health risks, more research and education is needed to improve our understanding of this broad, complex issue. For example, there is more to learn about how scorching heat waves, water scarcity, food insecurity, comorbidities, and the dehydrating effects of cancer treatment might amplify disparities associated with poor cancer outcomes for people displaced by climate emergencies.

Addressing the burgeoning climate-driven health crisis is a moral imperative for the World Health Organization, governments, health-care professionals, and health advocacy groups. Our ability to lead healthy lives depends on having a healthy planet. As the climate changes, so must our health policies and protocols.

The opinions expressed in this commentary do not reflect the views and opinions of Harvard Medical School or Brigham and Women's Hospital.

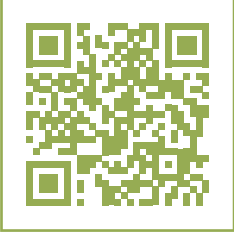
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New research shows that people living within 50 km of wildfires in Canada had a 10 per cent higher risk of incident brain tumours.

sport

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OMAN U-19 TEAM ALL SET FOR ARAB CUP CHAMPIONSHIP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 17

Oman under-19 football team is all set to take part at the 2022 Arab Cup U-20 Championship, which will begin in Abha city, Saudi Arabia from Wednesday. Oman's juniors will commence their campaign in the tournament with a tight clash against Egypt on Thursday. The match will start at 22:00 (Oman time) at Dhamak Club Stadium in Asir city. As many as 18 teams distributed into six groups will compete in the Arab Cup to clinch the prestigious title. The topper from each group will

advance to the quarterfinal beside two teams from the best second placed teams will progress to the same round. Oman team, coached by Spanish coach David Gordo, wrapped up their preparations ahead of the kick off. The team headed to Abha city on Sunday after completion of two strong international friendly games against Palestine in Muscat. Both warm up fixtures ended for Oman on a victorious note. The second preparatory game concluded for Oman team by 2-1 where Khalid al Sulaimi and Salim al Abdali netted the winning

goals. The first match ended at 1-0 and the only goal in the match was scored by Salim al Abri. **COMPETITIVE LEVEL** The head coach of Oman U-19 team, David Gordo, said that the team began the domestic camps two months ago. "The team had several warm up gathering during the last months with a total of four camps in the previous two months. The camps featured two international friendlies against Palestine. We focused during this period to raise the competitiveness level of players and shape their readiness for the Arab Cup

assignment. Proper technical growth of the players and assisting them to become top footballers are the main focuses", he added in his statement. The Spanish coach commented on team's performance during the international friendly games, he said: "Friendly games are very different from the official games. We are expecting a lot of tough games in the championship especially there are teams which have better harmony among the players. Also, they are more stable team as they trained under a coach for much longer time and he is very aware on player's technical performance and

capabilities. All these advantages will give better lead for the rivals. However, our team will do their level best and convert trained tactics and techniques in the field for better show and learn from this experience", he said. Responding to a query on dropping some players in the squad from Saham club, the 52 years old answered that he did not see a player's name or he is from which club. "My focus is to select the two most appropriate players for each position to ensure the strength of this side. All the players were known that three players will

be dropped from the squad after the second friendly game against Palestine. We gave equal opportunity to all the players both the warm up games and the decisions were made accordingly. The dropped players are among the best squad members and they may get back to the team anytime", he clarified. The experienced Spanish coach concluded his statement that the team will take each match of the tournament separately. "Will focus game by game. Our target is to play top games and register the victory and then move to think about the following match", he ended.

■ NATIONAL GOALBALL TOURNAMENT



MUSCAT: The national goalball tournament for blind, organised by Al Noor Association for the blind and in partnership with the Sports and Society Group at Sultan Qaboos University, began on Sunday at Jaber Bin Zaid School Hall. The tournament will be played in a league format to determine the first places. This tournament, which will conclude on Tuesday, aims to discover distinguished players to represent Oman in external forums.

Oman national swimming team to take part in Arab Championship meet

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

Oman national swimming team will take part in the Fifth Arabian Swimming Championship which will be held in Oran city, Algeria during July 20 to 24. As many as 200 swimmers representing 15 Arab countries will participate in this Arabian meet. Oman team featured from four swimmers including Issa bin Samir al Adawi, Ayman bin Talib al Qasimi, Muhannad bin Younis, Awlad Thani and Nasser bin Saif al Kindi. Swimmer Issa al Adawi



will participate in the 100m freestyle, 400m freestyle and 200m breaststroke races. Swimmer Muhannad and Awlad Thani will compete in the 50m backstroke, 100m backstroke and 200m backstroke races.

Swimmer Ayman al Qasimi will take part in the 800m and 1500m races freestyle while swimmer Nasser al Kindi will participate in the 50m backstroke, 100m backstroke, 50m butterfly and 100m butterfly races.

Kerley wins world 100m gold in US cleansweep

EUGENE: American Fred Kerley led a US cleansweep as he stormed to victory in the men's 100m at the World Championships in Oregon on Saturday.

Kerley, in lane four, trailed Marvin Bracy for 95 metres of the tight race, but managed to outdip his team-mate for victory in 9.86 seconds at Eugene's Hayward Field.

Bracy took silver in 9.88sec, Trayvon Bromell claiming bronze in the same time for a third-ever 100m world championship cleansweep for the United States after 1983 and 1991.

The fourth of the strong US quartet, Christian Coleman, the reigning world champion from Doha in 2019 who was banned from the Tokyo Olympics for missing three doping tests, finished sixth (10.01) despite an electric start.

"We said we were going to do it and we did! USA, baby!" Olympic silver medallist Kerley said to roars of approval and applause from a partisan home crowd.

"I didn't know until I looked up and saw the clock with my name 'Fred Kerley' on it," added Kerley, whose path to gold was made easier by the withdrawal of Italy's Olympic champion Marcell Jacobs earlier on Saturday.

"It means a lot and I've done something not many 400m runners have done," Kerley said, adding: "I know today opened up many doors for me. The future is



(From L) South Africa's Akani Simbine, USA's Fred Kerley and USA's Marvin Bracy cross the finish line in the men's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. — AFP

bright for me."

The last US cleansweep featured Carl Lewis, Leroy Burrell and Dennis Mitchell, something not lost on the modest Kerley or silver medallist Bracy.

"It's amazing to be among the great, they did it in 1991, we did in 2022," Bracy said.

"This is history, to be part of something that has only happened three times ever just means the

world to me."

Bracy meanwhile paid tribute to Kerley's remarkable versatility. The 27-year-old started his career as a 400m specialist before switching down to the shorter 100m.

"The guy's special, he's a rare talent to be able to do all three events, his range is limitless. He might do 800m next year, we don't know!"

"He's a special cat, amongst

an elite group of people like the (Usain) Bolts the Wayde van Niekerks."

Kerley has now set his sights on the 200m starting on Monday, and is also not ruling out runs in the 4x100m and 4x400m relays.

"If the coach allows me!" Kerley told reporters.

Late-charging Kerley

It was far from plain sailing for the in-form Kerley, who set out his

stall with a heat-winning 9.79sec on Friday, as all the sprinters got off to a good start.

Bracy and Coleman looked like they might deprive Kerley of a gold many had predicted he would win.

But they hadn't counted on his savage finishing skills, the former 400m runner showing all his strength at the line. Bromell also left it late to sneak onto the podium from lane eight.

As the crowd realised it was a US cleansweep, chants of "U-S-A" rang out and flags brandished.

Jamaica's Oblique Seville finished fourth in 9.97sec, just ahead of South African Akani Simbine, who was clocked at 10.01 like Coleman in sixth.

Japan's Abdul Hakim Sani Brown and Canada's Aaron Brown were seventh and eighth, in 10.06 and 10.07sec respectively.

Failing to advance from the semifinals to the final were Canada's Olympic 200m champion Andre de Grasse, also a two-time 100m bronze medallist, and 2011 world champion Yohan Blake of Jamaica.

The build-up to the final was rocked by the decision of Olympic champion Jacobs to withdraw just hours before the semifinals with tightness in his right thigh.

Italian team doctor Andrea Billi said that evaluation of the contraction had found a "clinical picture that can put muscle integrity at risk and lead to injury".

Jacobs, who pulled off one of the shocks of the Tokyo Olympics last year when he stormed to victory in the 100m in 9.80sec, was crowned world indoor 60m champion in Belgrade in March but has struggled with injury since.

"I am a fighter and this is why I decided to be in Eugene," he tweeted, saying it had been a "painful choice, I am forced to stop". — AFP

Ealey wins US women's shot put world title

EUGENE: One throw was all it took for Chase Ealey to make history on Saturday as she won the United States' first women's shot put title at the World Championships, denying China's Gong Lijiao a third successive gold medal.

The 27-year-old let out a roar as she threw 20.49 metres with her opening attempt, a mark that proved untouchable through six rounds, though Chinese Olympic champion Gong came close with her fifth try, which fell just 10cm short.

"I was just trying to set the tone but I felt like I could have thrown further if need be," Ealey told Reuters. "It was one of the most amazing feelings I've ever experienced in my life. I don't think I can think of a better moment." Jessica Schilder of the Netherlands produced a national record of 19.77m to clinch bronze. — Reuters



Gold medallist USA's Chase Ealey poses on the podium during the medal ceremony for the women's shot put during the World Athletics Championships at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon. — AFP

Mount lifts Chelsea to 2-1 win over Club America in Vegas friendly

LOS ANGELES: Chelsea, prepping for their first Premier League season since Todd Boehly's consortium bought the club, beat Mexico's Club America 2-1 in an international club friendly in Las Vegas. Mason Mount sealed the victory in the 83rd minute with a sensational right-footed shot from outside the box.

Timo Werner had given Chelsea a momentary lead in the 55th but a sloppy backpass from Reece James resulted in an own-goal five minutes later that gifted Club America the equaliser. The 47,223 who turned out at Allegiant Stadium, home of the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders, watched both teams struggle to finish in the first half. Chelsea's Brazilian international Kenedy fired wide in the 24th, Kai Havertz shot over the crossbar in the 29th and in the 40th substitute America's keeper Oscar Jimenez blocked Thiago Silva's header from the centre of the box.

