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OMAN IN MUST-WIN SITUATION AGAINST THAILAND AT AFC U20 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS



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BLOCK 11 EPSA AFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO OMAN



P18

BENIN BRONZES GET FINAL BERLIN SHOW BEFORE RETURN



MUSCAT

MUNICIPAL ELECTION INITIAL LISTS TODAY

The Ministry of Interior on Sunday publishes the initial lists comprising 760 candidates who will be contending for seats at the municipal councils in its third term on the municipal councils website elections.om. The ministry said that any stakeholder may object to any candidate names listed on the initial lists by submitting an application on the elections website within five days from the date of publication stating the reasons of the objection and attaching documents supporting their claim. — ONA

NEW DELHI

INDIA WELCOMES BACK CHEETAHS

Eight Namibian cheetahs arrived in India on Saturday, decades after their local extinction, in an ambitious project to reintroduce the spotted big cats that has divided experts on its prospects. Officials say the project is the world's first intercontinental relocation of cheetahs, the planet's fastest land animal. The five females and three males were moved from a game park in Namibia aboard a chartered Boeing 747 dubbed "Cat plane" for an 11-hour flight. Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the release at Kuno National Park, a wildlife sanctuary 320 km south of New Delhi selected for its abundant prey and grasslands. **DETAILS ON P6**



OMAN SENDS RELIEF AID TO PAKISTAN

Based on the Royal orders issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO), and in cooperation with the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), operated relief voyages to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan after being hit by floods that caused a great deal of damage in the country. Military cargo ships of the Royal Navy of Oman set off from the Said bin Sultan Naval Base on Saturday heading to Pakistan and carrying miscellaneous objects and relief materials. **SEE ALSO P2**

Tough on food safety violations

OUTLETS WARNED AS INSPECTIONS CONTINUE

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttv](#)

Restaurants and food outlets which are caught violating the Sultanate of Oman's food safety laws could face legal action in addition to the closure, warns Muscat Municipality.

The warning followed detection of violations of parameters concerning food safety and hygiene in restaurants and cafes in Muttrah during inspections by food inspectors from the municipality.

Notices of violations were issued to 16 outlets. Two were closed, 92 kg of 'not fit for use food' were destroyed, and 104 equipment, including utensils not suitable for food preparation, were confiscated.

In a statement, the municipality said that the administrative closure will remain in effect until the violations are corrected.

The violations included poor storage of food, such as storing or displaying perishable food items at an inappropriate temperature, handling food in a manner that affects public safety and leaving food exposed during storage.

"The municipality will not allow any kind of non-compliance as far as food safety regulations are concerned," an official at the municipality told the Observer over the phone.

He said that civic officials are also cracking down on all food outlets to ensure that food is preserved under appropriate conditions, within the expiry date, and is fit for consumption.

"The municipality gives paramount importance to the health of the citizens and residents. There will not be any compromise on violations," he warned.

10 divorce cases per day in 2021

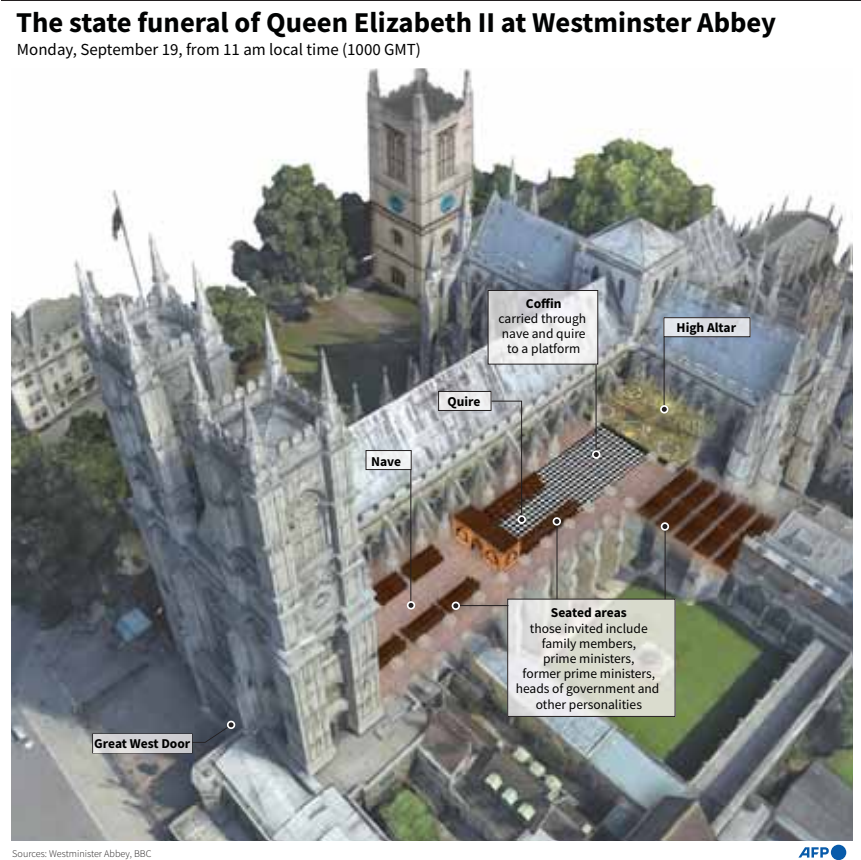
KABEER YOUSUF
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As many as 6,000 people got divorced in 2021 bringing the total number of divorces to 41,549 or 2.4 per cent of the total Omani population of the age 15 years and above. Men make up 35 per cent and women 65 per cent of the total

number of divorces, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total number of divorce certificates registered in the Sultanate of Oman in 2021 was 3,837, up by 12 per cent from 2020, an average of 10 divorce certificates per day. According to sociology researchers and family counsellors, divorce in the Omani society can be attributed to ignorance about the rights and responsibilities in marriage and interventions by the relatives.

Besides, the pandemic has played a major role in the increase of divorce cases due to family disputes triggered by lockdowns and work from home. **SEE P4**



Ukraine N-plant reconnected to national grid

KYIV: Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant is receiving power from the national grid once again, the UN's atomic agency (IAEA) said on Saturday, after it was cut off from external power, raising the risk of an accident. The Russian-occupied plant had been cut from the national grid since September due to shelling.

"The restored 750 kilovolt (kV)

line is now providing Europe's largest nuclear power plant... with the electricity it needs for reactor cooling and other essential safety functions," the IAEA said.

Since being cut off from the grid, the station was relying on its own power supplies to operate essential safety mechanism. Experts feared that the plant could run out of the internal power.

Zaporizhzhia was seized by Russian troops in March and shelling around the facility raised fears of nuclear disasters ever since. The IAEA visited the power plant in early September. — Agencies

OMAN FM 90.4

Jump Start

AMAL AL BALUSHI

TALAL AL SHAHRI

WEEKDAYS 7AM

uoc OMAN FM



■ DR AL SAEEDI GETS KHALIFA AWARD



Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, former minister of health, alongside 17 prominent Arab personalities, was honoured with His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa Award for Voluntary Work in recognition of their outstanding contributions to stem the Covid-19 pandemic.

OCEC to host 50 events this quarter

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre will host more than 50 major events in the last quarter this year.

Saeed al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention and Exhibition Center, said, “The last quarter of 2022 will see us hosting more than 50 events, which will be attended by more than 300,000 people.”

Among the events that have been lined up is the Oman Tourism Forum on September 27 and 28, which will attract more than 300 representatives from the tourism sector, and the Regeneration International Science and Engineering Fair’s ISEF Middle East Awards on September 29, which will see the participation of over 1,000 people.

Oman Food Exhibition and Oman International Health Conference and Exhibition will be held from September 26 to 28.

In October, Al Shanfari said the centre will host events focusing on science, technology, innovation, agriculture, and the fresh produce sector, and a fashion show.

On October 10, the Al Nimr



International Company will organise a three-day exhibition/Edutrack Oman on October 24, followed by Project Oman and Oman Exhibition for Security and Fire Safety on October 25.

Oman Maritime Conference will be held from October 24 to 27, focusing on the marine heritage of the Sultanate of Oman, communication, and cultural exchange between hundreds of representatives from the sectors of marine logistics, marine supply chains, port management, fish farming, and marine marketing.

Oman Nights (a musical and cultural programme) to be attended by over 2,000 participants

will be held on November 2-3 while the Muscat Arts Festival will be held from November 3-4.

The 89th UFI Global Congress will be held from November 14 to 17, which will see the participation of more than 600 delegates from 50 countries. During this period, OCEC will also host a special event for football fans for 21 days as Qatar hosts the World Cup.

Among others, the Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition will be held from December 1 to 5, the Green Hydrogen Summit and Exhibition from December 5 to 7, the Airports Council International Conference on Innovative Airports 2022 from December 7 and 8, and the Oman Agro Exhibition from December 11.

More people register in Shifa to donate organs

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Organ donation and transplants are picking up pace in the Sultanate of Oman thanks to rising awareness. Since last October, 15 organ transplants have been performed including seven kidney transplants, eight liver transplants, and kidney transplants for two children from a brain-dead donor last March.

Organ transplantation strives to ensure the safety of both the donor and the patient. Organ donation saves many lives and lack of donors is a challenge, say surgeons and transplant specialists. Community awareness is key to popularising organ donation. For instance, there are approximately 2,500 kidney patients in the Sultanate of Oman who depend on dialysis. If matching donors are willing to give a part of their body, it will alleviate the suffering of these patients. Dr Ahmed al Busaidi, Supervisor of the National Programme for Organ Transplantation, said, “We see the increasing social awareness of organ donation through people’s demand for registration in the Shifa application for organ donation after death, which is a positive sign.”

The establishment of a National Centre for Organ Transplantation with the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will make a qualitative leap in the healthcare for those in need of organ donation and their families. This also helps Oman to set up a database and address the challenges in organ donation and transplant.

The organ donation process is legally regulated in Oman through Ministerial Resolution No 179/2018, which sets conditions for donating human



A person can save 8 lives with his/her organs.

Since last October, 15 organ transplants have been performed including seven kidney transplants, eight liver transplants, and kidney transplants for two children from a brain-dead donor last March.

organs during life as well as after death. The Omani Association for Organ Transplantation plays a tangible role in educating the community about the importance of organ donation and contributing to the rehabilitation of medical personnel through holding seminars and practical conferences.

Dr Neven bint Ibrahim al Kalbani, Senior Consultant of Pediatric Nephrology and Head of the Organ Transplant Department at the Royal Hospital, said the number of people registered in Shifa for organ donation after death is rising since its launch in December last year.

The culture of organ donation needs time and awareness to develop, she said. “There are

misconceptions and beliefs about organ donation after death, including the inadmissibility of organ donation in Islam. Organ donation after death delays a lot in burial and mourning ceremonies. Changing these misconceptions take time and effort.”

She said the focus is on successful transplant operations to enhance confidence and make sure that the health of the donor is not affected. Omani Organ Donation Day, which falls on December 19 of each year, was chosen to mark the first organ transplant in the Sultanate of Oman from a brain-dead donor in 1988.

Shaikh Dr Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharusi, Assistant Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, said organ donation after death does not mean sale of organs.

He clarified that organ donation is permissible under Islamic law because it saves lives. “But organ donation must be free of charge; an organ must not be sold. Islam urges saving lives and donating organs is one way of doing so. God has said in the Holy Quran, ‘And whoever saves one life, it is as though he has saved the lives of all mankind,’” Dr Al Kharusi said.

■ OMAN SENDS RELIEF MATERIALS TO FLOOD-HIT PAKISTAN



Based on the Royal orders issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) and in cooperation with the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), operated relief voyages to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan after being hit by floods that caused a great deal of damage in the country. Military cargo ships of the Royal Navy of Oman set off from the Said bin Sultan Naval Base on Saturday heading to Pakistan and carrying miscellaneous objects and relief materials. Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) continued transporting various humanitarian supplies as part of a relief programme carried out by Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO). The move comes within the context of the humanitarian efforts undertaken by the Sultanate of Oman during emergencies, and in solidarity with the friendly Islamic Republic of Pakistan in a bid to mitigate the impact of floods.

Overwhelming response to people’s satisfaction survey

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There has been an overwhelming response to the 35th session of the survey measuring people’s satisfaction under the current economic conditions as the enumerators are pressing ahead with the deadline of September 27, a spokesperson from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) told the Observer.

The NCSI began implementing the Consumer Confidence Survey for the third quarter of 2022,

which will last for two weeks aimed at taking feedback from 1,500 citizens of 18 years and over residing in various governorates, on September 12.

“We are taking into account the representation of males and females in relation to society, age groups and different educational levels and data is collected by telephone from the call centre at the National Centre for Statistics and Information,” she said.

The Consumer Confidence Index is one of the important indicators of the performance of economic activity. The survey



The NCSI began implementing the Consumer Confidence Survey for the third quarter of 2022, which will last for two weeks aimed at taking feedback from 1,500 citizens aged 18 years and above

aims to measure the development in the material condition of Omani families and the factors that positively or negatively affect the level of the Omani economy. In addition to identifying the future expectations of the Omani economy, the economic situation of families at the present time, their purchasing power for household appliances, cars, and various commodities, in addition to the availability of job opportunities at present and future expectations for them.

“All data will be kept confidential according to the Statistics Law

issued by Royal Decree No 55/2019 in Article No 11 which states that all individual data in accordance with the provisions of this law, which relate to any census, are considered confidential, and may only be published in an aggregate form. It is prohibited to be viewed by any individual or governmental or non-governmental entity, and may not be used for anything other than statistical purposes,” she said.

Any citizen who wishes to participate in the survey can get in touch with the centre and express his opinion on the set questions.



Oman strong in food security, safety measures, price stability

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Sultanate of Oman ranks first in the Arab world and third in the food quality and safety index, according to the Arab Food Security Report, 2021, issued by the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development.

The country is in a safe and reassuring food situation, which has achieved food security by working with various local partners from the public and private sectors.

Through a set of measures, the Sultanate of Oman sought to strengthen the food security system to ensure the stability of food prices and establish government investment companies specialised in food production.

In addition, to provide food in exceptional circumstances where food security is achieved according to the Oman Vision 2040 where all community members always have access to adequate food as well as financial means and supply stability.