Chelsea finally broke through after the break. A minute after Michy Batshuayi's shot went wide, James set up Werner in the box. His shot was denied by Jimenez, but the rebound went back to the German striker who rifled in a shot from close range.

The advantage was erased in the 60th, when James's backpass caught goalkeeper Marcus Bettinelli off guard and both could only watch the ball trickle into the net. — AFP



Spain seal Euro last-eight clash with England after win over Denmark

LONDON: Spain booked a quarterfinal meeting with Women's Euro hosts England after a 1-0 win over Denmark on Saturday ensured they finished as runners-up in Group B.

Having beaten Finland in their opening game, a draw was all Jorge Vilda's side needed to seal a place in the last eight behind group winners Germany but a late header from Marta Cardona put a gloss on their progression.

It was a cagey affair to begin with at a sunny and noisy Brentford Community Stadium, with 2017 runners-up Denmark threatening on the break but unable to find a clear shot on goal.

Spain had numerous efforts from forward Athenea Del Castillo but all were stopped by goalkeeper Lene Christensen, while captain Irene Paredes had a goalbound header cleared off the line on the

stroke of half-time.

Spain dominated possession in the second half but their end product let them down, while Denmark's best chance fell to substitute Nadia Nadim in the 78th minute when she was set up by Pernille Harder in the box moments after coming on. However, her right-footed shot was tipped over by Sandra Panos.

Denmark looked out of ideas as the clock ticked down and their fate was sealed in the 90th minute as Cardona drifted in at the far post to get on the end of a deep cross from Olga Carmona and head in the winner.

"We knew their game — they were just waiting for the moment to counter-attack, or get a corner to score a goal," Paredes said. "We knew that but had to trust in ourselves — just keep the ball and try, try, try, and defend. We



suffered a lot but we trust in this team a lot and we won the game."

It is the third successive time Spain have qualified for the quarterfinals but they face a tough battle to reach the last four when they take on England at Brighton's Amex Stadium on Wednesday.

"To play in this country against them, with the atmosphere there'll be in that game, is going to be amazing. It's going to be a tough game but we are ready for that," Paredes added.

For Denmark it was a disappointing exit considering their strong showing in 2017 but captain and Chelsea forward Harder was proud of her team's showing on Saturday evening.

"I think the girls fought fabulously well, and I'm proud of them. We fought our backsides off, but the ball simply wouldn't go in," she said. — Reuters

McIlroy, Hovland share British Open lead

ST ANDREWS, United Kingdom: Rory McIlroy and Viktor Hovland share the lead going into the final round of the 150th British Open on Sunday with St Andrews poised for a shoot-out between the two for the Claret Jug.

The duo sit level on 16 under par and are four clear of their nearest challengers, Cameron Young of the United States and Cameron Smith of Australia, who had led at the halfway stage.

McIlroy and Hovland, of Norway, will go out in the final pairing on Sunday at 2:50 pm (1350 GMT), with Smith and Young teeing off together 10 minutes earlier, by which time forecast morning showers were expected to have cleared.

The loudest support around the Old Course is likely to be for McIlroy, who was the favourite coming into the week and has so far lived up to the hype with rounds of 66, 68 and 66.

That is identical to his first three rounds at Hoylake in 2014, when he won his only British Open to

date.

McIlroy followed that victory by winning the PGA Championship a few weeks later but he has not added to his tally of four major titles since then, famously missing the chance to defend his title in the last Open at St Andrews in 2015 after injuring an ankle playing football.

Yet his recent form suggested he has been building up to this, as the 33-year-old came second at the Masters in April, tied fifth at the US Open and won the Canadian Open in between.

"I'm playing a golf tournament and I've got myself in a great position after three days. I've finished off enough golf tournaments in my time to feel like I know what to do tomorrow", he said on Saturday.

"I'm not going to take anything for granted. Nothing's given to you and I have to go out there and earn it just like I've earned everything else in my career."

McIlroy and Hovland fed off each other as they played together



on Saturday, both shooting rounds of 66.

The highlight of McIlroy's day was a sensational chip-in from a bunker for an eagle two at the 10th, while he also had five birdies with the one blemish on his card a bogey at the 17th.

'I'M THE UNDERDOG'

Hovland's own round featured six birdies and not a single

dropped shot.

"Obviously I'm probably the underdog, but I don't mind that at all and hopefully we can push each other again", said Hovland, who could become the first Norwegian ever to win a major.

"I don't think there's any other place that would top it. To win a major that's closest to home, that would be really cool."

Whatever happens on Sunday,

the 24-year-old world number nine seems certain to claim his best ever finish in a major, better than his 12th place in last year's Open.

Unless the leading pair both struggle badly, it is going to take something special for any of the chasing pack to catch them on a course where the record low score in an Open is 63.

That record was set by Paul Broadhurst in 1990 and matched by McIlroy in 2010.

Smith, the 28-year-old Brisbane native with the trademark mullet, is hoping to become the first Australian British Open winner since Greg Norman in 1993.

He led after the first two rounds on 13-under but shot a 73 on Saturday to drop back to 12-under, level with Young.

"It's always hard to back up a good round. You know, to have one like that was definitely frustrating, but it will definitely motivate me tomorrow", Smith said of his Saturday display.

JOHNSON CARRIES LIV HOPES

Neither of those two has the past experience of winning a major, unlike world number one Scottie Scheffler, who is another shot back on 11-under, level with South Korea's Kim Si-Woo.

Scheffler could become the first player to win the Masters and the British Open in the same year since Tiger Woods in 2005.

There is still hope for another American, with Dustin Johnson sitting at 10-under for the championship, although he shot an underwhelming 71 on Saturday. Having quit the PGA Tour last month to join the LIV series, Johnson is the only member of the breakaway Saudi-backed tour still in with a chance of winning on Sunday.

World number 11 Sam Burns of the United States made the biggest impression of the early starters on Sunday as he matched the lowest round of the week with an eight-under 64 to finish on six-under for the championship. — AFP

ROVANPERA WINS ESTONIA RALLY TO EXTEND CHAMPIONSHIP LEAD



TARTU, Estonia: Championship leader Kalle Rovanperä claimed his fifth win of the season in the Estonia Rally on Sunday, finishing ahead of his Welsh Toyota team-mate Elfyn Evans.

The 21-year-old Finn, also winner

last year in Estonia, consolidated his position as leader in the championship after a dominant performance which saw him win 13 of the 24 stages to finish over a minute ahead of Evans, who won six.

Home hope Ott Tanak was third best for Hyundai, two minutes behind Rovanperä who earned five bonus points for the best time in the last "Power Stage" over wet and muddy roads.

Rovanperä now has 175 points after

seven rounds, with Belgian Thierry Neuville of Hyundai second on 92 points after finishing fourth on Sunday.

Evans is third on 79 points, two ahead of Tanak, who claimed one stage win over the weekend. — AFP

Cressy and Bublik advance to ATP Hall of Fame Open final

NEWPORT, United States: American Maxime Cressy and Kazakhstan's Alexander Bublik advanced to the final of the ATP Hall of Fame Open with victories on Saturday at the grass-court tournament.

Cressy, chasing his first ATP crown, reached his third final of the year by defeating compatriot John Isner 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 while Bublik, who won his first ATP title in February at Montpellier, eliminated Australia's Jason Kubler 6-3, 6-2.

"I just had to focus on what I could control, my serve", Cressy said. "He definitely played a big level starting in the second set."

Bublik, ranked 42nd and Cressy, ranked a career-best 41st, will meet for the first time in Sunday's final.

Cressy, a French-born 25-year-old who competed for his homeland until becoming an American in 2018, blasted 22 aces to dispatch four-time Hall of Fame champion Isner.

Russian-born Bublik, who began playing for Kazakhstan in 2016, fired 15 aces. Bublik, 25, lost his first four ATP finals — the first of those at Newport to Isner in 2019 — before his breakthrough title five months ago.

Cressy reached his first two ATP career finals this year, losing to Rafael Nadal at Melbourne Summer Set in January and to compatriot Taylor Fritz at Eastbourne last month.

Cressy broke Isner for a second time to claim the first set in 29 minutes, but Isner broke Cressy with a backhand winner to grab a 3-2 edge in the second time and held through to force a third set.

A stunning point delivered Cressy a break for a 5-3 lead. After a forehand winner to get a break chance, Cressy made a service return that barely crossed the net, then spun back up and over the net and out of Isner's reach, giving Cressy a chance to serve for the match.

"The opportunities came and I seized one of them, by luck", Cressy said. "I apologised to him, but I guess I created the luck by staying patient."

Isner had two break chances in the ninth game but Cressy saved both and held to advance after an hour and 51 minutes.

Bublik dropped only three points on his own serve in each set, two of those coming on double faults, and cruised past 102nd-ranked Kubler.

Bublik laughed after a backhand winner off an overhead smash by Kubler on his way to breaking the Aussie at love in the penultimate game and winning after 69 minutes. — AFP



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Risks to Oman’s financial stability have eased: CBO

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 17

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has affirmed that risks to the Sultanate of Oman’s “financial stability have subsidy”, but warned nevertheless that “new vulnerabilities have appeared that may test the resilience” of the country’s financial system.

The apex bank made the observations in its Financial Stability Report 2022 (FSR), published here on Sunday. The report stressed the banking sector “retains the capacity to absorb a variety of shocks without adverse spillover effects on credit supply and the real economy”.

CBO Executive President Tahir bin Salim al Amri credited the Omani government and the Central Bank for helping craft a “swift post-pandemic economic recovery plan”, that was buoyed by favourable oil prices.



“Fiscal authorities and CBO took an array of fiscal, financial, and monetary measures to support businesses and households to ensure that the economy remains well-poised for a swift recovery once the pandemic subsides,” said the Executive President in his foreword.

“We realised the desired

outcomes of our joint efforts without a lasting impact on our economy. As the Covid-19 related restrictions were gradually eased, the economy rapidly bounced back with a V-shaped recovery duly supported by improvement in oil prices,” he noted.

Significantly, the Financial Stability Report cautions that ongoing geopolitical tensions in Eastern Europe could fuel inflationary pressures that are evident around the world. It warns that ensuing monetary tightening may weigh on growth, especially for the sectors that are still in the recovery phase.

As for the overall health of the banking sector, the report notes that banks continue to hold large capital buffers which are supported by improvement in their profitability indicators. The asset quality of the banks remains well contained with a low non-performing level (NPL) ratio and

adequate provision coverage, it said.

While the loan moratorium ended in December 2021, expectations of credit risk from deferred loans remains low, according to the report. It explained that the exit from this regulatory relaxation was timed to coincide with strong economic recovery and a provision to restructure the loans if necessary without affecting the risk classification.

In concluding, the report stressed that overall short-term risks to financial stability have significantly declined compared to the previous year. It voiced hope that “an amicable resolution of the ongoing European conflict” would help restore confidence and relieve some pressures, while any further escalation or a delay in the peace process will elevate downside risks for recovery and financial stability.”

Circular economy project opportunities worth RO 528m unveiled



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, in cooperation with Oman Environmental Services Holding Co (be’ah), is promoting circular economy and waste management opportunities valued at around RO 528 million to the private sector and small and medium size enterprises (SMEs).

The ministry said in a statement that the project opportunities will enhance

FDI inflows and GDP growth, while also supporting economic diversification.

The investment opportunities are as follows: recycling of electronic waste, construction of biogas plant for electricity and heat production, fertiliser production, waste-to-energy plant, used cooking oil recycling, glass recycling, recycling of green waste, paper waste, cardboard, copper residues, aluminium residues, acid lead battery treatment facility, used vehicle oil and recycling of fish waste.

(With inputs from ONA)

Inflation outlook in Oman remains moderate: Report

Counter-measures: Inflation expectations for over half of the consumer basket remain low, says Central Bank of Oman



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 17

Inflation expectations for the Sultanate of Oman, notwithstanding soaring global inflation stoked by the Ukraine-Russian war and lingering supply-chain constraints, will remain moderate, according to the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The apex bank attributed this outlook to the benign growth in prices of more than 50 per cent of the goods and services that together constitute the ‘consumer basket’ for determining consumer price index trends.

“The inflation outlook in Oman remains moderate as the inflation expectations for over half of the consumer basket remain low,” said the Central Bank in its Financial Stability Report 2022 published here on Sunday.

“Moreover, the higher hydrocarbon revenues have

provided more fiscal space to the government for targeted intervention to offset any inflationary pressures to complement monetary actions taken by CBO,” it further noted.

In a foreword, CBO Executive President Tahir bin Salim al Amri said the Central Bank, taking a cue from the US Fed’s decision to raise its benchmark interest, had raised its repo rate to 2.25 per cent by mid-June 2022 in three successive rate revisions.

Despite these measures, a recent Credit Conditions Survey foresees an increase in the demand for credit from households and businesses, while also anticipating the easing of credit availability to both segments, the central bank noted.

Also auguring well for the moderate inflation outlook for Oman is the slump in property prices and rents due to the decline in the expatriate population. “Due to ample

supply, housing costs are not expected to rise sharply in the near term. Moreover, the prices of utilities (water, gas, electricity) are administered, the price of fuel for the year 2022 has been capped at the October 2021 level, and the communication sub-index has been almost flat though slightly declining for almost a decade.”

“Considering this, although landed cost of some food items in particular grains and edible oil will contribute to higher prices, the inflation will remain benign for over 50 per cent of the consumer basket,” the report said.

The Central Bank nevertheless acknowledged concerns about the rising cost of living and interest rates for the sustainability of household debt.

“Households with lower incomes are disproportionately more vulnerable to the soaring inflation as they have narrower buffers to maintain their debt servicing capacity in the face of rising costs,” it noted.

“Nevertheless, risks from these developments remain contained in Oman due to moderate inflation expectations, targeted subsidies to protect the more vulnerable strata from inflation, and fixed-rate personal loans,” it added.



SAS airplanes are parked at the Oslo Airport Gardermoen, as Scandinavian airlines (SAS) pilots go on strike, Norway. – Reuters

SAS and pilots negotiate around the clock, seeking end to crippling strike

STOCKHOLM: Ailing airline SAS (SAS.ST) and pilot unions continued talks over new collective agreements on Sunday after negotiations through the night, a union representative told reporters as the strike entered its 14th day.

Most SAS pilots in Sweden, Denmark and Norway walked out on July 4 after talks over conditions related to the Scandinavian carrier’s rescue plan collapsed. The parties returned to the negotiating table in the Swedish capital on Wednesday.

“We have been at it tonight and we continue,” Norwegian pilot union representative Roger Klokset said while on a break.

Klokset said parties may have come closer to a deal overnight.

“Maybe. But I don’t know whether there will be an

agreement yet,” he said.

SAS, the main owners of which are Sweden and Denmark, has been struggling to compete with low-cost competition for years before the pandemic slammed the industry. It needs to attract new investors and secure bridge financing, saying that it must first slash costs to achieve those objectives.

Pilots employed in the 75-year-old carrier’s SAS Scandinavia subsidiary last week said they would agree to limited wage cuts and less favourable terms, but SAS said that concessions offered were not enough for it to carry out a rescue plan announced in February. read more

Unions also demand that pilots axed during the pandemic are rehired at SAS Scandinavia rather than having to compete with external applicants for

jobs on less attractive terms at recently created SAS Link and Ireland-based SAS Connect.

On Saturday a mediator said the parties had made progress, but significant issues had yet to be resolved.

The airline said on Thursday that the strike had caused 2,550 flight cancellations, affecting 270,000 passengers and costing it between \$94 million and \$123 million. The Swedish government has said it will provide no more cash.

For Sunday, 164 SAS flights, or 62% of those scheduled, were cancelled, according to flight-tracking platform FlightAware. Pilots at SAS Link and SAS Connect are not on strike.

Earlier, National Mediator of Norway Mats Wilhelm Ruland said the parties had come closer during the day. — Reuters

Banking credit to private sector climbs to RO 23.6 billion

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

The total outstanding credit extended by other depository corporations (ODCs) — representing conventional and Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman — grew by 4.5 per cent to reach RO 28.3 billion at the end of May 2022, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) stated in its latest review of banking and monetary developments. Credit to the private sector demonstrated a slight increase of 1.8 per cent (Y-o-Y) to reach RO 23.6 billion, it noted.

Non-financial corporations received the highest shares of the total private sector credit, at approximately 45.6 per cent at end of May 2022, followed by the household sector at 45.4 per cent.

The share of financial corporations was 5.3 per cent while other sectors received the remaining 3.6 per cent of total private sector credit as at end of May 2022.

Total deposits held with ODCs registered a Y-o-Y growth of 3.2 per cent to reach RO 25.9 billion at the end of May 2022. Total private sector deposits decreased by 1.0 per cent to RO 17.2 billion. In terms of sector-wise composition of private sector deposits, the biggest contribution is from household deposits at 52.7 per cent, followed by non-financial corporations at 29.5 per cent, financial corporations



at 14.9 per cent and other sectors at 2.9 per cent.

The combined balance sheet of conventional banks showed a Y-o-Y growth of 3.3 per cent in total outstanding credit as of end of May 2022. Credit to the private sector increased by 0.9 to reach RO 19.1 billion while their overall investments in securities went up by 4.1 per cent to RO 4.9 billion at end of May 2022.

Investment in Government Development Bonds decreased by 2.6 per cent compared to the same period last year to RO 2.1 billion while their investments in foreign securities declined by 11.6 per cent to RO 0.73 billion at the end of May 2022. On the liabilities side, aggregate deposits held with the conventional banks increased by 1.5 per cent Y-o-Y to RO 21.3 billion at end of May 2022.

The government deposits with conventional banks witnessed an increase of 15.9 per cent at RO 5 billion, and deposits of public enterprises increased by 13.0 per cent to RO 1.6 billion. Private sector deposits, which accounted for 66.8 per cent of total deposits with conventional banks, decreased by 3.5 per cent as of May 2022 to reach RO 14.2 billion.

The total assets of Islamic Banks and Windows increased by 9.4 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis to RO 6.1 billion and constituted about 15.7 per cent of the banking system's assets with a growth of 9.4 per cent at end of May 2022. Islamic banking entities provided financing of RO 5 billion at the end of May 2022, recording a growth of 10.5 per cent over that a year ago. Total deposits held with Islamic banks and windows increased by 11.8 per

cent to RO 4.6 billion.

The nominal GDP, as per preliminary data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), showed an increase of 25.7 per cent at the end of May 2022 compared to the same period of 2021. The expansion was driven by an increase in the output of the hydrocarbon sector by 69.0 per cent and non-hydrocarbon sector by 8.9 per cent.

The Omani oil average price during January-May 2022 at \$80 per barrel was higher by 46 per cent than that in January-May 2021. The average daily oil production at 1,042.8 thousand barrels during January-May 2022 increased by 9.4 per cent.

Oman's average Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed a Y-o-Y inflation of 3.4 per cent during the period January-May 2022.

New Omran-backed residential project launched in Salalah

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

'Fonar Views', a new residential project located in Muriya's Hawana Salalah Integrated Tourism Complex, has been launched in Dhofar Governorate.

Muriya, the developer of Hawana Salalah, is a partnership between the leading government arm for tourism development in Oman, Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran) and the internationally acclaimed developer of fully-integrated towns, Orascom Development Holding (ODH).

The new project has the potential to spur investment opportunities in Dhofar's real estate sector.

Located a short distance from Fanar Hotel & Residences beach, the marina and the destination's world-class amenities, Fanar Views offers luxurious waterfront living and a unique investment opportunity with high potential returns within a lucrative year-round rental market.