Oman Food Investment Holding Company works and looks forward to the next stage of development and growth of food security in line with Oman Vision 2040 that focuses on economic diversification.

The Sultanate of Oman is considered one of the food secure countries in terms of its ability to ensure stocks despite its heavy dependence on imports and price fluctuations.

Food security's main pillars



Through a set of measures, Oman sought to strengthen the food security system to ensure the stability of food prices and establish government investment companies specialised in food production

said: "The Sultanate of Oman has undertaken several projects to secure food, including white and red meat projects, allocating

lands for agricultural investment with long-term contracts, and model farms for the production of various foods."

The government has signed agreements on food laboratory and usufruct contracts with companies to establish agricultural projects to meet the food needs of the Sultanate of Oman.

These projects also varied between the production of meat, eggs, goats, vegetables, fruits and fish which will be established in the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah, North Al Sharqiyah, South Al Sharqiyah, Al Dhahirah and Musandam.

Scattered light rains in parts of coastal areas likely

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The weather forecast issued by Oman Met Office stated that there are chances of low clouds forming in the coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman. Scattered light rains, low clouds and fog formation over parts of the coastal areas overlooking the Arabian Sea are expected through Sunday, Monday and Tuesday this week.

Low clouds intensified on parts of the coasts of South Al Sharqiyah and Dhofar, and clouds of varying heights spread over parts of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates on Saturday.

Fahud, Samayil and Al Buraimi recorded the highest temperature with a maximum temperature of 41 degrees Celsius, while Jabal Shams, Qairoon Hairiti and Jabal Qamar recorded the lowest temperature — 21 degrees Celsius — at night.

During the weekend, active northwesterly winds caused high temperatures, dust rising, and a decrease in horizontal visibility over Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates.

As per the weather summary for the next three days, cloud activity and chances of rain of varying intensity and thunderstorms, accompanied by active downward winds, over Al Hajar Mountains and neighbouring areas are expected during the afternoon and evening.

The height of the sea wave

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on the coasts of the Sea of Oman and the coasts of the Musandam Governorate on Sunday and Monday is to have a maximum height of 1.5 -2.0 metres, while the waves are medium-rough on the coasts of the Arabian Sea with 2.5 metres.

There are chances of dust and dust rising due to active wind movement in parts of Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates by Monday.

Moderate to rough sea along Arabian Sea coasts with a maximum wave height of 3.0 metres and moderate sea over the western coasts of Musandam with a maximum wave height of 2.0 metres are expected. The impact is likely to be slight along the rest of coasts, with a maximum wave height of 1.0 metres.

The Civil Aviation Authority has issued caution stating that horizontal visibility may reduce during fog and rain in addition to the alert on moderate to rough sea along the Arabian Sea coast.

Emergency at Muscat airport tackled in 90 minutes

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The fire that engulfed an aircraft, which led to an emergency evacuation of passengers on Wednesday, was brought under control in just 90 minutes, said Oman Airports on Saturday.

"A morning salute to the Muscat International Airport's Fire and Rescue team for their performance in responding, in only 90 seconds, and extinguishing an engine fire on an aircraft last week," the statement from the company.

Not just officials, even passengers on onboard praised the services provided by the airport

authorities at the moment.

In the first of its kind incident at Muscat airport in recent times, 14 passengers suffered minor injuries as Air India Express's Kochi-bound flight from Muscat encountered an engine malfunction.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Air India Express flight IX 442 was scheduled to leave at 11.30 am local time. A fire broke out in one of the engines before taking off from Muscat International Airport, which required the evacuation of passengers.

CAA also extended thanks to all the aviation sector partners as they helped minimise the potential damage and risks.

CAS Nizwa inducts students for the new academic year

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, SEPT 17

University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa (CAS Nizwa) on Thursday wrapped up an induction programme for 326 new students for the academic year 2022-2023.

These students were admitted into three primary majors in mass communication, business administration, and design.

The induction programme, which began last week included foundation courses in English language, mathematics, and computer skills. Dr Said bin



Hamad al Rubaie, President of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, welcomed the new students and urged them to use their time to gain scientific skills and achieve excellence in studies. Dr Mohammad bin Juma al Kharusi, Dean of the College, then spoke about career prospects,

ethics and ways to reach goals.

Salim al Azwani, Assistant Head of the Admission and Registration Center, gave an overview of the work carried out by the Admission and Registration Center and the academic system at the university.

Ahmed al Abri, from the General Requirements Department, spoke

about mathematics and Computer. The programme included a lecture by Professor Dr Musallam al Wahaibi, from the General Requirements Department, on the values of a good student during university life.

A workshop entitled Bright of Information Security in association with Center for Education Technologies was presented by Maryam al Hinaï and Sheikh al Hinaï.

The workshop was on the importance of information security and how to protect personal accounts, files, and maintain backup copies.

Omani qualifies for prestigious Stars of Science season 14

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Oman's Sumaya bint Saeed al Siyabiyah, who developed a solution to dispose of microplastics in a safe and environment friendly manner, is among the seven contestants qualified for the 14th season of 'Stars of Science' science reality show organised by Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community.

These seven candidates from 2,500 applicants across the Arab world will be invited to Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) – Qatar Foundation's (QF) technology hub, and home to tech-based entrepreneurs and their start-ups – to compete over

the course of twelve weeks while developing, refining, and testing their innovations.

Sumaya, who expressed her happiness on qualifying, said, "I reached this stage after a strong competition, and my arrival at this stage confirms the great potential and capabilities of Omani innovators." The Stars of Science programme is one of the leading programmes in the Arab world. It focuses on innovation with the aim of supporting and encouraging aspiring entrepreneurs in science and technology in the region.

The contestants will have to progress through several elimination rounds to secure a spot in the Grand Final, where two winners share a prize of seed



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funding.

Yosouf al Salehi, Executive Director of QSTP, said: "Today's innovators do not work in a vacuum. They are part of a vast ecosystem; their ideas build off

the discoveries of others before them, and their inventions often require the insights of experts hailing from different disciplines. As a key contributor to the innovation ecosystem in Qatar,

we at QSTP aim to accelerate the commercialisation of market-ready technologies to realise the national drive towards economic diversification and sustainability.

"We are pleased to be part of the Stars of Science's 13-year journey that introduced many Arab youth to the vibrant innovation community in the region and empowered them to forge new opportunities for the next generation across sectors and economies, in line with QF's vision of creating an economic, social, and sustainable legacy." Since 2009, many of the show's alumni have launched their products or gone on to establish successful businesses in the Middle East and North Africa, reaching Europe, the

Americas, and Eastern Asia.

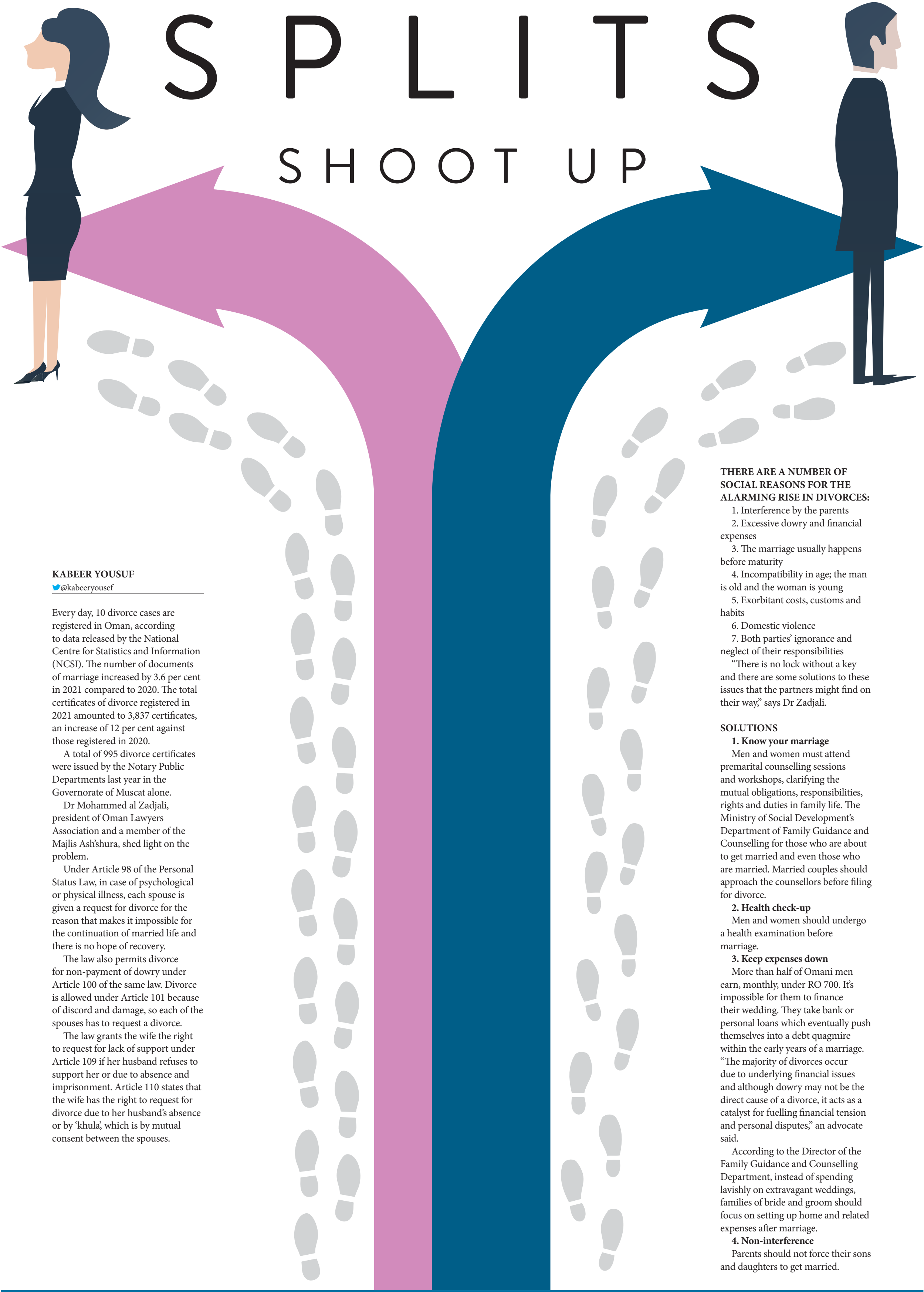
According to Professor Fouad Mrad, one of the jury members, their time spent on Stars of Science empowered them to play an integral part in fostering the innovation ecosystems across the Arab world.

"Every contestant on Stars of Science benefitted from leveraging the knowledge and resources available at QF's top-tier universities, innovation hubs, and research centres," said Professor Mrad. "The ever-growing ecosystem of QF stands out on the global stage and exposes Arab innovators to the importance Stars of Science will air every Friday and Saturday until October 14 on six channels in the region and online.



EVERY DAY, 10 DIVORCE CASES ARE REGISTERED IN THE COUNTRY.

FINANCIAL, SOCIAL AND PERSONAL REASONS LEAD TO BROKEN MARRIAGES



KABEER YOUSUF
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Every day, 10 divorce cases are registered in Oman, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The number of documents of marriage increased by 3.6 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020. The total certificates of divorce registered in 2021 amounted to 3,837 certificates, an increase of 12 per cent against those registered in 2020.

A total of 995 divorce certificates were issued by the Notary Public Departments last year in the Governorate of Muscat alone.

Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, president of Oman Lawyers Association and a member of the Majlis Ashshura, shed light on the problem.

Under Article 98 of the Personal Status Law, in case of psychological or physical illness, each spouse is given a request for divorce for the reason that makes it impossible for the continuation of married life and there is no hope of recovery.

The law also permits divorce for non-payment of dowry under Article 100 of the same law. Divorce is allowed under Article 101 because of discord and damage, so each of the spouses has to request a divorce.

The law grants the wife the right to request for lack of support under Article 109 if her husband refuses to support her or due to absence and imprisonment. Article 110 states that the wife has the right to request for divorce due to her husband's absence or by 'khula', which is by mutual consent between the spouses.

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SOCIAL REASONS FOR THE ALARMING RISE IN DIVORCES:

1. Interference by the parents
 2. Excessive dowry and financial expenses
 3. The marriage usually happens before maturity
 4. Incompatibility in age; the man is old and the woman is young
 5. Exorbitant costs, customs and habits
 6. Domestic violence
 7. Both parties' ignorance and neglect of their responsibilities
- "There is no lock without a key and there are some solutions to these issues that the partners might find on their way," says Dr Zadjali.

SOLUTIONS

1. Know your marriage

Men and women must attend premarital counselling sessions and workshops, clarifying the mutual obligations, responsibilities, rights and duties in family life. The Ministry of Social Development's Department of Family Guidance and Counselling for those who are about to get married and even those who are married. Married couples should approach the counsellors before filing for divorce.

2. Health check-up

Men and women should undergo a health examination before marriage.

3. Keep expenses down

More than half of Omani men earn, monthly, under RO 700. It's impossible for them to finance their wedding. They take bank or personal loans which eventually push themselves into a debt quagmire within the early years of a marriage. "The majority of divorces occur due to underlying financial issues and although dowry may not be the direct cause of a divorce, it acts as a catalyst for fuelling financial tension and personal disputes," an advocate said.

According to the Director of the Family Guidance and Counselling Department, instead of spending lavishly on extravagant weddings, families of bride and groom should focus on setting up home and related expenses after marriage.

4. Non-interference

Parents should not force their sons and daughters to get married.



King Charles, William greet well-wishers in queen’s queue

LONDON: King Charles and his son William shook hands and greeted well-wishers who had queued for hours in central London on Saturday to file past the coffin of Queen Elizabeth, asking people how long they had been there and whether they were warm enough.

To cheers of “hip, hip, hurrah” and shouts of “God save the King”, Charles and William spoke to mourners near Lambeth Bridge, as they neared the end of the mammoth line to see the lying-in-state in the historic Westminster Hall.

On Friday night, Charles had joined his three siblings -- Princess Anne and Princes Andrew and Edward -- in a silent vigil at the coffin while their eight children, including William and Harry, will form their own ceremonial guard later on Saturday.

“She wouldn’t believe all this, she really wouldn’t,” William was heard telling one man of the late monarch who died on September 8 at the age of 96. “It’s amazing.”