The project boasts a limited selection of townhouses, twin- and standalone villas, fully serviced and furnished, with private pools overlooking the lagoons. Properties in Fanar Views are available with one, two- and three bedrooms, offering resort-style living in a developed community. Buyers

of all nationalities can also enjoy lifetime family residency, complimentary use of the Fanar Hotel & Residences' swimming pool, beaches, sports facilities, gym, business centre and exclusive discounts at the hotel's restaurants.

"With the Governorate of Dhofar continuing to gain standing as a sought-after tourist destination and growing real estate market, Fanar Views is a great choice for living as well as a robust investment opportunity. As the first such development in the area, 'Fonar Views' offers an ideal base from which to experience the beauty of the governorate, complete with access to all of what Hawana Salalah as well as the key offerings that Fanar Hotel & Residences have to offer," said Seif Elkhoully, Chief Development Officer, Muriya.

"As our latest prestigious neighbourhood, Fanar Views is designed with luxury living in mind and whether for couples, families, or as a lucrative rental with high return on investment potential in Oman's rapidly-expanding subtropical city, the new neighbourhood unlocks the exceptional."

Set on 13.6 million sq metres, Hawana Salalah offers 1,100 hotel rooms, 7 km white sandy beaches, a 170 berth marina, aqua park and a variety of bustling restaurants and cafes.

Oman Air to launch Future Leaders Commercial Graduate Programme

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 17

National carrier Oman Air will shortly launch its Future Leaders Commercial Graduate Programme exclusively for Omani graduates on the Oman Air website.

The intensive 2-year programme will offer up to 12 selected candidates the opportunity to gain internationally recognised



qualifications while being exposed to all commercial functions at Oman Air.

The programme designed

for the most talented Omani graduates, and expands on Oman Air's excellence-focused culture. With job rotations that

will expose students to six core commercial departments — and strategy & Planning, Revenue Management, Sales, Marketing, Product Development and Service Delivery — graduates will receive practical experience from inside the airline's commercial department.

The programme will help students reach their potential as commercial managers and provide them with the skill sets needed to enter the airline sector.



Toyota Oman unveils exciting summer thrills campaign

Toyota enthusiasts can now own their favourite Toyota and enjoy exclusive benefits. Service from 1 Year/10,000 kms up to 4 years/40,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and Insurance 1 Year or Cash Gift in Lieu of Insurance RO 125 to RO 450.

The campaign is valid until September 15, 2022.

In Oman, customers can choose from a wide range of thrilling vehicles including SUVs, sedans, hatchbacks, hybrids and pick-ups.

The SUV range include the C-HR. The C-HR, represents a leap forward in design, manufacturing and engineering for Toyota. The C-HR offers impressive fuel economy with 23.9 Kms/L as per GSO Conformity Certificate and carries a Hybrid battery warranty of 8 Years/160,000 Kms.

The Toyota Raize reflects Toyota's commitment to developing diverse mobility solutions and offers the space, practicality and comfort

demand by today's active lifestyle.

Raize is equipped with a 1-litre turbocharged engine producing 96.5 hp and 14.28 Kg m of torque. It is paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission.

The sporty and stylish RAV4 offers extraordinary moments. The RAV4 includes features like 19" Alloy Wheels, LED Headlamps & DRL, Power Back Door, Wide Moonroof, 8" Navigation System, Wireless Charger (Qi Enabled) and more. The Fortuner is equipped with 4.0L, V6 Engine, 18" Alloy Wheels, LED Projector Headlamps with DRL, Navigation System, Power & Ventilated Driver & Front Passenger Seats, Power Back Door and more.

The powerful and capable Prado includes 4.0L, V6 Engine, LED Headlamps & Fog Lamp, 9" Navigation System, Ventilated



Front Seats, Moonroof, Airbags: Driver + Front Passenger + Curtain + Side (Front) + Knee (Driver) and more.

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The sedan range includes the popular Yaris. The Yaris delivers a dynamic driving experience. The Yaris sedan and Yaris Hatchback is equipped with 1.5L engine. The 1.5-litre four-cylinder engine can

churn out a maximum output of 106 hp and 14.3 kg-m of torque and is mated to the CVT transmission to offer a smooth shifting experience with excellent fuel efficiency.

The Toyota Corolla — the popular choice of people around the world has been developed from a driver and passengers' point of view first. The Corolla is also available in a Hybrid option.

The sleek and stylish Toyota Camry has been one of the best-sellers. Equipped with a range of exciting features, technology and more, the Camry is also available in a 2.5L, 3.5L and Hybrid options.

The Toyota Avalon is a statement of luxury. It is equipped with 3.5L V6 Engine, LED Headlamps with Adaptive Cornering Lamps, Premium Leather Seat Material, 9" Navigation System with 14 JBL Speakers, Head Up Display, Toyota Safety Sense and more.

Specifications of vehicle

imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms and conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details.

For the latest press releases, test drive requests and more, please visit www.toyotaoman.com, www.youtube.com/toyotaoman, www.facebook.com/toyotaoman and www.instagram.com/toyotaomanofficial/. For any further details & to ascertain availability of stocks, please visit your nearest Toyota Showroom.

S Africa’s business owners fume as power cuts hit profits

LINDA GIVETASH

South Africans’ annoyance at power cuts has given way to worry, with business owners complaining that the prolonged energy crisis for which no end is in sight is eating into profits and hobbling economic activity.

At Native Rebels, a colourful second-floor bar flanked with a large balcony in the Johannesburg township of Soweto, the cost of running a generator to keep lights on for weeks has been a huge burden, co-owner Masechaba Nonyane said. “We thought Covid was bad... now that has been replaced with eight hours of no power”, the 33-year-old entrepreneur said.

“It’s been really, really crippling”, she added.

Scheduled

blackouts, known locally as load shedding, have burdened the country for years but recently reached new extremes.

This month, the country has endured almost two weeks of stage-6 load shedding, which entails multiple power cuts a day, each lasting between two and four hours.

Each of the up to eight stages of load shedding costs the country’s economy an additional \$29 million a day in lost activity, according to government estimates. The crisis was exacerbated by a labour dispute at monopoly power provider Eskom’s coal plants.

The dispute was resolved earlier this month as Eskom agreed to a pay raise for its striking workers — but power cuts have yet to significantly abate.

“Load shedding will lead to further job losses, which will lead to lower production. It will affect spending. It will further affect economic growth”, said Ismail Fasanya, senior lecturer of economics at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Firms have had to spend money on generators, raising the cost of running a business — something that risks dissuading local entrepreneurs looking to start new ventures as well as foreign investors, said Fasanya.

The impact on jobs is particularly worrying in a country grappling with 34.5 per cent unemployment in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, he said.

Addressing the South African Communist Party congress on Friday, President Cyril Ramaphosa, who has been under pressure to resolve the issue, said he would soon be announcing measures to tackle the crisis. — AFP

Load shedding will lead to further job losses, which will lead to lower production. It will affect spending. It will further affect economic growth

ISMAIL FASANYA
lecturer



MARKET BUZZ
DESPITE CRISIS

A vendor arranges bananas at a wholesale vegetable and fruit market amid ongoing economic crisis on the outskirts of Colombo. — AFP

The energy crisis will deepen



DANIEL YERGIN

The writer Vice Chairman of S&P Global, is the author of ‘The New Map: Energy, Climate’, and the ‘Clash of Nations and The Prize’, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize. He received the first James R Schlesinger Medal for Energy Security from the US Department of Energy

Is today’s energy crisis as serious as similar previous ones — particularly the 1970s oil shocks? That question is being asked around the world, with consumers hit by high prices, businesses worried about energy supplies, political leaders and central bankers struggling with inflation and countries confronting balance-of-payments pressures.

So, yes, this energy crisis is as serious. In fact, today’s crisis is potentially worse. In the 1970s, only oil was involved, whereas this crisis encompasses natural gas, coal and even the nuclear-fuel cycle. In addition to stoking inflation, today’s crisis is transforming a previously global market into one that is fragmented and more vulnerable to disruption, crimping economic growth. And, together with the geopolitical crisis arising from the war in Ukraine, it is further deepening the world’s great-power rivalries.

Today’s energy crisis did not begin with Russia’s war on Ukraine, but rather last year when energy demand surged as the world emerged from the Covid-19 pandemic. That is when China ran short of coal and prices shot up. The global market for liquefied natural gas (LNG) then tightened, with prices skyrocketing, and oil prices rose as well.

Normally, with rising energy prices, a country like Russia would have increased its natural-gas sales to its main customer, Europe, above the minimum contracted

TODAY’S GLOBAL ENERGY CRISIS COULD TURN OUT TO BE EVEN WORSE THAN WHAT THE WORLD EXPERIENCED IN THE 1970S. MUCH WILL DEPEND ON MORE INFORMED COLLABORATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS AND INDUSTRY LEADERS, WITH POLICYMAKERS PROPERLY UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING THE ENERGY FLOWS

volumes. Instead, it stuck to its contracts, even though it could have produced considerably more. At the time, it appeared that Russia was trying to force prices up. But, instead, the Kremlin may well have been preparing for war.

Because Europe depended on Russia for 35-40 per cent of its oil and natural gas, Putin assumed that the Europeans would protest the invasion but ultimately stand aside. Fixated on his self-appointed mission of restoring what he views as Russia’s historic empire, he did not anticipate how they would respond to an unprovoked war next door.

Looking ahead, five factors could make today’s energy crisis even worse. First, Putin has opened a second front in the conflict by cutting back on the contracted volumes of natural gas that Russia supplies to Europe.

The goal is to prevent Europeans from storing enough supplies for next

winter and to drive prices higher, creating economic hardship and political discord. In his speech in June at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum, Putin made his reasoning clear: “Social and economic problems worsening in Europe” will “split their societies” and “inevitably lead to populism... and a change of the elites in the short-term.”

As it is, Germany is now anticipating the need for gas rationing, and its minister for economic affairs, Robert Habeck, warns of a “Lehman-style contagion” (referring to the 2008 financial crisis) if Europe cannot manage today’s energy-induced economic disruptions.

Second, a new or revived nuclear deal with Iran is unlikely. Thus, sanctions on the country will not be lifted — and that means Iranian oil will not be flowing into world markets anytime soon.

Third, although Saudi Arabia may step up its oil production to help “stabilise” oil markets in connection with US President Joe Biden’s upcoming visit, no gusher is likely to follow, because there does not appear to be a large amount of extra oil in Saudi Arabia (or in the United Arab Emirates) that can be produced on short notice.

Meanwhile, many other oil-exporting countries cannot even return to their previous levels of production, owing to a lack of investment and maintenance since the pandemic.

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Boeing aims to ignite Farnborough Airshow under record heat

BY TIM HEPHER AND DAVID SHEPARDSON

Boeing will seek to shore up its troubled 737 MAX 10 and 777X jets with orders officially worth over \$15 billion from Delta Air Lines and Lufthansa this week, as the aerospace industry swelters at its largest event since Covid-19.

Industry sources said the US planemaker, struggling to maintain its duopoly with Europe’s Airbus, would strike early at the Farnborough Airshow, which opens on Monday, after months of talks to sell its largest single-aisle jet to Delta.

Reuters first reported in March Delta was discussing an order for 100 MAX 10 planes, and reported

last week the airline was also in talks to order around 12 more Airbus A220s in a deal likely be announced on Tuesday.

Germany’s Lufthansa is likely to firm up a deal for around 10 large Boeing freighters, including seven of the recently launched cargo version of the 777X, sources said.

None of the parties commented ahead of the show, which is going ahead despite an emergency UK weather warning and restricted rail access caused by record forecast temperatures.

As Britain melts, aerospace firms will do their best to show civil demand is intact after the worst downturn in their history. Rising defence spending will also be in focus as the industry gathers under the shadow of war in Ukraine.

Boeing unveiled broadly stable

civil airplane forecasts on Sunday.

Even so, many of the deals will be provisional ones or formal signings of business already in the works and virtually all will be packaged as contributions to lower emissions in support of a common goal of net zero by 2050, delegates said.

EasyJet aims to secure shareholder approval for a recent deal for 56 Airbus A320neos, placing it on Farnborough’s radar.

Poland’s LOT is studying proposals from existing suppliers Boeing and Embraer as well Airbus and engine firms, but will not make a decision at the show, a person close to the talks said, denying a report the airline had already picked Airbus.

But most attention will be on the MAX 10 and 777X which Boeing

plans to fly in a scaled-down Farnborough display.

Both airplanes are the source of major headaches as Boeing wrestles with regulatory problems in the wake of a two-year safety crisis triggered by crashes of a smaller MAX.

Boeing has a December deadline to win approval for the 737 MAX 10 — the largest member of its single-aisle family — or meet new cockpit alerting requirements, unless Congress waives it.

Chief Executive Dave Calhoun has said Boeing could be forced to cancel the 737 MAX 10 — a move that could have repercussions across the industry including for rival Airbus, reluctant to be dragged into a race to develop new jets too soon.

However, the head of Boeing’s

commercial division, Stan Deal, told reporters on Sunday that cancelling the MAX 10, which analysts say is needed to compete with strong sales of the Airbus A321neo, is “not a high probability path”.

Boeing is also close to delivering its first 787 in a year after a spate of regulatory and production problems, Deal said.

Aerospace leaders will also be under pressure this week to address concerns over supply chains and a spike in inflation that raises questions over both input costs and consumer demand.

Current market leader Airbus is sticking with plans to raise single-aisle A320neo output to 75 jets a month in 2025 from 50 now, but some suppliers fear supply chains may not keep up. — Reuters

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Building bridges between the Orient and the Occident

Two German editors Natascha Plankermann and Gabriele Brähler have brought out a book called '1001 Friendships', connecting the deep relations between Germany and Oman. The book in English, German and Arabic abstracts contains stories about people in Oman and Germany. '1001 Friendships' also notably shares a wide range of topics and personal success stories of German and Omani students living and working together. Know more about the book and what Natascha, a Ginger Rogers fan, has to say about her Oman experiences... **P20**

Primatologist Jane Goodall gets Barbie doll in her likeness

BRITISH PRIMATOLOGIST Jane Goodall has got a Barbie in her likeness, fulfilling a longtime wish of having her own doll to inspire young girls.

Mattel Inc unveiled the new Barbie, which the toymaker says is made from recycled plastic, as part of its Inspiring Women Series, nodding to Goodall's groundbreaking studies of chimpanzees and conservation efforts.

Dressed in a khaki shirt and shorts and holding a notebook, Goodall's doll has a pair of

binoculars around her neck and David Greybeard by her side, a replica of the first chimpanzee to trust the primatologist as she conducted her research at Gombe National Park, in what is now Tanzania in east Africa.

"I wanted a doll to be me even before this idea came up. I've seen... little girls playing with Barbie dolls and certainly at the beginning, they were all very girly girly and I thought little girls need... some choice", Goodall told Reuters.

"Mattel has changed its range of dolls and there's all kinds of



astronauts and doctors and things like that. So many children learn about me at school. They'll be thrilled to have the Barbie doll."

Goodall, 88, began her research in east Africa in 1960, observing

that chimpanzees make tools, hunt and eat meat and show compassion among other traits.

"When I got to Gombe, it was beautiful, my dream had come true", she said. "But for four

months the chimps ran away from me... so although the forest was wonderful, I couldn't enjoy it until this David Greybeard lost his fear and helped the others to lose their fear too."

Mattel said it would also partner with the Jane Goodall Institute and her youth service movement Roots & Shoots to help teach children about their environmental impact.

"I see us at the mouth of a very long, very dark tunnel with a little shining star at the end and it's no good sitting at the mouth of the tunnel and saying 'Oh, I hope that star comes to us.' Hope is about action", Goodall said.

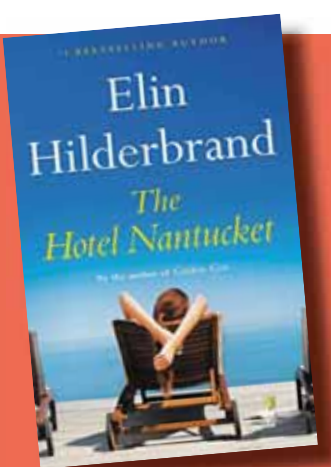
"We... work around all these obstacles between us and the star, which is climate change, loss of biodiversity, poverty, unsustainable lifestyles, pollution, you name it. And as we go along the tunnel, we reach out to others because there are people working on each one of these problems but so often they're working in silos." — Reuters

READ

THE HOTEL NANTUCKET

BY ELIN HILDERBRAND

The new general manager of a hotel far from its Gilded Age heyday deals with the complicated pasts of her guests and staff.



AESPA KEEPS WINNING FANS OVER

Making their debut in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic didn't stop Korean pop group AESPA from winning fans, but it did stop the band from meeting them. The group - made up of members Karina, Winter, Giselle and Ningning - has tried to remedy that since launching in late 2020. On a tour to promote their new album "Girls," the group performed at Coachella and appeared on "Good Morning America" - and are soaking up the chance to see fans in person.



ANCIENT HARBOURS

Cyprus has opened its first underwater archaeological park, offering visitors a glimpse of history at one of the eastern Mediterranean's best preserved ancient harbours. The now-submerged harbour lying off the ancient city-kingdom of Amathus was constructed between 212/311 BC and 294 BC, when Cyprus was the focus of conflict between two successors of Alexander the Great. It was probably constructed as a naval base because of its narrow entrance, though experts say its combined commercial use cannot be dismissed either. — Reuters





Iraq's date palms: Rescuing a national icon



THOUSANDS OF YOUNG date palms, Iraq's national symbol, form lines that extend from the edge of the desert near the central city of Karbala and into the horizon.

Iraq's prized trees are central to a push aimed to preserve a long-threatened ancestral culture, whose fruit historically presented prosperity across the Arab world.

"The date palm is the symbol and pride of Iraq," says Mohamed Abul-Maali, commercial director at the Fadak date plantation.

Once known as the "country of 30 million palm trees", and home to 600 varieties of the fruit, Iraq's date production has been blighted by decades of conflict and environmental challenges, including drought, desertification and salinisation.

The Fadak plantation, taking its name from a date-filled oasis central to Islam's origins, is a 500-hectare (1,235 acres) farm operated by the Imam Hussein Shrine in the nearby holy city of Karbala.

Abul-Maali hopes the project, launched in 2016, will "restore this culture to what it used to be".

The grove is a repository for "more than 90 date varieties, Iraqi but also Arab species", from the Gulf and North Africa, he adds.

The Iraqi varieties are among "the rarest and best" and were collected from across the country.

Of the 30,000 trees planted at Fadak, more than 6,000 are already producing fruit, according to Abul-Maali.

He expects this year's harvest to reach 60 tonnes, a threefold increase

on 2021.

The rows of new trees at the Fadak farm stand in stark contrast to the state of plantations in other parts of the country.

'LIKE A CEMETERY'

The scene at Fadak with well-watered trees is far removed from the Basra region, once a centre of date production in southern Iraq.

Here the landscape is scarred with the slender trunks of decapitated palm trees.

In the Shatt al-Arab area, where the Euphrates and Tigris rivers meet, Baghdad razed entire tracts during its 1980-88 war with Iran.

Often the trunks of felled date palms were used to fill and bury irrigation canals that had dried up and become unused.

"It looks like a cemetery," says agricultural engineer Alaa al Badran.

According to him, the number of palm trees in the area has fallen from six million, before the Iraq-Iran war, to less than three million today.

Now "the salinisation of the waters of the Shatt al-Arab and of the land" poses an even greater challenge, Badran says.

"The solution would be drip irrigation and desalination systems. But that can be expensive," says Ahmed

al Awad, whose family once owned 200 date palms in the area but only have 50 trees remaining.