One woman told Charles it had been “worth the wait” and



Britain’s King Charles and Britain’s Anne, Princess Royal, attend a vigil as people pay their respects to the coffin of Britain’s Queen Elizabeth inside Westminster Hall in London. – Reuters

others wished him well when he asked how long they had been standing there.

People continued to flock to central London, adding to the hundreds of thousands who have filed past the coffin in a solemn stream to honour Britain’s longest-reigning monarch - a testimony to the affection in which she was held.

Ahead of the state funeral on Monday, world leaders also started arriving in the British capital.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Australian

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese were among the dignitaries to pay their respects on Saturday while New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was seen curtsying to the coffin on Friday.

US President Joe Biden was expected to go on Sunday to see Elizabeth lying in state in an oak coffin on a purple-clad catafalque, draped in the Royal Standard and with the bejewelled Imperial State Crown on top.

London’s police force has described the funeral as the

biggest security operation it has ever undertaken as prime ministers, presidents and royals come together, and the king visited police headquarters to thank emergency services workers involved in the planning on Saturday.

Underscoring the risks, police said one man had been detained and arrested after a witness told Sky News he “ran up to the queen’s coffin”. Footage showed a man being pinned to the ground by police officers and taken away.

Charles was also due to greet leaders of the 14 countries where he is head of state such as Canada, Australia and Jamaica at meeting the governors-general - the people who represent the monarch in overseas realms - at Buckingham Palace. By 2 pm, Britain’s culture ministry said the waiting time to reach Westminster Hall was up to 16.5 hours. Inside the silent hall, some mourners wept, many were tearful while current soldiers and veterans saluted their former commander-in-chief. Others fell to their knees. — Reuters

Harry were later set to lead a vigil of Queen Elizabeth II’s eight grandchildren at her coffin, joining tens of thousands of members of the public who have been queueing round the clock for days.

Those inside parliament’s Westminster Hall for the lying-in-state received a shock late on Friday when a man burst out of the line and approached the coffin, which sits topped with the Imperial State Crown.

A live television feed of the mourners briefly cut away around 10 pm as police detained the man, two hours after Charles and his three siblings had held their own vigil in the cavernous hall. — AFP

Truss set to meet world leaders

LONDON: British Prime Minister Liz Truss is primed to hold the first of her confirmed head-to-heads with world leaders as they make the trip to Britain for the Queen Elizabeth II’s funeral.

Truss spoke with her counterparts from New Zealand and Australia on Saturday, with the conversations framed by her office as chats rather than formal bilateral meetings.

Downing Street suggested they would be an opportunity for condolences over the queen’s death, with politics likely to come up. The first of the weekend’s meetings will be based at the government’s Chevening country residence, rather than Chequers, which is said to be undergoing routine maintenance work

after Truss’s predecessor Boris Johnson’s exit. Truss will see New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Australian leader Anthony Albanese on Saturday.

Ardern has said the queen’s death and new king will be the “focus of conversation,” with the pair also likely to discuss Ukraine and Britain’s free trade agreement with New Zealand.

But all will be “within the context of the week of mourning that the UK is currently in.”

When his British counterpart won the Tory leadership contest earlier this month, the Australian PM tweeted: “I look forward to a continued constructive relationship and friendship between our nations and people.” — dpa

Figureheads and world leaders heading to the funeral for Queen Elizabeth II

Attendance expected
Confirmations according to reports in mainstream media

Selective list

Source: AFP/Reuters media

Security scare hits mourning

LONDON: Crowds greeted King Charles III on Saturday as he arrived at Buckingham Palace to meet Commonwealth leaders hours after a security scare interrupted the queen’s sombre lying-in-state.

Charles’ arrival at the palace came as world leaders began to arrive in London ahead of Monday’s state funeral, Britain’s first in nearly six decades.

Princes William and

Queen Elizabeth’s favourite brands face losing royal warrant

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth II’s death means that around 600 of her favourite brands risk losing their royal warrant and must now await the approval of her successor King Charles III.

Fortnum and Mason teas, Burberry raincoats, Cadbury chocolate and even broomstick and dog food manufacturers are among those facing the loss of royal prestige.

If they do not gain the new monarch’s stamp of approval, they will have two years to remove the seal that marks them as preferred suppliers to the sovereign.

In his former role as the prince of Wales, Charles issued his own royal warrants to more than 150 brands.

Holders receive “the right to display the appropriate royal arms on their product, packaging,

stationery, advertising, premises and vehicles”, the Royal Warrant Holders Association said.

For some companies, royal endorsement is a powerful selling point, even if it is hard to measure the true impact on sales.

Fortnum and Mason were the grocers and provision merchants by appointment to Queen Elizabeth, and the tea merchants and grocers by appointment to the prince of Wales.

“We are proud to have held a warrant from Her Majesty since 1954, and to have served her and the royal household throughout her life,” the luxury London department store said.

Fortnum and Mason has a long and close history with the royal family, having created Royal Blend tea for king Edward VII in 1902.

Twinnings also had royal

warrants as tea and coffee merchants to Queen Elizabeth and to the prince of Wales.

Launer, which prided itself on supplying the sovereign with her ever-present handbags since 1968, now risks losing its precious cachet.

However, Barbour jackets, particularly suited to country life in the British weather, were the official manufacturers of waterproof and protective clothing to both Queen Elizabeth and her eldest son.

But for brands less well-associated with Queen Elizabeth in the public mind, the royal warrant is “above all, the recognition of know-how and tradition”, Christian Porta, the managing director of global business development at Pernod Ricard, which owns Dubonnet, said. — AFP

OMAN AIR (S.A.O.C.)
Muscat International Airport, P.O. Box 58, P.C. 111, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman

TENDER NOTICE

Oman Air is looking for a qualified and experienced Suppliers to participate on the above tenders. Complete details will be provided to the interested bidders upon payment of RO 500 towards the tender fee.

SN	Tender Title	Tender Number	Closing Date	Tender Fee
1	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Grocery Requirement	SCM/2022/4240	26 September 2022	RO 500/-
2	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Consumables Requirement	SCM/2022/4241	26 September 2022	RO 500/-
3	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Bakery and Pasty Requirement	SCM/2022/4242	26 September 2022	RO 500/-
4	Food and Beverage Tender for Transom Catering - Canned Requirement	SCM/2022/4243	26 September 2022	RO 500/-

Interested parties are requested to complete the online vendor registration through the Oman Air website (<http://www.omanair.com>) → Useful links → **E-procurement** or through URL (<https://e-procurement.omanair.com/Pages/LoginPage.aspx>).

Please note that you should complete the online vendor registration to receive the tender documents and submit your proposal online. Alternatively, the bidder may submit the proposal in a sealed envelope to Oman Air Supply Chain Management Office located at Block-300 near the old airport. The last day for submitting proposals is April 14 September 2022, before 12:00 pm

For any query, please send an email to: or call:
raymond.ricafrente@omanair.com
Mohammed.Albalushi11@omanair.com

SME and “Riyada” card holders and other companies, For any inquiry related to registration system, please contact
Zainab.AIzadjali@omanair.com 24258217
Noor.AIHarthi2@omanair.com 24258725

www.omanair.com

الطيران العماني
OMAN AIR

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health (Nizwa Hospital) invites specialized companies to participate in the following Bid:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for collection of tender document	Tender Submission Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)	Office where Tenders are to be deposited (HQ)
1/2022	Site rental for vending machines for hot and cold drinks and snacks in Nizwa Hospital	17/10/2022	12 pm on Thursday 27/10/2022	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25/= per set	DIRECTOR OF NIZWA HOSPITAL OFFICE

Please note the following:-

- Copy of Registration Certificate issued by the Tender Board is to be submitted for collection of Tender Documents.
- Bid Documents can be purchased from the Financial Affairs Dept Between 8.00 A.M and 12.00 P.M on working days, on payment of Tender Fee mentioned above.
- The Bidder should enclose Bank Guarantee or a certified Cheque issued by a Local bank for 200 Omani Rial validity for (90) days from the Tender Submission date Tender(s) submitted without Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque will not be considere.
- Tenderers are requested to deposit their Tenders Documents in the Ministry of Health – Nizwa Hospital at the Offices director.
- The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Tender.



Biden warns Putin on N-weapons in Ukraine

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden is warning his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin against using chemical or tactical nuclear weapons in the wake of serious losses in his war in Ukraine.

“Don’t. Don’t. Don’t,” Biden said, in an excerpt from an interview with CBS’ “60 Minutes” aired on Friday evening. Biden was responding to an interviewer’s question about the possibility of Putin, whose army is incurring heavy losses in the Ukraine counteroffensive this month, resorting to chemical or tactical nuclear weapons.

“You would change the face of war unlike anything since World War II,” Biden said.

“They will become more of a pariah in the world, more than they have ever been,” the US leader added.

Ukraine has recaptured swaths of territory in the east from occupying Russian forces in recent weeks, boosted by heavy weapons supplied by Western allies.

And Moscow is facing fresh outrage from the West after the



Members of Honour Guard hold a national flag over a coffin with the body of Ukrainian serviceman and famous ballet dancer Oleksandr Shapoval, who was recently killed in a fight against Russian troops in Donetsk region, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, during a funeral ceremony at the National Opera of Ukraine in Kyiv. — Reuters



You would change the face of war unlike anything since World War II They will become more of a pariah in the world, more than they have ever been

JOE BIDEN US President

discovery of a mass grave outside the formerly Russian-occupied city of Izyum, where, Kyiv officials say, almost all of the exhumed bodies showed signs of torture.

But Putin remained steadfast, saying his war against Russia’s Western-leaning neighbor was proceeding according to plan.

“The plan is not subject to adjustment,” Putin said on Friday. “Our offensive operations in Donbas itself do not stop. They are going at a slow pace... The Russian army is occupying newer and newer territories.”

Meanwhile, Russia’s defence ministry said on Saturday that its forces had launched strikes on Ukrainian positions in several parts of Ukraine, and accused Kyiv of carrying out shelling near the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

Russian forces conducted their strikes in the Kherson, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, according to the ministry, which added that Ukrainian forces had carried out an unsuccessful offensive near Pravydne in Kherson. — AFP/Reuters

UN ship leaves Ukraine with wheat for Ethiopia

KYIV: The third vessel chartered by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP), left Ukraine’s Chornomorsk Black Sea port with around 30,000 tonnes of wheat on board, Ukraine’s infrastructure ministry said on Saturday.

“The vessel is headed for Ethiopia. According to UN estimates, Ethiopia is on the verge of a food crisis,” the ministry said in a statement. It said that in partnership with the WFP, three ships loaded with more than 90,000 tonnes of wheat are on their way to Ethiopia and Yemen.

“We plan to export another 190,000 tonnes, which are

currently being purchased by UN partners,” the ministry said, adding that besides the Ikaria Angel, another nine vessels have left Ukrainian ports on Saturday.

The country’s grain exports have slumped since the start of the war because its Black Sea ports — a key route for shipments — were closed off, driving up global food prices and prompting fears of shortages in Africa and the Middle East. Three Black Sea ports were unblocked at the end of July under a deal between Moscow and Kyiv, brokered by the United Nations and Turkey.

— Reuters



A general view of a chasm after heavy rains and deadly floods hit the central Italian region of Marche, in Cantiano, Italy. — Reuters

Search on for missing after Italian storms

ROME: The search for three people still missing after a storm and flooding disaster that struck the Italian region of Marche this week continued on Saturday.

Emergency services workers, including 400 firefighters, were looking for a man, a woman and an 8-year-old boy who had been ripped from his mother’s arms during the storm on Thursday as they were getting out of their car.

“There was this superhuman force,” the woman told the newspaper La Repubblica. Her

son was holding on to a tree trunk, she said.

“He was trying to stay afloat. A few seconds, then he disappeared into the darkness.”

Ten people died, the prefecture in the city of Ancona announced late on Friday. Earlier, there had been talk of nine dead.

Prime Minister Mario Draghi visited the stricken area and said: “This is a disaster. We are doing our best.” The government had declared a state of emergency for the area and provided emergency

aid of \$5 million.

Due to extreme downpours, rivers burst their banks in the region near the Adriatic coast. Masses of water and mud - some several metres high - pushed their way through the villages.

Several people were caught in their cars by the sudden floods, and some were unable to reach the upper floors of buildings. More than 50 people were injured, and about 150 people had to be evacuated from their homes by rescue workers. — dpa

Cheetahs return to India after 70-year absence

LONDON/NEW DELHI: Eight radio-collared African cheetahs step out on to the grassland of Kuno National Park in central India, their final destination after a 8,000 km journey from Namibia that has drawn criticism from some conservationists.

The arrival of the big cats - the fastest land animal on Earth - coincides with the 72nd birthday of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who released the the first cat into the park on Saturday. It is the culmination of a 13-year effort to restore a species which vanished from India some 70 years ago.

The high-profile project is the first time wild cheetahs have been moved across continents to be released. It has raised questions from scientists who say the government should do more to protect the country’s own struggling wildlife.

The cheetahs - five females and three males - arrived after a two-day airplane and helicopter journey from the African savannah, and are expected to spend two to three months in a 6-square-km enclosure inside the park in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

If all goes well with their



Prime Minister Narendra Modi holds a camera after he released cheetahs following their translocation from Namibia, in Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh. — Reuters

acclimation to Kuno, the cats will be released to run through 5,000 square km of forest and grassland, sharing the landscape with leopards, sloth bears and striped hyenas.

Another 12 cheetahs are expected to join the fledgling Indian population next month from South Africa. And as India gathers more funding for the 910 million rupee project, largely

financed by the state-owned Indian Oil, it hopes to eventually grow the population to around 40 cats.

S P Yadav of the National Tiger Conservation Authority said the extinction of the cheetah in India in 1952 was the only time the country had lost a large mammal species since independence.

“It is our moral and ethical responsibility to bring it back.”

But some Indian conservation experts called the effort a “vanity project” that ignores the fact that the African cheetah - a subspecies similar but separate from the critically endangered Asiatic cheetah now only found in Iran - is not native to the Indian subcontinent.

And with India’s 1.4 billion human population jockeying for land, biologists worry cheetahs won’t have enough space to roam without being killed by predators or people.