Iraq's agriculture ministry claims some progress in addressing declining date palm production.

"In the last 10 years we have gone from 11 million palm trees to 17 million," says Hadi al Yasseri, a spokesman for the minister.

A government programme to rescue the date palms was launched in 2010, but eight years later it was

shelved due to a lack of funds, says Al Yasseri.

But he expects it to be relaunched, as new funds are due to be included in the next government budget.

UPSTREAM DIVERSIONS

According to official figures, Iraq exported almost 600,000 tonnes of dates in 2021.

The fruit is the country's second largest export commodity after oil, according to the World Bank.

"As global demand is increasing, the ongoing initiatives in Iraq on improving quality should be continued," a recent World Bank report stated.

While exports earn the national economy \$120 million annually, the organisation laments that much of Iraq's crop is sold to the United Arab Emirates, where dates are repackaged and re-exported for higher prices.

In the town of Badra, on Iraq's eastern border with Iran, grievances are commonplace.

The scars of war are evident among groves of decapitated palm trees.

For more than a decade, officials have complained of scarce water supplies, and have accused Iran of upstream diversions of the Mirzabad River, known locally as Al Kalal.

"The date of Badra is incomparable," says Mussa Mohsen who owns around 800 date palm trees.

"Before, we had water from Al Kalal which came from Iran," he recalls.

"Badra was like a sea but now to irrigate we rely on wells." — **AFP**

A LOOK INTO THE ACADEME

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Summer Learning loss and Narrowing Achievement Gap

INTERESTING, EXCITING results published in 'American Research' Journal, followed "students in grades 1 through 6 over five summers, show 52% of students lost an average of 39% of their total school year gains during the summer months.

The study used data from Northwest Evaluation Association that included 200 million test scores for 18 million students in 7,500 school districts" (Atteberry& McEachin, 2020).

Nevertheless, some students might continue to gain knowledge over the summer, whereas others tend to lose it. In comparison with formal schooling times, as students show great commitment to learn, students spend a significant portion of their time outside the school setting. That out of school time is concentrated in the summer months, a time when the school plays a little role in students' lives (Atteberry& McEachin, 2020).

Moreover, research suggests that summer learning loss is cumulative. Thus, it contributes to a substantial portion of students' achievement gap. For instance, some researchers estimated



that "approximately two-thirds of the reading achievement gap by ninth grade could be attributed to summer learning loss in the five years of schooling".

Moreover, there is a strong correlation between time and academic learning time, and due to the absence of skills practice in the school, acquired skills degrade over time outside the school throughout the formal summer break. What's more, finding shows that summer loss differs by students' personality, grade level and subject. Overall, loss in literacy skills is more likely to be less than mathematics ability over the summer (Mccombs et al., 2011).

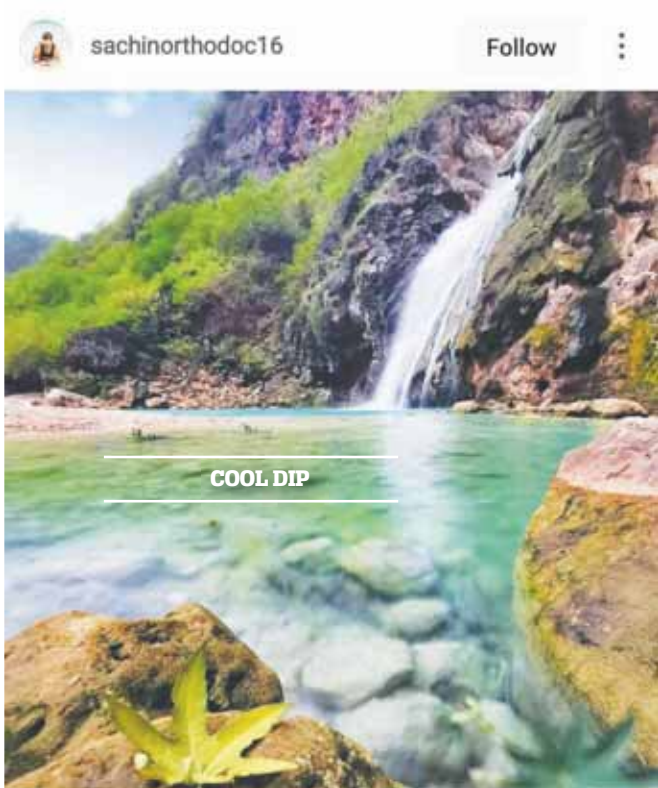
However, summer activities such as reading books, and summers camp tend to be more useful. According to Dewar (2019), there are some suggestions to prevent summer learning loss, such as: starting a summer interesting and challenging reading program, setting aside little pieces of time to review mathematics concepts using educational games and apps that make practice more fun, playing "unplugged" number games to help children sharpen their math skills, taking a summer trip to museums or natural sites which is helping children enjoy hands on experiences, and allowing the student to explore a different side out of schooling curriculum as memorising parts of the Holy Quran, palaeontology, astronomy, rock collection, ancient history. Research indicates that such practices may help improve summer learning loss and enrichment opportunities. Simultaneously, integrating with and out of school learning.

In conclusion sum up, the previous research findings should be of interest to policymakers and parents in improving learning loss through summer breaking. Additionally, funders of summer learning programmes play a substantial role to enhance the quality of the learning summer programmes which involve the knowledge, skills based on creativity and imagination that satisfies the students' curiosity about materials and tools that are never made into the school curriculum.



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AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

After sensational trial, Johnny Depp releases an album



FRESH OFF HIS HIGHLY publicised, controversial defamation suit, actor Johnny Depp sought to show his creative career was back on track on Friday, releasing an album with English rocker Jeff Beck. The 13-track album "18" on which Depp sings and plays guitar features mainly covers, and so far it has been critically panned. It's a record unlikely to figure prominently in the repertoire of Beck, the 78-year-old former member of The Yardbirds. The album includes renditions of Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" and John Lennon's "Isolation," as well as the Velvet Underground classic "Venus In Furs." The choice to include a song focused on sado-masochism might seem bizarre to some, given the ultra-mediatised trial centred on alleged domestic abuse between Depp and his ex-wife Amber Heard, the actor best known for her role in "Aquaman." The album also includes two songs the 59-year-old "Pirates of the Caribbean" star penned himself: "This is a Song for Miss Hedy Lamarr," and "Sad Mother fuckin' Parade." "Erased by the same world that made her a star / Spun out of beauty, trapped by its web," Depp sings of Lamarr, who secluded herself in the final years of her life.

BAD BOYS, HOLLYWOOD VAMPIRES

Depp and Beck met in 2016, bonding "over cars and guitars" before the latter said he began to appreciate "Depp's serious songwriting skills and ear for music." They began working on this LP in 2019. It's far from Depp's first foray into music: the actor for more than a decade has recorded and toured with the Hollywood Vampires, a super group he started with Alice Cooper and Joe Perry. Beck is currently on tour in Europe with Depp as a special guest. This spring Depp won \$15 million in the defamation suit against Heard, who was awarded \$2 million. The jury found that Heard, 36, defamed Depp in describing herself as a "public figure representing domestic abuse" in a 2018 op-ed published in The Washington Post, although she did not identify the actor by name. Depp held he suffered reputational damage following its publication. Heard received \$2 million in damages because the jury found that one of Depp's lawyers had defamed her. The six-week trial gained widespread attention not least because it was televised and live streamed, with clips making their way to social media as Heard became a target of online vitriol and mockery. In its aftermath Depp is embarking on a return to acting, set to star in the forthcoming French movie "La Favorite." He will play King Louis XV, with filming locations including Versailles. -- AFP

DINING

A Fresh Look at Iran's Street Food at Eyval



IF YOU HAVE EATEN at Sofreh, the 4-year-old Persian restaurant in a Brooklyn brownstone, chances are you know its mast-o musir, a yogurt dip. The first things you see are chips of dried musir, the Iranian wild shallot, prized for its courtly but distinct whiff of garlic. Underneath this is a bed of musir-enriched yogurt. It has a richness that puts you in mind of custard and a sour streak that makes your mouth water. One of the original chefs at Sofreh, Ali Saboor, recently opened his own Persian restaurant in Brooklyn. Its name is Eyval, its neighborhood is Bushwick and its yoghurt is even more delicious. Eyval has its own spin on mast-o musir, topped with some pickled musir in a spicy pool of turmeric oil. But the restaurant's greater contribution toward advancing the cause of yoghurt in New York City lies in Saboor's reconsideration of another yoghurt dip, or class of dips, called the borani. A typical borani involves folding cooked eggplant or another vegetable into strained yogurt. The vegetables in Eyval's boranis tend to be some seasonal treat, like grilled fiddleheads in brown butter or small, spring-green fava beans slicked with mint oil, and they are not mixed into the yoghurt. They rest on top of it, in a little hollow, like the pothole I make in my mashed potatoes on Thanksgiving so the gravy will have somewhere to go. Concentrating the vegetables in the center means that any given swipe of bread into the borani will dredge up a fair amount of pure, undiluted yogurt, which can be appreciated on its own terms. I have enjoyed many yoghurt dips in my life, but the boranis at Eyval may be the first yogurt dips toward which I've felt something like desire. I mention this not just because I hope you will try a borani at Eyval, but also because it illustrates some of the ways Saboor has expanded on the Persian themes he first explored at Sofreh. There, he started by helping