India last year joined a UN pledge to conserve 30 per cent of its land and ocean area by 2030, but today less than 6 per cent of the country’s territory is protected. Bringing back the cheetah “is our endeavour towards environment and wildlife conservation,” Modi said. — AFP

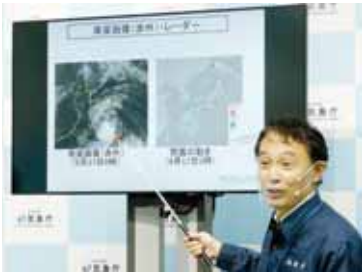
SHORT TAKES

TOKYO

Japan braces for ‘dangerous’ Typhoon Nanmadol

Japan’s weather agency warned of “unprecedented” risks from a ‘very dangerous’ typhoon heading towards the southern Kyushu island, urging residents to take shelter ahead of the storm. Typhoon Nanmadol was producing gusts of up to 270 kilometres an hour and classed as a “violent” storm, the agency’s top level. By late afternoon it was approaching the remote Minami Daito island, 400 kilometres east of Okinawa island.

The storm is expected to



approach or make landfall on Sunday in Kyushu’s southern Kagoshima prefecture, then move north the following day before heading towards Japan’s main island. — AFP

MANILA

Cleanup day comes to Manila’s polluted bay

Hundreds of volunteers joined a mass cleanup drive along the coast of the polluted Manila Bay in the Philippine capital to mark International Coastal Cleanup Day. Volunteers and government workers, including hundreds of coast guard personnel, collected sachets, rubber slippers and other non-biodegradable waste that have been washed in the Manila Bay, a 60 km semi-enclosed estuary facing the South China Sea.



“This initiative will help make our coastal area in Manila Bay better so that our tourists and visitors will see the beauty of the bay,” college student Kendrick Lopez, 18, said. — Reuters

KATHMANDU

At least 17 dead after landslides strike Nepal

Landslides caused by heavy rains buried several homes in a remote mountainous district of Nepal late on Friday, killing more than a dozen people and leaving several others injured, officials said. Rescuers have recovered 17 bodies from three landslide sites in Achham district since search operations began early on Saturday, according to district administrator Dipesh Rijal. “Eleven people buried in mud were pulled out alive, of whom three are receiving medical



treatment for severe injuries,” Rijal said. “We will ascertain the number of affected households, and start relief and rehabilitation packages once rescue works are completed.” — dpa

‘We’re part of history’: An overnight wait to bid farewell to the Queen



Isabella Kwai

It was just after 2 in the morning when the couple from Bristol joined the end of the line, snaking beside the dark, rippling waters of the River Thames and through the hushed streets of London to see the queen for the last time. Joining the line of people waiting to see the coffin of Queen Elizabeth II, lying in state in Westminster Hall, was not for the faint-hearted.

In conversations across Britain, it is simply “The Queue,” no further description needed. On Wednesday night and into Thursday morning, it was 3 miles long and ever-moving, with projected waits as long as 30 hours, officials warned initially, making it a feat of endurance, an all-night and all-day marathon.

But Tracy Withers, who had started the journey from Bristol in western England at 10 pm on Wednesday, said that eventually getting to the finish line would make the wait worthwhile. “This is something that we’re not ever going to see again,” she said. She wanted, she added, to say goodbye.

The people in the line, thousands and thousands of them, had come from nearby, from London and surrounding counties, and from places far from the capital, like Lancashire in the northwest of England. Some came with their families, lugging chairs and wearing padded coats to ward off a fresh nip in the air. Others came alone, some in suits so they could head straight to the office in the morning.

But early on Thursday, all were in the dark waiting, and waiting, and waiting, in what was likely to be the longest line of their lives, to pay their respects to the queen.

With hours to burn and not much sleep to be had, the mood in many stretches of the line was one of good-humoured resignation and even camaraderie. Queue buddies befriended one another and shared bags of potato chips or more adult refreshments like cans of gin and tonic. Along the route, which took on a ghostly sheen under the moon, cafes opened their doors past their usual hours to serve those waiting — though there were lines, of course, for them as well. And with the background of floodlit landmarks like St. Paul’s Cathedral across the river, many were clearly enjoying the view.

The queen’s coffin will be on view in Westminster Hall until Monday when a state funeral will be held. To get to the hall, mourners have to join a line that stretches along the South Bank of the Thames, past St. Paul’s Cathedral, the Millennium Bridge, Southbank Center and London Bridge.

There are plans for the line to loop inside Southwark Park, in South London, accommodating a length of up to 10 miles; the government has said it will turn people away once it judges they will not have time to reach the coffin. In the meantime, it is releasing live updates on the length of the line, warning people to prepare for overnight waits and to



Mourners in London queue outside the British Film Institute, where a film about Queen Elizabeth II plays, as they head to the Palace of Westminster to pay their respects to Queen Elizabeth II.

bring food and drink. Public toilets, drinking water stands and first-aid stations had been set up for the occasion.

In the line overnight, everyone had their own reasons for joining the shuffling procession. But many expressed similar sentiments: a desire to honour the queen; the need to express, somehow, the loss and grief they felt; a sense of being part of a moment bigger than themselves.

“We’re not here for the monarchy; we are here for her,” said Sujata Mahendran, about four hours into her wait, referring to Elizabeth. Mahendran had watched the royal procession earlier that day taking the queen from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Hall, which had given her with a sense of national pride. “It’s being British. That’s us, isn’t it?” she said, adding, tongue-in-cheek, “We do queue very well.”

As the hours dragged on, rumours rippled down the line over the question that had been consuming everyone: How long, exactly, was the wait? Six hours, people had heard, or no, at least 12 — or was it, perhaps, two hours a mile?

At one cafe, where some people sat slumped in chairs, Reena Mehmi was buying cappuccinos for her family while her father held her place in line. “We made a spontaneous decision to come,” she said, adding that the family had driven down from Bedford, north of London, at around 7 pm on Wednesday. Everyone was feeling a bit tired, she said, but thought it was better to come overnight rather than risk an even longer wait the following day.

“I keep saying to the kids, ‘We’re part of history. You’ll never get this opportunity again,’” she said. She added

that she remembered a visit to Bedford by the queen, who greeted people in the pouring rain. “Why should the cold stop us?”

Todd Sinclair, a Canadian who had come with two friends after dinner, said he had also lined up in the middle of the night to see Elizabeth’s mother lying in state in Westminster Hall after her death in 2002 and felt compelled to come again when the queen died.

“When she died, it hit me; I was unmoored,” he said.

He described the awe he had felt in 2002 at the grandeur and solemn atmosphere in Westminster Hall at the time. “I’m not religious or necessarily a monarchist, but I went, ‘Wow,’” he said. He wanted to share that experience with his friends, he said.

At 4 in the morning, the weariness became more apparent in some stretches of the line. A mother cradled a baby, looking into the distance. People covered yawns, and someone grumbled that people were pushing in. “It’s too early,” one man sighed. A woman spoke of runner’s exhaustion: “This is like a 5k.”

Simon Waters, from Southampton, on the south coast of England, joined the line with his family at 8 pm on Wednesday. Almost nine hours later, on Thursday morning, he walked into Westminster Hall to see the queen’s coffin, with the crown placed on top of it.

“You can’t just describe it,” he said. It had been a long wait, he added, but Waters looked very much awake. “It’s unbelievable.”

For Gen Z, TikTok is the new search engine



Kalley Huang

When Ja’Kobi Moore decided to apply this year to a private high school in her hometown of New Orleans, she learned that she needed at least one letter of recommendation from a teacher. She had never asked for one, so she sought help. “Teacherletterofrecommendation,” she typed into TikTok’s search bar.

Moore, 15, scrolled TikTok’s app until she found two videos: one explaining how to ask teachers for a recommendation letter and the other showing a template for one. Both had been made by teachers and were easier to understand than a Google search result or YouTube video, said Moore, who is planning to talk to her teachers this month.

TikTok is known for its viral dance videos and pop music. But for Generation Z, the video app is increasingly a search engine, too.

More and more young people are using TikTok’s powerful algorithm — which personalises the videos shown to them based on their interactions with content — to find information uncannily catered to their tastes. That tailoring is coupled with a sense that real people on the app are synthesising and delivering information, rather than faceless websites.

On TikTok, “you see how the person actually felt about where they ate,” said Nailah Roberts, 25, who uses the app to look for restaurants in Los Angeles, where she lives. A long-winded written review of a restaurant can’t capture its ambience, food and drinks like a bite-size clip can, she said.

TikTok’s rise as a discovery tool is part of a broader transformation in digital search. While Google remains

the world’s dominant search engine, people are turning to Amazon to search for products, Instagram to stay updated on trends and Snapchat’s Snap Maps to find local businesses. As the digital world continues growing, the universe of ways to find information in it is expanding.

Google has noticed TikTok edging into its domain. While the Silicon Valley company disputed that young people were using TikTok as a replacement for its search engine, at least one Google executive has publicly remarked on the rival video app’s search capabilities.

“In our studies, something like almost 40 per cent of young people, when they’re looking for a place for lunch, they don’t go to Google Maps or Search. They go to TikTok or Instagram,” Prabhakar Raghavan, a Google senior vice-president, said at a technology conference in July.

Google has incorporated images and videos into its search engine in recent years. Since 2019, some of its search results have featured TikTok videos. In 2020, Google released YouTube Shorts, which shares vertical videos less than a minute long, and started including its content in search results.

TikTok, which is owned by the Chinese internet company ByteDance, declined to comment on its search function and products that may be in testing. It said it was “always thinking about new ways to add value to the community and enrich the TikTok experience.”

Doing a search on TikTok is often more interactive than typing in a query on Google. Instead of just slogging through walls of text, Gen Z-ers crowdsource recommendations from TikTok videos to pinpoint what they are looking for, watching video after video to cull the content. Then they verify the veracity of a suggestion based on comments posted



Need to find a restaurant or figure out how to do something? Young people are turning to TikTok to search for answers. Google has noticed

in response to the videos.

This mode of searching is rooted in how young people are using TikTok not only to look for products and businesses, but also to ask questions about how to do things and find explanations for what things mean. With videos often less than 60 seconds long, TikTok returns what feels like more relevant answers, many said.

TikTok’s ascent as a search engine may mean that more people stumble upon misinformation and disinformation on the app, which could then be amplified and spread further, said Francesca Tripodi, an information and library science professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The platform has struggled with moderating misleading content about elections, the war in Ukraine and abortion.

TikTok’s algorithm tends to keep people on the app, making it harder for them to turn to additional sources to fact-check searches, Tripodi added.

“You aren’t really clicking to anything that would lead you out of the app,” she said. “That makes it even more challenging to double-check the information you’re getting is correct.”

TikTok has leaned into becoming a venue for finding information. The app is testing a feature that identifies keywords in comments and links to search results for them. In Southeast Asia, it is also testing a feed with local content, so people can find businesses and events near them.

Building out search and location features is likely to further entrench TikTok — already the world’s most downloaded app for those ages 18-24, according to Sensor Tower — among young users.

TikTok “is becoming a one-stop shop for content in a way that it wasn’t in its earlier days,” said Lee Rainie, who directs internet and technology research at the Pew Research Center.

How to prepare for a job interview



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

Dr Hamed al Sinawi is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

My son was called for an interview last week so I had to give him few tips on how to handle the interview. Knowing him, I was rather worried about the interaction with the interviewers than the actual content. He is a smart young man and knows his job well but when it comes to handling “small talk” as he called it, he is not the best at that. He said he found questions like ‘tell us about yourself’ and ‘what are your strengths and weaknesses’ rather challenging, as he does not know how to “sell himself” as he says. I had to explain to him that he needs to learn these skills — as it’s the only way for the panel to know if he is a team player or a lone wolf. After a long discussion, he agreed to listen to me then make

up his mind. After all, it’s up to him whether he will “take it or leave it”. I was mindful about the generational gap between us and the changes in the job market since I had my own interview years ago. There is no doubt that the competition for jobs is very high and new graduates have to build up their resumes and learn new skills that may not have been covered during their courses, as my son explains “they never prepared us for the job market so we had to learn the tricks from scratch”. Business psychologists suggest a few tips that can make a candidate more likely to succeed at a job interview. The main point is to have the right attitude, as no one would like to work with a person who is rude

‘THE COMPETITION FOR JOBS IS VERY HIGH AND NEW GRADUATES HAVE TO BUILD UP THEIR RESUMES AND LEARN NEW SKILLS THAT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN COVERED DURING THEIR COURSES’ and disrespectful to others. Start by preparing well and researching the job you are applying for. Rehearsing for the interview will most definitely boost your confidence. Prepare for common questions and learn the answers to them with the correct approach. A commonly used technique is the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, and Result) method, which allows candidates to properly set the scenario for the panel.

During the day, make sure that you wake up early and prepare for the journey to avoid any delays. Have a light breakfast and take a bottle of water with you. Avoid too much coffee or tea as the caffeine in them may worsen your anxiety and make you use the toilet too frequently. Arrive early, as this will make you feel more calm and confident. Be presentable and never argue with the interviewers. Wear clean and formal clothes and avoid strong perfumes — as some people may be allergic to them. Listen to the question and remember to appear genuine and interested and smile. When asked to “tell us about yourself, remember to mention information relevant to the post, don’t shy away from talking about

your achievements, but don’t make it sound like you are bragging. Keep it simple and up to the point. If you happen to find such interviews anxiety-provoking or have symptoms of social anxiety disorder, then it’s important to practise well for the interview and perform relaxation techniques. If your anxiety is severe and you worry that you may stutter during the interview or have severe sweating attack, then it may be good to consult your doctor who may prescribe a medication to help you feel calm so the above symptoms do not show. Finally, remember to remain positive, if you don’t get the job then ask the panel for feedback so you can improve your performance during the following interview.

Climate takes backseat in Italy vote despite extreme events

ELLA IDE

From parched rivers to a glacier collapse and this week’s deadly storms, Italy has suffered numerous climate events this year — but many politicians pay the subject little more than lip service. Desperate to see some firm commitments ahead of September 25 elections, climate activists staged a sit-in at the Rome offices of frontrunner Giorgia Meloni earlier this month. They demanded a public meeting with the far-right leader, but police carted them off the premises. Concern over the spiralling cost of living has drowned out the debate over how to tackle the devastation caused by global warming. The war in Ukraine has put the risk to energy supplies centre stage in a country heavily reliant on Russian gas. That has prompted a fresh drive for renewables — but also an increase in production in coal-fired plants. Michele Giuli, a member of the Last Generation movement that stormed Meloni’s office, said deadly floods in central Italy this week had to refocus thinking. Many have linked the extreme weather event to climate change, including Prime Minister Mario Draghi. “People have died...,” he said. “This must make us reflect. “What do we want to do with our lives, while the Italian state does nothing to reduce emissions and avoid tens of thousands of similar deaths in the next few years?” This summer’s drought, the worst in 70 years, drained the Po River, the peninsula’s largest water reservoir and a crucial resource for Italy’s agricultural sector. And then the rains came, hitting land as hard as concrete. Five times the number of storms, hurricanes and floods lashed the country compared to 10 summers ago, according to the agricultural association Coldiretti. In August, Italian scientists wrote an open letter to politicians, urging them to put the emergency first. But an analysis published this week by Greenpeace found that less than 0.5 per cent of political leaders’ statements on the main TV news programmes covered the climate crisis. This summer in Italy “will be sadly remembered for the frequency and the violence of climate events... yet this dramatic emergency does not seem to affect many of the political leaders seeking to lead the country,” said Giuseppe Onufrio, Executive Director of Greenpeace Italy. But it has been worse. Election experts at Luiss university in Rome note that some parties never used to mention the environment at all. — AFP

What Ukraine needs from us



Paul Krugman

The writer is an opinion columnist

Lately, I’ve been seeing what seems like a growing number of reports about Ukraine’s economic difficulties. And it definitely makes sense to focus more on the country’s economy now that the tide seems to have turned in Ukraine’s favour on the battlefield. But it’s hard to avoid suspecting ulterior motives for that scrutiny. Supporters of Ukraine’s fight may be trying to shame Western powers into providing more aid, while “realists,” who’ve spent the whole war urging Ukraine to surrender and have been disappointed in their predictions of military defeat, are now predicting inevitable economic collapse. Still, the economic difficulties are real and serious. According to official estimates, Ukraine’s real gross domestic product has fallen 37 per cent from a year ago, although there are some signs of recovery. At the same time, inflation has surged to nearly 24 per cent over the previous year. But here’s the thing: I’ve read a lot of economic history, including the economics of wars past. And my reaction to the Ukrainian numbers is: That’s all? OK, that’s a really big decline in GDP, but what do you expect when an invader seizes a significant part of your territory, blockades your ports and uses missiles to blow up a significant part of your infrastructure? And the inflation number is surprisingly low, given the circumstances. After all, quite a few countries have managed to create significantly higher inflation than that without being the target of a huge foreign invasion. Turkey, for example, currently has 80 per cent annual inflation. It’s important to note that major wars usually lead to higher inflation, with some justification. After all, it’s unusual and, in fact, inappropriate for a government confronted with the need to make large but temporary outlays — such as paying for immense military operations or, for that matter, pandemic relief — to fully pay for those outlays with higher taxes. Why inappropriate? Because even a liberal like me will admit that very high tax rates hurt incentives. So it’s better to borrow some of the needed funds and defray those costs over time. But running a big budget deficit

does increase overall demand in the economy, which is inflationary, especially if supply is simultaneously being reduced — for example, by Russian missile strikes. If borrowing to cover the deficit is difficult — which it often is in wartime — some of the gap may also be covered by printing money. So it’s normal and even acceptable to see significant inflation in times of war. World War II, by the way, is the exception that proves the rule. Despite gigantic budget deficits and the diversion of much of the economy’s capacity to war production, the US government mostly kept a lid on

THE COMBINED ECONOMIC WEIGHT OF THE COUNTRIES BACKING UKRAINE MAKES THE RUSSIAN ECONOMY LOOK PUNY, AND DIVERTING EVEN A SMALL FRACTION OF THESE COUNTRIES’ RESOURCES TO HELPING UKRAINE UTTERLY SHIFTS THE BALANCE OF POWER

inflation, partly via price controls and partly via rationing and other controls that suppressed private demand. Even then, there was a postwar spike in prices when those controls were removed. If we look at earlier episodes,

however, wars were regularly accompanied by inflation. During World War I, for example, Britain and the United States experienced inflation not far short of what Ukraine is experiencing now, even though neither was invaded. Or look at the Civil War. The Union experienced Ukraine-like inflation. The Confederacy, whose military situation more closely resembled that of contemporary Ukraine — even though Ukraine is defending freedom, while the South was defending slavery — experienced runaway inflation. So Ukraine is actually doing pretty well, considering. Why? Part of the answer is that on the economic front, as in the military struggle, the Ukrainians have shown an unexpected level of coolheadedness and competence. They quickly imposed capital controls to prevent a massive flight of money from the country and also intervened to stabilise the foreign exchange value of their currency — something that isn’t always a good idea but in this case helped prevent an inflation panic. But none of this would have mattered — just as the battlefield courage of the Ukrainians wouldn’t have mattered — were it not for the fundamental fact that Ukraine isn’t standing alone. On its own, Ukraine is hugely outmatched economically by Russia, which is one reason Russia appeared to have overwhelming military superiority. — New York Times



A window shopper at a market in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Reflections: Passing the Queen’s Baton



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Tomorrow sees the State Funeral of Elizabeth II, the Queen of Great Britain, who has been a particular friend of the Sultanate of Oman for so many decades. It is a passing Oman will mourn, and her last visit here, in 2010, was an occasion of as much pomp and ceremony as any global Head of State or monarch.

The royal visit continued a tradition of royal ‘patronage’ of Oman with Her Majesty having previously visited in 1979. King Charles III, formerly Charles, the Prince of Wales, has also visited Oman, in 1986, and 2013, with his now Queen Consort Camilla, and who could forget the visit of a boisterous and charming Prince Harry in 2014 to celebrate National Day, the 18th of November.

However, returning to Elizabeth II, for all that pomp, all the ceremony, and all the diplomacy that engendered the royal visit, my wife Yelena and I were just a couple of the hundreds of ‘ordinary’ folk, invited to share a day at the races with royalty, to share a picnic lunch, mere yards away from Her Majesty, Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, her husband and constant companion, and Sultan Qaboos, and their respective retinues.

A diverse crowd of Omanis and expatriates hung on every move, every gesture, of Their Majesties, with ripples of ooohs and aaahs, spontaneous ripples of applause and admiration when their delight or approval was clear. It was a wonderful occasion in the sunshine at the Royal Cavalry Racecourse in Barka, where there was just enough of that cooling sea breeze to make what could have been a challenging afternoon, both a pleasure and a privilege.

TO BE IN THE PRESENCE OF GREATNESS REDUCES ONE’S ABILITY TO BE CRITICAL, BUT IT DOES ENHANCE EVERY EMOTION AND SENSATION IN A VERY MUCH CONSIDERED DEMONSTRATION OF RESPECT THAT IS, WAS, TANGIBLE

Certainly, to be in the presence of greatness reduces one’s ability to be critical, but it does enhance every emotion and sensation in a very much considered demonstration of respect that is, was, tangible. It is telling that today, in a world riven with such uncertainty, that the very few who have sought to belittle the late Queen have been either seeking political notoriety, or their ‘15 minutes of fame,’ and could only aspire to such levels of global affection.

So, what does the future herald for the relationship between Oman and the British succession? While death and taxes are the only certainties, the protective cloak the United Kingdom has steadfastly maintained over the jewel of the Gulf states, it is difficult to see any change in the closeness of the relationship established across five decades at either the royal level, or in diplomatic circles.

Though Charles III has been the longest serving heir to the throne in history, and the eldest crowned monarch of the British Isles, he has shown himself to be very much in his mother’s mold, yet his own man, who has proven year after year to have been willing to speak out on controversial and contentious issues, and almost without fail to be proven correct subsequently.

He supported conservation and the environment before they became political bandwagons. He recognised the need to both protect and challenge the youthful generations, and who could doubt now, his astuteness on that subject. Neither was he afraid to be critical of those who have little or no social responsibility while having the power, and the means to do so. Some would have undoubtedly shifted uncomfortably in their seats as he chastised their indolence, saying...

“To move forward we must acknowledge that sustainability and profitability are no longer mutually exclusive,” that “It is time to align sustainable solutions with funding in a way that can transform the marketplace,” and asking, “How quickly can we get there and who are the leaders who will drive us forward?” These are not the utterances of one who will stand... and watch...

The mutual respect held for each other by these two illustrious royal dynasties forged in the crucible of ceremony, or perhaps despite it, signposts the tolerance of each other’s religions, lifestyles, histories, cultures, and values, and long may it last. The Queen is dead, the heralds cry is “Long live the King: Long live King Charles III.”



FLYING HIGH

Paratroopers perform a parachute jump with deployed parachutes during a commemoration of Allied airborne landings during Operation Market Garden in 1944, 78-years-ago in Ginkelse Heide near Ede, Netherlands, on Saturday. – AFP



Anand Gopal

The author is Executive Director of Policy Research at Energy Innovation

How Wright’s Law can right the climate

As the world’s second-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, the United States is critical to preserving a livable planet. And with the recently enacted Inflation Reduction Act – which allocates hundreds of billions of dollars towards decarbonisation – America has shored up its credibility just in time for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27) in Egypt.

America is now well positioned to achieve its goal of halving its emissions by 2030, relative to 2005 levels. While the IRA’s provisions could cut US emissions up to 43 per cent by 2030, the remaining shortfall can be covered by new Environmental Protection Agency rules and stronger state-level action of the kind that we have seen this year in California.

But while the IRA is a historic achievement in its own right, its largest benefits will come in the form of global economic spillover effects. Like the European Union’s “Fit for 55” policies, the IRA will drive the deployment of solar, wind, and battery storage, thereby reducing the costs of these clean technologies for everyone. Ultimately, all countries will pay much less to cut their own emissions at the speed and scale necessary to keep climate change in check.

To be sure, the US still needs to follow through on its other climate commitments, not least by providing the \$11.4 billion per year (a paltry sum compared to other US expenditures) that it has pledged to finance mitigation and adaptation in the Global South. Counterintuitively, though, massive domestic investments in clean technologies by the US and the EU stand to be much more valuable than any direct financing they provide, owing to a little-known phenomenon known as Wright’s Law.

Named after the US engineer who first noticed it in the 1930s (Theodore Wright), Wright’s Law predicts that every cumulative doubling of a technology’s global production will reduce its cost by a constant percentage. And as recent research at the University of Oxford confirms, solar, wind, battery, and electrolyzer costs have declined steeply as their global production has increased.

But even more significantly, the researchers found that Wright’s Law holds true even after an innovative technology has achieved high levels of market maturity. That means the IRA’s \$370 billion dollar investment in clean-energy production could trigger even faster cost decreases for the technologies needed to solve the climate crisis, delivering a higher quality of life for billions of people.

For example, our modeling at Energy

Innovation shows that these government investments could add 1,053 gigawatts of new wind and solar energy to the US grid, making it 85 per cent clean in just eight years. Likewise, the law’s new electric-vehicle (EV) tax credits could ensure that roughly one-third of all new passenger cars and heavy-duty trucks sold in the US are electric by 2030. IRA incentives are also expected to add five gigawatts of electrolyser capacity to produce zero-carbon hydrogen, which will be critical to cutting emissions in the chemical industry and aviation.

Moreover, the IRA’s public investments will unlock several times as much private capital. Add in Europe’s investments and China’s massive push into clean energy and EVs, and annual deployment of

WHILE AMERICA’S INFLATION REDUCTION ACT IS A HISTORIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ITS OWN RIGHT, ITS LARGEST BENEFITS WILL COME IN THE FORM OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC SPILLOVER EFFECTS. ULTIMATELY, ALL COUNTRIES WILL PAY MUCH LESS TO CUT THEIR OWN EMISSIONS AT THE SPEED AND SCALE NECESSARY TO KEEP CLIMATE CHANGE IN CHECK

innovative clean technologies is poised to explode.

In addition to reducing emissions in the world’s largest and most highly polluting economies, the exponential growth in clean technologies will make it dramatically cheaper for the rest of the world to transform their energy systems. In fact, we have already seen this

dynamic playing out. Green investments by Germany and California at the start of the last decade helped reduce the costs of solar by 85 per cent and of wind by 56 per cent between 2010 and 2020. Similarly, EV demand in China has helped slash battery costs by 89 per cent since 2010.

For its part, India has capitalised on these falling costs by designing clever power auctions that result in the lowest utility-scale solar-power prices in the world. As the decrease in costs accelerates, countries across the Global South will be able to exploit the benefits of Wright’s Law through bold policies to decarbonise cars, cooling, and electricity.

Energy Innovation’s modelling consistently shows that ambitious clean-energy policies expand economies and create jobs, while also improving air quality. Even before the IRA, research found that India could save more than 60 trillion rupees (\$752 billion) by 2050 if it adopts high-decarbonisation policies.

To that end, performance standards – requiring an increasing minimum share of clean power and EVs each year – are a particularly powerful instrument. In low- and middle-income countries, such policies can elegantly leverage US and EU investments at no cost to governments beyond enforcement, and can prevent a country from becoming a dumping ground for polluting vehicles and equipment.

Understanding Wright’s Law can help reframe North-South dialogue at COP27. Domestic investments by the wealthiest countries will cut costs for developing countries and stretch international finance further. The less expensive climate action becomes, the greater our chances of maintaining climate stability.

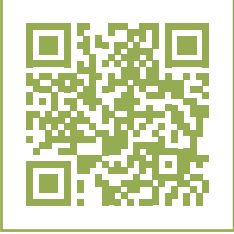
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The US still needs to follow through on its other climate commitments.

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ITALY AND GERMANY ADVANCE IN DAVIS CUP, ALACARAZ HAS LOSING HOMECOMING

PARIS: Germany and Italy on Friday locked up places in the Davis Cup last eight, while Britain and France were eliminated and US Open champion Carlos Alcaraz made a losing return to the court.