N a s i m Alikhani, an owner, adapt the stews, fragrant platters of basmati rice and other recipes that had made invitations to her house much sought after by friends. He had cooked in restaurants; she hadn't. At Eyval, which opened in March with financial backing from Theodore Petroulas, Alikhani's husband and her partner in Sofreh, Saboor turns his attention from the home to the streets, particularly the grilled kebabs eaten across Iran. A follow-up restaurant focused on street food might suggest a simpler menu, easier recipes, more limited flavours. None of that applies at Eyval. The portions are generally small; a single skewer makes a serving. But behind each plate is an understanding of the ways Persian ingredients like black lime and barberries create little detonations of flavor, as well as a sure sense of when a few drops of rosewater will cast the right spell and when the high-pitched sourness of unripe grapes is just the thing. Eyval's chicken kebab is no mere stick of meat. It is a reimagining of zerehsht polo morgh, the reliable combination of basmati rice, stewed chicken and barberries that has pacified hungry guests at countless Persian dinner parties. The grill puts crisp golden skin on the chicken, and the scent of smoke. On top are the fried onions and tart little dried barberries and underneath is a chicken-tomato broth, aromatic with saffron. All the right things are there, down to the separate plate of rice, but they come together in new ways. The koobideh, on the other hand, is undeniably a stick of meat. But what meat it is. Saboor grinds lamb shoulder and beef brisket, a fatty cut many chefs rely on to produce a self-basting burger. Minimally seasoned, it makes an unusually tender, almost delicate kebab. Then there is the mushroom

kebab. It is not meat, nor is it served on a stick, but it may be the most interesting thing on the menu. King trumpet mushrooms are grilled until they are as caramelised and juicy as sea scallops. They are paired with pickled beech mushrooms, and both are tied together by a creamy stew of beluga lentils. From these thoroughly earthy elements, Saboor has built something elegant. The setting is a graffiti-scrawled corner building next to a vintage clothing shop. Facing the restaurant, across a parking lot, is Roberta's, which first brought this brand of dynamic, ingredient-conscious small plates to the area. Until last month, the Eyval people ran a Persian teahouse next door, Sofreh Cafe, where very fine baked goods such as glazed pirashki filled with rosewater custard would materialise throughout the day. Some of these items survived the cafe. On certain nights a meal at Eyval could start with a small loaf of komaj, vaguely sweet and dotted with cumin seeds. There is almost always barbari, the essential Persian flatbread, a long, grooved oval with sesame and nigella seeds embedded in its crackling crust. Among other things, barbari is an ideal implement for scooping up yoghurt. The kitchen, organised around two charcoal-burning grills, sits between Eyval's two dining rooms like a hinge. One room has a cocktail bar, and the other has a blank wall on which an old concert by exiled Iranian pop star Googoosh is usually being projected. Both rooms are covered in subway tiles and can be numbingly loud when full, which they often are. And, like many restaurants now, Eyval sometimes falls short of its service goals, so your experience at the table may not come up to the standards set by the cooking crew. -- NYT

OF BOOKS, LIFE, AND POP CULTURE



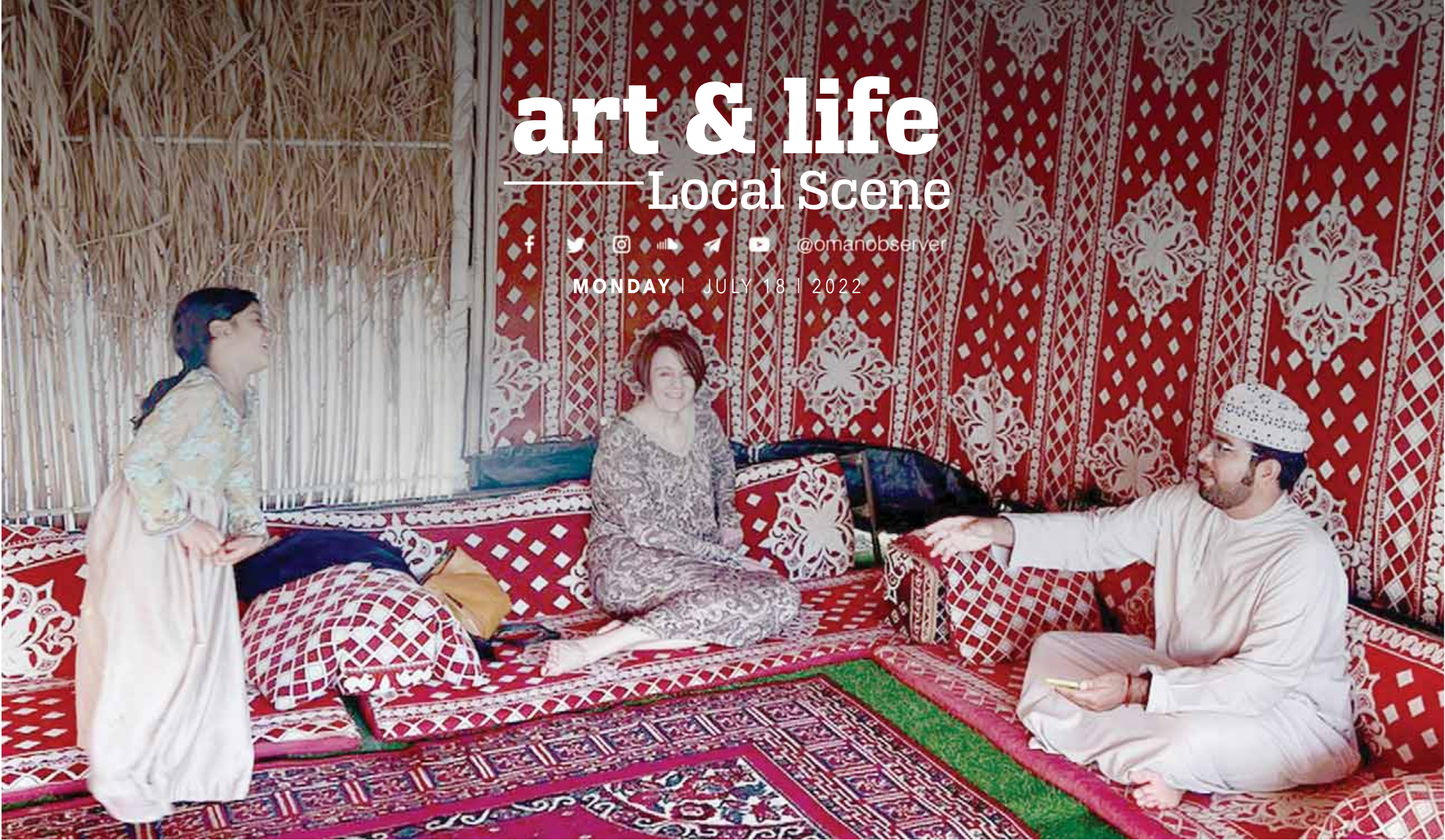
Rasha al Raisi

The Book of Misers

ONE OF THE MOST important classical writers in the Arab world comes from the Abbasid Caliphate. Born in Basra in 776 A.D, Abu Uthman Amr ibn Bahr will become known by his nickname: Al-Jahiz (the bug eyed). Sources mention that his grandfather was a black cameleer and that their roots go back to the Kinanah tribe in the heart of Arabia. Orphaned at a young age and raised by his poor mum selling bread and fish on the river bank, Al-Jahiz was keen on seeking knowledge and learning from a young age. He started with a group of youth learning in the main mosque of Basra at the time of the Abbasid reign (750-1517 A.D) which was considered the Golden Era, where Caliphs paid special attention to knowledge and translation. Books were readily available and Al-Jahiz got to learn from the best mentors such as Al-Akhfash and Al-Asmai'. He studied philology, lexicography, poetry, syntax, pre-Arabic history, the Quran and the Hadith as well as reading translated books of Greek science and Hellenistic philosophy. He also learned the Mu'tazila theology which left its mark on his mindset and writings. In his lifetime, Al-Jahiz lived under the rule of 12 Abbasid Caliphs and managed to produce more than 170 written works between books and research papers. Unfortunately, not all of them survived and the ones that did are considered timeless classics such as: Book of Animals, The Book of Misers and The Book of Eloquence and Demonstration. The latter was considered one of the four essential books when learning Arabic literature by Ibn Khaldun, the famous Andalusian philosopher. Al-Jahiz was known for his eloquence, intelligence and wit as well as his ugliness. Famous stories about his looks (short, dark-skinned and bug-eyed) include one with Caliph Al-Moutawakel hearing of him and ordering that he

tutors his children. However, when the Caliph met him, he was appalled by his looks and changed his mind yet paid him generously. Another story was of an unknown woman asking him to accompany her to the jeweller, to discover — surprisingly — that she'd asked for a picture of the devil to be engraved on her ring and who's a better model than Al-Jahiz? In his final years, Al-Jahiz suffered from hemiplegia and later gout. He died in 869 AD after a pile of books fell on him, killing him instantly. Many consider Al-Jahiz a pioneer as he noted the natural selection process in his Book of Animals, centuries before Darwin. As an Arab student, I got to learn extracts from Al-Jahiz's work in literature classes, especially from the 'Book of Misers'. Recently, I acquired the book and decided to read it as an adult. The book is divided between letters from famous characters of the time defending their stance on being stingy (pages long with many citations from different sources) and stories of famous misers of Al-Jahiz's time. Although humorous and satirical, the book's main purpose was to highlight the fact that stinginess — unknown to Arab societies at the time — was creeping in as an influence of other cultures such as Persian. Al-Jahiz's not only relates anecdotes of the misers but also analyses the psychology behind their acts, which reflects his ingenuity. Some of the misers are in denial and others are proud. Reading the long letters was daunting at times, yet full of interesting stories, poetry and historical facts. Being a linguist, Al-Jahiz has sections in the book that names different types of food, eating habits and beggars. In the coming weeks, I'll be sharing some of these stories as an introduction to this great Arab writer.