In Bologna, Matteo Berrettini crushed Argentine Sebastian Baez 6-2, 6-3 in 71 minutes and then Jannik Sinner beat Francisco Cerundolo 7-5, 1-6, 6-3 to give Italy a winning 2-0 lead in the tie and ensure they would in the top two places in Group A.

Italian pair Simone Bolelli and Fabio Fognini then lost the doubles to Maximo Gonzalez and Horacio Zeballos in three sets.

In Hamburg, Kevin Kraweitz and Tim Puetz gave the hosts a 2-1 victory when they beat Belgian pair Sander Gille and Joran Vliegen 4-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/5) in the deciding doubles.

“Nights like this live long in the memory,” said Germany captain Michael Kohlmann.

Jan-Lennard Struff had given Germany a winning start by beating Zizou Bergs 6-4 7-6 (11-9) but David Goffin fought back from a set down to overcome Oscar Otte 3-6, 7-6 (9-7), 6-3.

Germany’s victory eliminated France which had lost its opening two ties in Group C.

Playing in his home city of Glasgow and in his 50th Davis Cup rubber, Andy Murray could not conjure any magic as he and



Canada’s Felix Auger Aliassime celebrates after winning the match against Spain’s Marcel Granollers and Pedro Martinez. – Reuters

Joe Salisbury lost a tight doubles decider to Wesley Koolhof and Matwe Middelkoop.

The Dutch pair won 7-6 (7/0), 6-7 (6/8), 6-3 to join the United States with two victories in two



Spain’s Marcel Granollers and Pedro Martinez during the match against Canada’s Felix Auger Aliassime and Vasek Pospisil. – Reuters



Britain’s Andy Murray and Joe Salisbury react during their match against Netherlands’ Wesley Koolhof and Matwe Middelkoop. – Reuters

ties in Group D.

Dan Evans had given the hosts the lead by beating Tallon

Griekspoor 6-4, 6-4.

Botic Van De Zandschulp responded by crushing world

number eight Cameron Norrie 6-4, 6-2.

In Valencia, Carlos Alcaraz, the youngest ever men’s world number one at 19 after his US Open triumph, had a bittersweet homecoming as he lost to Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-7 (3/7), 6-4, 6-2 in his country’s Group B loss to Canada.

Given an ovation by the home fans after his first Grand Slam conquest on Sunday, the Spaniard and his Canadian opponent played out a thrilling second singles rubber, with Canada levelling the tie at 1-1.

Alcaraz, from nearby Murcia, had watched from the sidelines on Wednesday as Spain beat Serbia 3-0.

On Friday, after the players had split two fiercely-fought sets, Alcaraz faded, perhaps unsurprisingly after his marathon matches in New York.

World number 13 Auger-Aliassime broke straight away and then again to go 4-1 ahead, holding off the Spaniard despite strong encouragement from the crowd.

Roberto Bautista had put Spain 1-0 up in the tie after coming from behind to beat Vasek Pospisil 3-6, 6-3, 6-3.

Pospisil and Auger-Aliassime rallied for a 4-6, 6-4, 7-5 doubles win over Marcel Granollers-Pujol and Pedro Martinez Portero to move Canada to the top of the group and within sight of advancing. — AFP

Early goals ease Man City to win at 10-man Wolves

ENGLAND: Jack Grealish scored inside the first minute and Erling Haaland netted his 11th Premier League goal of the season as Manchester City eased to a 3-0 victory over 10-man Wolverhampton Wanderers at Molineux on Saturday.

Phil Foden added a third in the second half as City moved to the top of the table with 17 points from seven games, while Wolves are in 16th place having won only once this season.

The home side were reduced to 10 men on 33 minutes after a horrendous challenge from defender Nathan Collins, who launched himself studs-first into the midriff of Grealish and could have no complaints about the straight red card.

There was a minute’s silence ahead of kickoff following the death of Queen Elizabeth and the majority of fans kept a respectful silence, while there was warm applause on 70 minutes from all around the ground to mark the number of years the monarch was on the throne.

The opening goal after 55 seconds was a first of the season for Grealish, who has come under criticism this week for his failure to both score and provide assists since his £100 million (\$114 million) move from Aston Villa last year.

“It was nice to get off the mark



this season and get the three points at a difficult place to come against a top team,” Grealish told BT Sport.

“This Wolves team is so underrated and they showed that in the second half, so it is a great result for us.

“I should be scoring goals and getting more assists. I’m always going to have people talking about me with the amount I was bought for. “But even at Aston Villa I did not score as much as I should have. It is something I want to add to my game.”

The champions took the lead when Kevin De Bruyne’s inviting cross into the six-yard box was turned home by Grealish, before Haaland scored his 14th goal in all competitions with a scuffed shot from the edge of the box after Wolves defender Max Kilman stood off him.

The Norwegian striker became the first player in Premier League history to net in his first four away games, and the points were sealed when De Bruyne was again the architect with another low cross into the six-yard box which was turned home by Foden.

The win sees City unbeaten in their last 22 away Premier League games, a club record, and was achieved despite a lethargic second-half display in which they were not at their sizzling best.

— Reuters



Al Harthi to compete in 100-mile Nice Côte d'Azur race in France

MUSCAT: Hamed al Harthi, one of Oman's best and most experienced trail runners, will compete in the first ever Nice Côte d'Azur by UTMB, taking place from September 22-25, 2022 in Nice, France. Hamed will be running the 100-mile (164km) race, which takes athletes from the snowy peaks of the French Alps to the clear blue seas of the Mediterranean Sea.

An iconic trail running distance, the race begins in the ski resort town of Auron and quickly reaches the highest point of the course at more than 2,650 metres above sea level. From there, the route weaves through forests and along the meandering Tinée river and Mercantour massif, the glacier-covered dome of Mont Blanc, before tackling four more mounts amidst spectacular landscapes and ending on the world famous Promenade des Anglais along the seafront in Nice on the shores of the legendary French Riviera.

Speaking before leaving Oman for France, Hamed said, "This an exciting new challenge in a truly



awe-inspiring location. The Mont Blanc region is the home of the UTMB ultra running races, so to be able to take part in the first edition of Nice Côte d'Azur by UTMB is a great step in my career. My training has been going well, but each race is a new challenge, and I am looking forward to testing myself on a variety of terrains. I am also hoping to gain more knowledge from this race in preparation for the main race, the UTMB Mont Blanc in 2023".

64-year-old Hamed is a lifelong runner and has conquered many of the most challenging races in the world during his career. In 2018, he competed in Oman by UTMB and Ushuaia by UTMB in Argentina in 2019, UTMB Mont-Blanc 2021 and reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro the same year. In March 2022, he completed the epic 560km 'Border to Coast' challenge from Um Zumul, on the border of Oman, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, to Sur in eight days and plans to continue taking on epic challenges all around the world.

Rasheed Jaber named as Seeb head coach

Seeb appointed Rasheed Jaber as head of the team as replacement to the Romanian coach Eli Stan. The Board of Directors of Seeb Club approved appointment of Jaber as head of technical coaching staff of the team and to replace the Romanian coach. Jaber will lead Seeb in the West Asian final against Bahrain's Riffa on October 4, at Al Seeb Sports Stadium.



Singapore will be tough, says F1 driver Albon

LONDON: Williams Formula One driver Alex Albon said he hoped to race in Singapore on October 2 after missing last weekend's Italian Grand Prix with appendicitis but recognised it would be tough.

The 26-year-old Thai was replaced at Monza by Dutch reserve Nyck de Vries, who finished ninth on his debut.

Albon was released from hospital on Tuesday and is recovering at home in Monaco ahead of the Singapore round which starts with practice on September 30.

"I feel pretty good, I feel OK," he said in a video message on social media.

"Obviously on Saturday I had a slight issue and the doctors did an amazing job. I'm very grateful that they got me in good health and out of the hospital by Tuesday.

"I've been in Monaco since



then, I've been starting to walk around and the goal is to be ready for Singapore which is going to be tough. It's one of the toughest races that we go to, so it's not an easy one.

"But let's aim high and see what happens."

Williams said on Monday that Albon suffered "unexpected post-operative anaesthetic complications which led to respiratory failure" and had spent Saturday night in intensive care.

— Reuters

Biggest names in world golf set for Thailand test

BANGKOK: The eyes of the golfing world are turning to Thailand as the land of smiles gears up to host the biggest tournament ever to be held on Asian soil: the \$25 million LIV Golf Invitational Bangkok.

Forty-eight of the best golfers on the planet are Bangkok-bound to battle it out for individual and team glory as LIV Golf breaks new ground with Asia's debut LIV Golf Invitational, taking place at Stonehill, October 7-9.

A stellar field including defending Open champion Cameron Smith, big-hitting Bryson DeChambeau and multiple-major winners Dustin Johnson, Phil Mickelson, and Brooks Koepka is confirmed for the tournament.

In addition, two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson will make on-air contributions to the broadcast coverage and serve as a non-playing captain at the course.

They will be joined by hometown heroes Sodom Kaewkanjana and Phachara Khongwatmai, plus a host of Ryder Cup and major-winning stars including Henrik Stenson, Lee Westwood, Ian Poulter, Sergio

Garcia, Louis Oosthuizen and Patrick Reed.

The sixth event of eight in LIV's inaugural year, the LIV Golf Invitational Bangkok will hold the distinction of becoming the first international tournament to be staged at the all-new Stonehill in the northern suburbs of Bangkok, situated in the Pathum Thani province.

LIV Golf CEO and Commissioner Greg Norman said: "Everyone at LIV Golf is enormously excited to bring our innovative format and elite competition to Thailand and the people of Asia, one of the most exciting and rapidly developing golf landscapes in the world. At LIV Golf, we're committed to creating opportunities that grow the game and reach new audiences around the globe. Thailand is our first Asian stop as we continue our launch, and the LIV Golf Invitational Bangkok promises to be a truly incredible week for players and fans alike."

"I've been looking forward to saying this for a long time: Asia,



here we come!"

The revolutionary tournament format of LIV Golf aims to supercharge the sport of golf. Each event sees a world-class 48-man field compete in 12 teams of four, with a shotgun start, on-course music and entertainment that creates an electric atmosphere.

After three rounds of golf, both an individual and team champion is crowned and a prize of \$25 million shared.

An incredibly strong field for Bangkok features no less than 12 Major champions and four former World No.1s set to be on the hunt for individual and team glory.

Thai star Khongwatmai has featured in all five of this year's LIV Golf Invitationals, earning his spot through some top performances in the Asian Tour's new marquee International Series events, which are supported by LIV Golf.

He said: "To be playing in an event of this scale at home in

Thailand is something I could only have dreamed of growing up. The quality of the field is unlike any golf event that will ever have competed here, which makes this a huge moment for not only golf, but sport in Thailand and in Asia.

"These LIV events bring together the best golfers in the world, in a new format which works for both players and spectators. The atmosphere has been incredible in all the events I have played so far, and to be able to experience the same on home turf is something I'm really going to relish. It'll be something very special for Thai golf and golf fans."

Kaewkanjana, a two-time Asian Tour winner who has also teed it up in all LIV Golf events so far this season, said: "Playing in Thailand confirms that LIV Golf is a global league, bringing the best in the world to our country and growing the game across the region. LIV Golf is something different, something very exciting, and this week is further evidence that the series is connecting with new audiences all around the world." — AFP



Benzema out for Real but Atletico’s Oblak returns for Madrid derby

MADRID: Real Madrid will be without striker Karim Benzema for the Madrid derby clash with rivals Atletico Madrid, coach Carlo Ancelotti confirmed on Saturday.

The French forward has missed the team’s last two games with a thigh injury and was hoping to be fit, but did not train with the team on Saturday.

“Benzema will not make the game,” Ancelotti told a news conference ahead of Sunday’s derby at the Wanda Metropolitano.

“He has started to work individually. He’ll stay here during the international break to be ready to return when La Liga is back.”

The coach did not want to get involved in the controversy in Spain over forward Vinicius Junior’s dancing goal celebrations, which some have labelled disrespectful.

“I am not his father, I am not his brother, I am just his coach,” said Ancelotti. “He is playing football with the joy that he has, with the happiness that he has.”

Atletico Madrid will have goalkeeper Jan Oblak back from injury, after he missed the 4-1 win over Celta Vigo in La Liga and Tuesday’s 2-0 defeat at Bayer Leverkusen in the Champions League.

Simeone confirmed the Slovenian was ready to play, and said his team are capable of upsetting their rivals.

“I always think in the big games and derbies. It is important how you arrive, but the moment that you start the game, it’s a new story,” said Simeone.

“Everything is all very well until the referee blows the whistle, then it’s a new film and we don’t know the ending. That’s why this game is so fun.” — AFP

Oman in must-win situation against Thailand in Asian Cup Qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The hosts Oman will look for the triumph only when they face off Thailand on Sunday in Group G of the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 Qualifiers. The match will kick off at 8:45 pm (Oman time) at Al Saada Sports Complex in Salalah.

The Oman boys managed to start the qualifiers campaign strongly as they blanked Philippines 3-0 in the opening clash. In the following game, they suffered a shock 1-0 defeat against Afghanistan on Friday.

Thailand are leading the group with full points as they impressed against the Philippines and managed to win 3-2 over Philippines on Friday. The leaders stunned Afghanistan 3-0 in the opening round match. Oman and Afghanistan are in second and third places respectively with three points for each team. Oman have a better goal average than Afghanistan while the Philippines are in fourth place with no points.

The Oman national team, coached by Spanish coach David Gordo, have to win against Thailand in Sunday’s fixture and the Philippines must defeat Afghanistan in their clash on Sunday. This scenario will ensure Oman advancing to the AFC U20 Asian Cup Uzbekistan 2023 finals which will be held in March 2023.

Oman head coach David Gordo commented on the team’s defeat against Afghanistan. “The team had several mistakes in the match and the players did not perform well, especially in the attacking side. The opponents Afghanistan wasted the time of the match. We could not expect that they would face an organised team in their defending side. The team lacks speed in the front. However, these are not excuses but we have to work to address these disadvantages in the forthcoming game,” he added.

The Spanish coach added that he could not predict the defeat. “This is football and we have to accept the final result. Our boys could not penetrate the centre of the team and they were lacking for taking the right decision at the right time at the centre. I did not request from players to depend on the long balls but this happened in the match. There is no differences in the main squad and the substitutions list of the team,” he added.



OAA delivers first successful series in Khareef season

SALALAH: The city has welcomed a great season of motorsport events first-ever held in Dhofar, granting the people of Salalah an experience of a lifetime. There were a number of activities that the public were able to take part in and join in as the audience, from Drift to Karting to 4x4s to Digital car games, Bike rides and Supercar shows.

OAA Managing Director, Suleiman al Rawahi, said: “What surprised me to be honest was actually finding people who have never experienced any sort of motorsport activity, adapting to them very fast. They’re enjoying it, because we’re doing it in a very professional way, safety wise and in the way we take care of our customers, making sure they come out with a big smile.”

He added: “We’ve also been seeing a lot of repeated customers and we see this to be a positive sign

for the long run.”

The Salalah Grand Mall has been holding the Khareef Digital Motorsport Championship series where the winners get to compete in the Oman MENA Digital Motorsport Qualifier, in which two winners will be picked to participate in Jordan’s MENA Digital Final in October.

The Kart races have become widely popular at Salalah’s Celebration Square over these past few weeks, with a show of great skill and speed among the local drivers. Delighted with the outcome of Car Park Drift, the first launch to Drift motorsports in Dhofar, Brigadier Jamal bin Saeed al Taie, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors of OAA, conveyed a few words in high spirits at the end of the series.

He said: “Thankfully, the public enjoyed the much-anticipated



drift event, which was held under the auspices of Shaikh Khalid bin Omar al Marhoon, in the presence of Wali of Salalah, a number of senior Royal Oman Police officers with an appearance from OAA’s Chairman Salim al Maskiry, as a large gathering of citizens,

residents and visitors at Salalah Celebration Square joined in to see the performances presented by the most skilled drivers.

“This highlights OAA’s goal to provide the best for our people in Muscat, Dhofar and the rest of the Sultanate’s governorates with

motorsport events coming up in the future.”

The Association’s Events Manager, Chris Hodgson, also added: “I think people were blown away by the drifting and the skills of the drivers. It’s a very popular motorsport, but they’ve only ever seen it on TV and YouTube, and never in real life. So, it was a pleasure to present drifting to the locals there.

“And it’s good to see the Celebration Square, which is quite an ornate space, being used again in the middle of Salalah for what it’s supposed to be. This is a celebration and it’s a celebration square, so we were celebrating motorsports.”

There were a great range of supercars touring Dhofar, from Oman’s two popular and fast-growing Supercar clubs, One More Drive and Supercar Majlis.

The people of Dhofar, including the passionate car lovers, got to witness the sleek sporty cars as the clubs drove and stopped at various nature spots to showcase these exotic automobiles.

OAA consistently persists with presenting enjoyable and entertaining motorsport events for their audience every year, never compromising on the quality produced.

The Khareef Dhofar series has been partnered with and sponsored by the following organisations: Sohar International, Sohar Bank, Oman Airports, Redbull Mobile, Motul

Oman, Mohsin Haider Darwish, SalamAir, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Salalah Municipality, Tulip Inn, Gang Plank, Salalah Grand Mall, View Park and Khareef Dhofar.



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Block 11 EPSA affirms commitment to Oman

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Energy major TotalEnergies says its partnership in an Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) signed with the Omani government on Thursday, builds on its “strategic relationship” with the Sultanate of Oman.

TotalEnergies, along with its partners, signed the EPSA pact with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) in the onshore Block 11. The first stage of the EPSA activities will see seismic acquisition in late 2022, with a first exploration well planned to be drilled in 2023.

TotalEnergies will hold a 22.5 per cent interest in the block, OQ 10 per cent and Shell with 67.5 per cent will be the operator. Block 11 contains undeveloped discoveries



and exploration potential.

“Our recent activities in Oman are a demonstration of TotalEnergies’ strategy of transformation into a multi-energy company.

Today’s entry into the Block 11 gives us the opportunity to unlock additional potential to meet domestic and export gas demand.

It strengthens our strategic relationship with the Sultanate of Oman, as illustrated last December by our entry into the neighbouring Block 10 gas concession, and

This agreement strengthens the strategic relations with partners in the sector such as Shell, TotalEnergies, OQ and others to ensure Oman’s energy security and attract more foreign investment, adding the highest value to the local supply chain

ENG SALIM BIN NASSER AL AUFI
Minister of Energy & Minerals

the start of construction last July of 17-megawatt-peak solar photovoltaic systems providing power to a desalination plant”, said Laurent Vivier, Senior Vice President Middle East and North Africa, Exploration and Production, at TotalEnergies.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, stated: “There is a continuous focus in MEM on enhancing the natural gas reserves of the Sultanate of Oman through exploration and appraisal activities undertaken by several companies in the country.

This agreement strengthens the strategic relations with partners in the sector such as Shell, TotalEnergies, OQ and others to ensure Oman’s energy security and attract more foreign investment, adding the highest value to the local supply chain.”

Oman’s oil exports to Japan increase by 206 per cent



JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman’s crude oil and oil condensate production increased by 10.1 per cent by the end of July to reach 223,176, 800 barrels, according to the latest data from the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Crude oil production alone rose 13.5 per cent during this period, while oil condensate production fell 1.6 per cent by the end of July compared to the same month last year.

Oman’s average price of crude oil increased by 61 per cent by the end of July 2022 to \$92.8 per barrel compared to \$57.6 per barrel at the end of July 2021. The Sultanate of Oman’s total oil exports rose by 16.7 per cent at the end of July 2022 compared to the corresponding period the previous year.

Oman’s oil exports to Japan grew significantly by 206.6 per cent to 7,308,700 barrels by the end of July, and oil exports to South Korea rose by 68.7 per cent over the period.

On the other hand, natural gas production (including import) in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of July saw a slight rise of 3.9 per cent to 30,485,400,000 cubic metres.

NCSI data indicated that natural gas consumption in both industrial areas increased by 13.9 per cent, industrial projects by 6 per cent and oilfields by 1.6 per cent, while gas consumption in power plants fell by 0.7 per cent.

IPO-candidate Oman’s OQ Gas Networks posts revenue of \$400 million in 2021

ROBUST PERFORMANCE: Value of gas pipeline-based asset base climbs to \$2.5 billion

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

State-owned OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) — part of Oman’s global integrated energy group OQ — posted revenues of around \$409 million and EBIDTA (Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) of around \$200 million in 2021 — figures that underscore the entity’s “robust financial performance”, company officials have stressed.

A candidate for privatisation via an Initial Public Offering (IPO) on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), OQ Gas Networks owns and operates the country’s sizable gas pipeline grid, which is over 4,000 km long.

As the sole supplier of natural gas to the country’s power plants, industrial clusters, free zones, LNG complex, oilfield customers and other end-users, it also represents a critical lifeline of the Omani economy.

At an investor forum hosted by MSX recently, key officials of OQ Gas Networks shared insights into the company’s nationwide gas transportation infrastructure, its business model and the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) framework under which it operates.

According to Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, Managing Director, OQ Gas Networks currently owns assets worth an estimated \$2.5 billion, comprising not only gas pipelines, but also gas supply stations and other facilities distributed across the length and breadth of Oman.



AS THE SOLE SUPPLIER OF NATURAL GAS TO THE COUNTRY’S POWER PLANTS, INDUSTRIAL CLUSTERS, FREE ZONES, LNG COMPLEX, OILFIELD CUSTOMERS AND OTHER END-USERS, IT ALSO REPRESENTS A CRITICAL LIFELINE OF THE OMANI ECONOMY.

Gas delivery grew at a CAGR of around 4.5 per cent in the last two decades, reaching 118 million standard cubic metres per day (mmscm/d) and delivered to around 60 customers in 2021. In all, around 37 billion standard cubic metres of gas was delivered in 2021 — a new supply milestone for the company, he said.

The increase in gas delivery volume was driven by, among other factors, the commissioning of Marafiq’s power and water plant in Duqm, the Duqm refinery, and addition of Fahud NGL and OQ LPG as rich gas consumers.

Additionally, the recent acquisition of the low-pressure gas networks that supply industrial customers within Madayn’s industrial cities has contributed to volumes growth, he noted.

Earlier in 2018, OQ Gas Networks secured a landmark 50-year concession to operate the country’s gas pipeline system for a 50-year period through to 2067 — the longest concession ever to be granted in the Sultanate of Oman, Al Abdali stated.

Khalid al Qassabi, Vice President Finance, OQGN, said the company’s operations are regulated by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR). Backed by an independent regulatory framework with a proven track record, OQGN generates reliable and predictable cash flows in proportion to its regulated asset base and approved cost of capital set. This predictable cash flow profile, coupled with an equity of \$1.4 billion, has enabled the company to secure efficient long-term funding, he added.

OQ Gas Networks is among a number of subsidiaries indirectly owned by sovereign wealth fund Oman Investment Authority (OIA) that are named as candidates for full or partial privatisation via listings on the Omani bourse.

Also identified for privatisation under OIA’s ‘exit strategy’ are Abraj Energy Services (OQ Group), a manufacturing project directly owned by OIA, two Asyad Group projects, and some OMRAN hotels and resorts.

Airlines make significant progress in use of SAF

VINOD NAIR
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Airlines have started taking serious initiatives on the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) as part of the efforts to achieve the net zero carbon emissions by 2050. According to the latest update by IATA, The OneWorld Alliance members will purchase up to 200 million gallons of SAF per year from 2027.

Shell, Accenture, and American Express Global Business Travel (Amex GBT) are jointly launching Avelia, one of the world's first blockchain-powered digital SAF book-and-claim solutions for business travel. It's the largest SAF book-and-claim pilot at launch, offering around 1 million gallons of SAF.

SAF stands for sustainable aviation fuel. It's produced from

sustainable feedstocks and is very similar in its chemistry to traditional fossil jet fuel.

Using SAF results in a reduction in carbon emissions compared to the traditional jet fuel it replaces over the lifecycle of the fuel. Some typical feedstocks used are cooking oil and other non-palm waste oils from animals or plants; solid waste from homes and businesses, such as packaging, paper, textiles, and food scraps that would otherwise go to landfill or incineration.

Other potential sources include forestry waste, such as waste wood, and energy crops, including fast growing plants and algae. United Airlines has become the first US airline to sign an agreement to purchase SAF out of Amsterdam's Schiphol airport.

Hawaiian Airlines and Par Hawaii announced plans to join forces to study the commercial



viability of locally-produced SAF. Southwest Airlines announced an investment into the SAFFiRE Renewables startup as part of a Department of Energy-backed project to develop and produce scalable SAF.

At its Doha summit, The International Air Transport Association (IATA) had called

for governments to urgently put in place large-scale incentives to rapidly expand the use of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) as aviation pursues its commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

"To fulfil aviation's net zero commitment, current estimates are for SAF to account for 65%

of aviation's carbon mitigation in 2050. That would require an annual production capacity of 449 billion liters. Investments are in place to expand SAF annual production from the current 125 million liters to 5 billion by 2025. With effective government incentives, production could reach 30 billion liters by 2030, which would be a tipping point for SAF production and utilisation," IATA said.

"Governments don't need to invent a playbook. Incentives to transition electricity production to renewable sources like solar or wind worked. As a result, clean energy solutions are now cheap and widely available. With similar incentives for SAF, we could see 30 billion litres available by 2030. Though still far from where we need to be, it would be a clear tipping point towards our net zero ambition of ample SAF

quantities at affordable prices," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General at the 78th IATA Annual General Meeting in Doha, Qatar.

In 2021, irrespective of price (SAF is between two and four times the price of conventional jet fuel), airlines have purchased every drop of the 125 million litres of SAF that was available.

And already more than 38 countries have SAF-specific policies that clear the way for the market to develop. Taking their cue from these policy measures, airlines have entered into \$17 billion of forward-purchasing agreements for SAF. On the producer side, Fulcrum BioEnergy announced the completion of commissioning and the initial operations of its Sierra BioFuels Plant, the world's first landfill waste to renewable transportation fuels plant.

Bank Muscat's Al Jawhar Privilege Banking hosts special customer event

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to further strengthen its partnership and communication channels with its customers, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking recently hosted a special event at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Suhar.

It was attended by the bank's Management Team and a large number of customers, who were also able to provide their opinions and feedback on the various banking services to the officials who were present at the event. Details about a number of special offers including attractive interest rates on Baituna home loans and personal loans for first time borrowers were presented to those gathered at the event.

Speaking about the importance of the bank's customer-centric vision, Taya Eid Bait Sabeea (pictured), Deputy General Manager — Interior Regions, Bank Muscat, expressed his appreciation to all the customers gathered at the event and thanked them for participating in the event and for their confidence in the bank's various products and services.

He added that Bank Muscat is always delighted to listen to its customers and events such as this one help the bank to fine-tune its world-class products and services according to its customers' dreams and aspirations. Bank Muscat Al Jawhar is designed to provide Privilege Banking customers with an exceptional banking and lifestyle experience.

Customers are eligible for exclusive 2-for-1 deals on food; entertainment and shopping that are available through the 'xperience with the Entertainer' app on their smartphones.

They also have access to a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 800.



Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders offers access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to the lounges at Muscat airport. Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a 'Meet and Greet' service with 15% discount at over 450 global destinations.

Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cardholders can enjoy the "best in class" complimentary travel insurance, which includes travel accident insurance as well as insurance for lost baggage and money, cancellation, travel delay, delayed baggage, personal liability, legal expenses and loss of passport and access to free medical and legal referral services worldwide.

The cardholders also enjoy 1% cash back on all local and international spends.

Designed around unique lifestyle and banking requirements, Al Jawhar is a unique privilege banking service that offers its customers unmatched features and benefits.

MSX 30 Index retreats 0.76% for the week

The MSX30 Index ended the week down by 0.76%. All sub-indices closed down, led by the Financial Index, which ended the week lower by 2.12%, the Services Index by 2.09%, and the Industrial index that closed down by 0.89%. The MSX Shariah Index closed also down by 1.26%.