Rasha al Raisi is a certified skills trainer and the author of: The World According to Bahja. rasha-books@yahoo.com

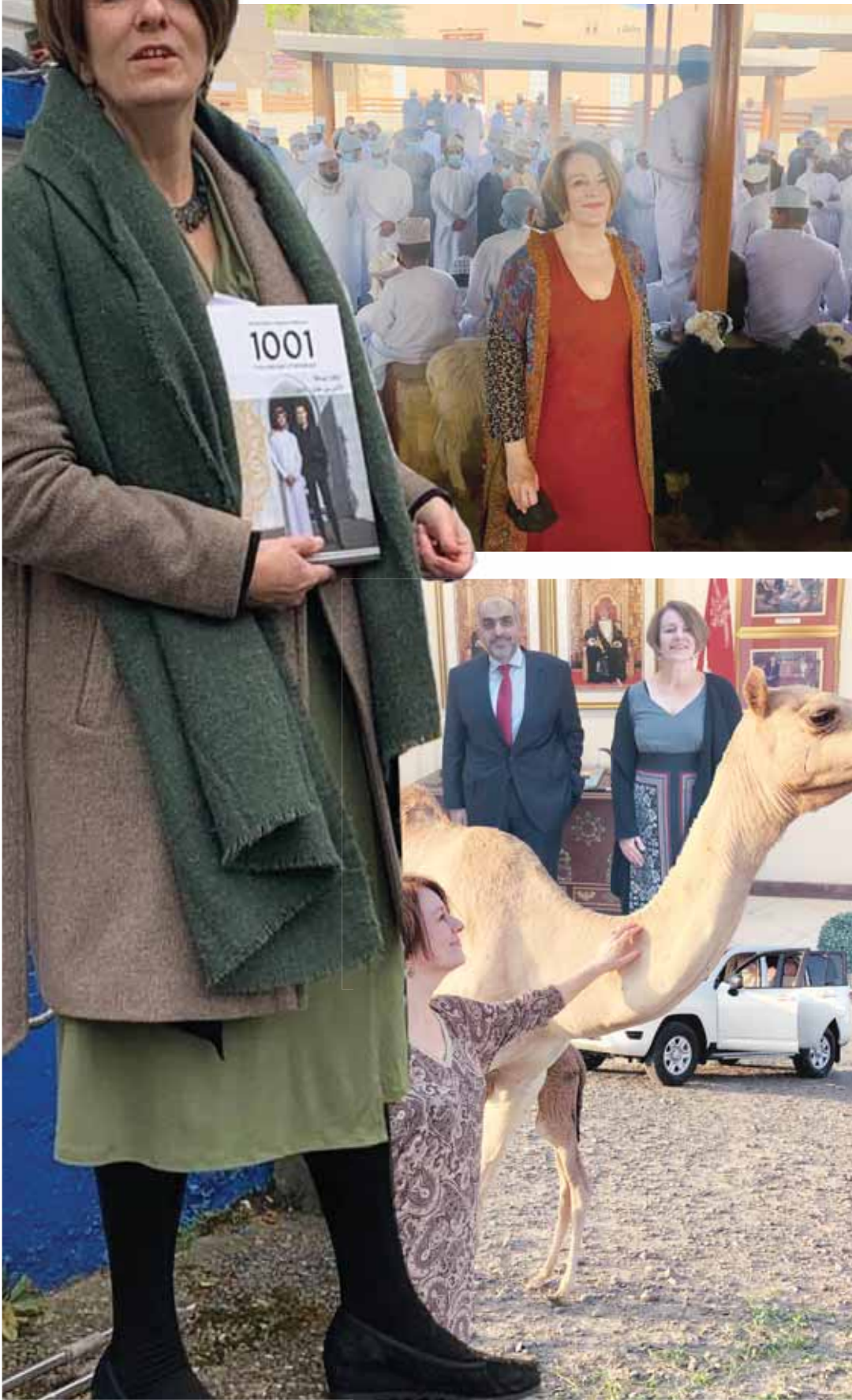


art & life

Local Scene

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Building bridges between the Orient and the Occident

By Liju Cherian
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Natascha Plankermann is a trained and experienced German editor, who works as a journalist, moderator and author for various media including 'Rheinische Post', 'WELT', 'Apotheken Magazin' as well as 'Funke Mediengruppe'.

Fascinated with Oman she is a sought-after expert and in the forefront as both the countries have nurtured diplomatic relations for more than 50 years.

In 2015, she discovered Oman by chance fulfilling a dream and travelled around the world for over two months. Oman was the first country on her itinerary as their travel agent told them that it was the safest country in the Arab world. She and her friend fell in love on the second day.

In Germany she occupied herself more extensively with Oman, travelling repeatedly, from time to time also together with Gabriele Brähler, her co-editor and came out with a book '1001 Friendships' (Freundschaft), in which they have put together 25 articles covering a wide range of topics. The 224 page illustrated book describes the special relations between Oman and Germany on the basis of articles dealing with economy, culture, tourism, media, education, religion and science, society among others.

Printed in English and German with an Arabic abstract, the book tells of people who make progress on the basis of shared values such as respect and mutual understanding. A case in point is Muadh Abdulmalik Al Badaei from Muscat and Pius Schmidt from Munich or Khalid Alfahdi and Steffen Sauer becoming thick friends stressing German and Omani students living, working and achieving great things together. Natascha shares more about her book and her love for Oman in an interview.

WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR BOOK '1001 FRIENDSHIPS' ON OMAN?

On the many journeys I myself became the Scheherazade or rather the 'Omanerazade' so many stories about wonderful and special friendships or relationships between Oman and Germany I learned, and wanted to tell them with pleasure. I also felt it was a kind of mission as many Germans don't find it easy to deal with people from Arab countries. I wanted to show examples of how it can work. My colleague Gabi Brähler accompanied me from time to time and took over some of the stories, while other colleagues wrote down their own experiences. The then German ambassador to Oman, Hans-Christian von Reibnitz, encouraged me to collect the stories in a book. His successor, Thomas Schneider, continues to promote the project and also wrote a word of welcome for it.

WHAT FASCINATED YOU TO OMAN AND HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU

VISITED SO FAR

Oman was the first stop on a journey in big steps around the world which I undertook with a colleague from January to early March 2015. We had planned to blog good-night stories from around the world and started in Oman. We heard that this is the land of 1001 Nights. This expression reminds us of Scheherazade, the woman who tells fairy tales in 1001 Nights to save her life. By doing so, she fascinates the king who actually wanted to kill her. The fairy tales from 1001 nights are famous in Germany. We landed in Muscat on January 6, the day on which Orthodox Christians celebrate the festival. According to the Bible, the Three Wise Kings arrived at the crèche of Jesus. I liked this idea, as one of the kings brought frankincense as a gift again a connection to Oman. Since that day, I have traveled to Oman twice every year, except for the last Corona years.

Tell something more about '1001 Friendships' not mentioned in the book.

Behind the stories are miles and miles of apparently endless drives through Oman. I was often marvelled at as a driver when we showed up with the rental car at the places where we were doing research or talking to the people. Today I would call quite a number of them friends or good acquaintances. It is amazing how many nice people you can get close to when you show a genuine interest in the country and its people. This is also true for Oman lovers here in Germany that I have met. You stay in touch via social media, even though it often seems that you completely disappear from the scene for the Omani when you leave the country.

HOW LONG IT TOOK TO COMPLETE, AND WHY WAS IT CALLED '1001 FRIENDSHIPS'?

We named the book in reference to the 'Tales from 1001 Nights' that I mentioned. 1001Nights, evokes positive associations regarding the Orient and we know in Germany. It's about stories, in this case about friendships. Between 2016 and 2019, we finished everything and wanted to present it at the International Tourism Fair 2020 in Berlin. But then Corona came in the way.

Some sponsors supported us, but we invested most of it ourselves and the book is a real passion project that couldn't even be properly presented yet due to the pandemic and its consequences. I hope to find an opportunity to present the book in Oman this year and would appreciate support. Have just initiated the transport of several hundred books to Oman.

WHICH SECTION AMONG THE 25 ARTICLES WAS MORE TIME CONSUMING TO COLLECT?

This is hard to comment on. I would say it's a total work of art and we used every single one of our stays to put it together lovingly, piece by piece, like a mosaic.

HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT DOING THIS, ANY PRE WORK DONE OR HELP SOUGHT FROM GROUPS

As I said, the pieces of the mosaic are

fitting together and I could go on and on now after publication. Because experience shows: Once you deal intensively with a topic, you always learn new and different aspects. That's what happened to me with German-Omani relations and the stories about them. I also received support from others: I asked colleagues who had worked in Oman or had already written about the country. I found the article about camel breeding by chance in the major German weekly newspaper 'Die Zeit' and the author revised it again for the book. Members of the German Omani Association (DOG) also played a role in the book.

THE RESPONSE SO FAR ON THE BOOK, IS IT AVAILABLE ONLINE

Omani fans in Germany love the book as much as German fans in Oman. All can order from Donata Kinzelbach, our publisher, or directly from me or Gabriele. This is also possible online or anyone who is interested can email me on NataschaP@t-online.de. Now several hundred books are on their way to Oman, and I hope to be able to offer them in Muscat bookstores or through museum stores in the country.

CAN YOU SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A TRAVELLER

Travelling in Oman is like diving into a wonder bag. Basically, it is best not to plan exactly in advance and let yourself be surprised. This is how the most beautiful experiences come about and you suddenly meet people who show you something you never expected. This is what happened to us in Salalah, where a nice Omani spontaneously became our guide through the city and its surroundings. However, it is difficult for Germans to just let themselves drift and not to plan their time in detail. We would like to know what to expect but in my experience it is nice to just let it come to you.

ANY OTHER RELATED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MORE BOOKS PLANNED IN FUTURE

I would love to tell the Germans more about Oman and bring German colleagues to the country to report. However, this should be done carefully so that the enchanting nature and special places, such as the Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, are not crowded. We in Germany like to talk about sustainability, also with regard to travel and tourism. It would be nice to develop awareness about sustainable awareness. I see beginnings of this in the heritage hotels and the fact that the old mud houses are being repurposed, for example in Nizwa, where I recently stayed. I'm sure there are still so many stories to tell also gladly in other ways, in articles in German media, in films.

YOUR HOBBIES, INTERESTS ON OMAN

Travelling, swimming, writing, meeting people. Oh yes, I love tap dancing like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers to the rhythm set by the shoes. In Oman I have danced only once at a wedding, but I am sure there is more to come.