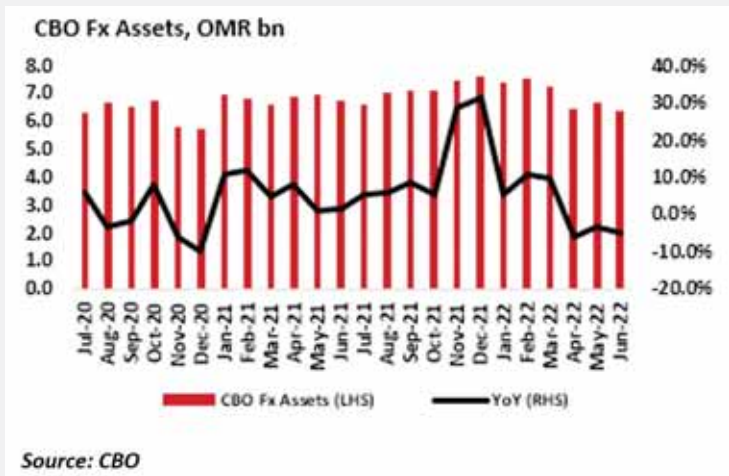
GCC, Arabs and foreigners absorbed the selling pressure from Omani investors, with a net buy of \$ 1.3 million worth of securities during the week.

During the week, Oman Fisheries Company announced that it got a clarification from the Capital Market Authority (CMA) over the accounting treatment that is connected to the Sale of Al Ameen Cold Store in the Consolidated Financial Statements of the company's second quarter.

Oman Fisheries Company (Parent company) published its financial results as of the 30th of June of the year 2022. These results showed a profit from the proceeds of the sale of Al Ameen of RO 2.6. The difference in the profit was accounted for in the 2nd quarter through shareholders equity instead of the profit & loss.

Bank Nizwa announced the signing of a financing agreement to develop the RO 250 million Al Nakheel Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) Project. Bank Nizwa signed the agreement with Palm Beach LLC for Al Nakheel Project that will be developed by Alargan Towell Investment Company. Al Nakheel Project is an Integrated Tourism Complex under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

With a total value of RO 250 million, the mixed-use community real-estate development is idyllically located on the seafront between Al Seeb and Barka, in close proximity to the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve.



Source: CBO

Slated to be constructed on a land area of 500,000 sqm, Al Nakheel Project will have a total built-up area of 369,000 sqm, envisaged to be developed in three phases.

Leading Omani engineering and construction services contractor Galfar said that it is keenly eyeing opportunities linked to the implementation of new projects worth an estimated RO 2 billion due to come on the market over the next three years. Galfar is also working actively to diversify its business model to include, for the first time, projects procured under the Public Private Partnership (PPP), Design Build Own Operate Maintain (DBOOM) and Engineering Procurement Construction (EPC) models.

Having emerged from a transformation exercise that has spawned in a leaner, streamlined and focused contracting company, Galfar has sets its sights on achieving a minimum turnover of RO 200 million annually.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and Omantel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on September 13 to introduce an accelerator programme to nurture and empower fintech startups. The MoU was signed by the CBO Executive Director Tahir bin Salim al Amri and Omantel CEO Talal bin Said al Maamari.

The signing of the MoU comes within the framework of the Omani FinTech Roadmap launched by the Central Bank

to promote fintech in the Sultanate of Oman and support fintech startups, SMEs, banks and technology companies. The partnership combines the expertise and shared vision of the Central Bank of Oman and Omantel to support local fintech startups.

CBO's foreign assets stood at RO 6.393bn as at the end of Jun'22, having decreased by 5.1% YoY and 4.7% MoM or RO 312 million during the month.

The MoM decrease is brought about by a 16.1% MoM decline in placements abroad (which account for 41% of the total foreign assets), a 1.6% MoM decrease in IMF Reserve Assets (6.7% of total), despite a 6.6% MoM increase recorded in securities held and while bullion was flat. CBO's foreign assets are notably above the trailing 12-month simple average of RO 7.0bn. These assets include bullion, IMF reserve assets, placements abroad and foreign securities.

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) has commenced efforts to secure a much-coveted elevation into the ranks of 'Emerging Market' stock exchanges. Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange, who is also Chairman of Muscat Clearing & Depository, said the 'upgrade' is a key component of the five-year strategy mapped out by the Omani bourse as part of its goal to go partially private in five years via a listing on the MSX. [Courtesy: U-Capital]

Oman Cables kickstarts SHE STEMS programme for Omani women

MUSCAT: Oman Cables Industry (OCI) welcomed on board twenty female Omani students for the SHE STEMS social development programme that aims to prepare more Omani women for the nation's manufacturing and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) sectors.

The start of the programme follows Oman Cables Industry's signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) and the Ministry of Labour (MoL) in early August to develop and implement the SHE STEMS initiative.

In line with Oman's Vision 2040 strategic objectives, SHE STEMS will create more opportunities for Omani women



to enter careers in the industrial sector, and contribute to building a productive and diversified economy, founded on innovation, integration of roles, and equal opportunities.

The twenty female Omani students were selected from a list of over three hundred candidates. As of this week, they have begun a six-month-long machine operations course that will emphasise hands-on skills development and practical on-the-job training in

machine operations, with a focus on the manufacturing sector. The training will be supervised by highly proficient and qualified instructors.

The machine operations course forms the first out of three SHE STEMS programmes scheduled for deployment, all of which will be officially certified by MoHERI. On completion of the training, each graduate will receive a SHE STEMS certificate recognised by the ministry.

Bank of Japan needs to pick yen battles carefully

Wall Street's recent woes suggest its stock markets have accepted the old advice of "don't fight the Fed". Battling the Bank of Japan, however, has historically offered better odds.

Tokyo called dealing rooms this week to check prices in a strong hint that its central bank may intervene to stem the yen's rapid slide against the dollar, media reported.

Yen bears retreated but with the dollar surging globally thanks to the Federal Reserve hiking US interest rates and traders betting on more of the same, the BOJ will need to do more than throw money at the foreign exchange markets to halt the slide.

With the yen near 24-year lows at almost 145 to the dollar, it's probably small comfort to BOJ Governor Haruhiko Kuroda to know he isn't alone in his worries.

In Seoul, which has its own active history of intervention, officials have hinted they could soon step in. Central bank interventions have been rare in recent years under a general G20 dislike of protectionist policies, although Japan has tended to insist that disorderly market moves merit an exception.

The BOJ itself has not stepped in since October 2011 after globally coordinated intervention in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster failed to stop the currency's strength pushing the dollar back to just 75 yen.

Yen weakness has not triggered intervention since the 1998 Asian Financial Crisis. If Japan is serious about reversing or at least slowing currency weakness, it would need to do more than buy yen.

Outright rate rises are extremely unlikely: even with inflation at a seven-year high of 2.4 per cent, Kuroda has made it clear that he sees such pressure as only transitory. Yet there are other moves available.

— Reuters

Tokyo called dealing rooms to check prices in a strong hint that its central bank may intervene to stem the yen's rapid slide against the dollar.



GOLDEN WALLPAPER

Joachim Nagel, President of Germany's federal reserve Bundesbank, poses for a picture in front of a wallpaper showing gold bars in a safe during a media tour at the Bundesbank headquarters in Frankfurt. — Reuters

ESG in small-to-medium enterprises



STEFANO VIRGILLI stefano@virgilli.com @stefanovirgilli

The writer is a member of the International Press Association.

ESG is that part of sustainability which has a commercial value. ESG is the umbrella term to describe a company's impacts on social and environmental issues, as well as their management, in addition to just revenue generation or profits.

Commitment to pursuing an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy is taking on increasing prominence for smaller businesses, with investors, stakeholders and customers placing the ESG approach in the spotlight.

We are going to take a look at how smaller businesses can enhance their ESG strategies, looking at three of ESGs core pillars, Environmental, Social, and Governance.

While small and medium-sized enterprises have less resources than larger, listed companies, the scale of small and medium-sized enterprises does mean faster decision-making and a more dynamic execution of ESG strategies.

Without embedding ESG and resilience in the core of their businesses, many leaders in small-to-medium size companies are not aware of the success they are already having. Making the business more focused

on ESG and sustainability might sound like a tall order.

I probably would advise any organisation, regardless of size, to consider ESG as something that both increases in value over time (opening doors for investors that are starting to use ESG as a filtering tool) and could make business more sustainable.

For big companies, supply chains are especially critical to making their sustainability policies and actions happen.

Many small-to-medium-sized enterprises can be challenged to determine just how far up their supply chains should extend in terms of sustainable enterprise practices. If SMEs fail to do so, they will not meet the minimum requirements, and they will run the risk of losing contracts to businesses that can prove they are taking action on environmental sustainability.

This also means that if SMEs are trying to get ahead in terms of ESG, but are just trying to emulate large companies, they are likely going to fail. While the SMEs might not have had ESG at the top of their agenda right now, in order to compete, they would have felt a push top-down from their customers to act.

While many of the world's biggest corporations are now committing to

shifting their practices to address the ESG wave, it is the small and medium enterprises that will make the real difference.

SMEs make up 90 per cent of all global companies, contribute to roughly 70 per cent of employment worldwide and 52 per cent of turnover. SMEs also drive up to 70 per cent of the global GDP, which makes them very important for economic growth. Affecting a change in sustainability that really makes a difference is therefore practically impossible without the cooperation of small businesses.

Employees are increasingly looking for environmental and sustainability of prospective employers (something that Generation Z, specifically, is concerned with). Recent research from the FCA has identified one of the trends of the future for employers to focus on how they are approaching being sustainable, accountable businesses, with clear social values and purpose.

When businesses start thinking about their responsibilities towards the environment, it is often overlooked that climate change not only needs to motivate them to adopt sustainable practices, but that this will also directly impact on the way they do business.

Is the pound close to the breaking point?



GENE FRIEDA

The author, a global strategist at PIMCO, is a senior visiting fellow at the London School of Economics.

Thirty years ago on September 16, 1992, currency speculators forced the British Government to abandon the commitment of pound sterling to the European Exchange Rate Mechanism.

In the days that followed. "Black Wednesday," sterling subsequently lost 15 per cent of its value. By early 1993, it had lost almost one-third of its value.

The pound's recent weakness – last week, it fell to its lowest level against the US dollar since 1985 – has understandably evoked memories of this earlier episode, leading some to compare the pound to an emerging-market currency.

But the comparison is imprecise and arguably inaccurate. Whatever its current economic travails, the United Kingdom retains strong institutions, a thriving democracy, and a reasonable track record of decent growth and low inflation.

So, what exactly has gone wrong, and is the pound really

at risk from a generalised loss of confidence in UK assets? Like almost every other currency except the US dollar and perhaps the euro, the pound lacks attributes of a dominant currency.

Aside from trade within the UK and between a few small Commonwealth countries, there is no natural international demand for sterling. Nor is there any evidence of pounds being held as a store of value.

When uncertainty strikes, UK government bonds typically rise in value (current circumstances notwithstanding) but the pound tends to fall against the dollar. The pound lacks the perceived safe-haven properties of the US dollar and a few other currencies that benefit from large stores of foreign assets – as a result of running consistent trade surpluses over long periods.

This means that the pound's value, like that of most other currencies, depends on whether foreign investors consider the government's economic policies prudent.

THE POUND'S RECENT WEAKNESS – LAST WEEK, IT FELL TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL AGAINST THE US DOLLAR SINCE 1985 – HAS UNDERSTANDABLY EVOKED MEMORIES OF THIS EARLIER EPISODE, LEADING SOME TO COMPARE THE POUND TO AN EMERGING-MARKET CURRENCY.

In one sense, Brexit was no different from any other negative shock to the country's terms of trade: The currency depreciated accordingly. But it also raised concerns about the UK's continued ability to borrow cheaply, given its impending divorce from its largest trading partner.

Initial evidence suggests that these concerns were overblown.

The UK's external financing needs, as reflected in its current account deficit, rose from 2.6 per cent of GDP during the first decade of this century to almost 4 per cent of GDP by 2020. Yet, adjusted for inflation, the UK's financing costs actually fell in the period after Brexit.

More recently, the sharp rise in its energy bill led to further deterioration in the UK's current account, resulting in a record-high deficit of more than 8 per cent of GDP in the first quarter of 2022 and significantly higher borrowing costs.

To be sure, the UK is not the only developed economy muddling its way through the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine. Even so, the fact that the UK is not doing worse than some other countries is no excuse for complacency.

The Liz Truss government's decision to cap domestic energy prices for households, in order to limit the impact of higher wholesale prices on consumption, is analogous to the UK's failed

exchange-rate peg of 30 years ago.

If wholesale gas prices soar, owing to Russia's cutoff of deliveries to Europe or because the UK's own foreign suppliers choose to limit gas exports in order to mitigate the effects of high energy prices on their own domestic economies, the cost of the subsidy scheme could skyrocket.

With the government's balance sheet exposed to huge potential losses, its borrowing costs would become closely linked to the wholesale price of gas, over which it has no control.

In other words, the UK is establishing a price peg that will be financially difficult to sustain and politically difficult to remove. Further increases in gas prices would lead to even higher interest rates; given Britain's high debt levels, a deep recession would almost certainly follow.

There would be no currency peg to break per se, but sterling would still become collateral damage as foreign financing dries up.

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Don't let hot temperature drive you to a sedentary lifestyle

By Staff Reporter

The hot temperature of summer is a big challenge to doing any outdoor or physical activities. Except maybe for the mountains where the temperature remains relatively cooler like that in Jabal Shams or Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, the heat contributes to some just enjoying the cool breeze of the air conditioner indoors.

Everyone agrees however that physical activities are necessary to keep fit and healthy. These are a few activities you can try to avoid living a sedentary lifestyle even in the middle of summer.

GO FOR A MORNING OR NIGHT WALK.

Not everyone is a morning person. So this greatly depends on which hour you're most comfortable doing it. The temperature in the early morning before sunset is usually better than at noon so this trend has pick-up, especially for a lot of couples and families. Any physical activity you can do contributes to your physical health. Walking for about 30 minutes every day helps increase your cardiovascular fitness, boost your endurance and muscle power and also strengthen your bones while helping reduce fat. The Sultanate of Oman is blessed with so many locations ideal for good short walks. The Qurum and Muttrah area are ideal for these walks. Since you don't require any



special equipment, you can do this quickly even with kids.

BOND WITH THE FAMILY AT A NIGHT CAMP.

Thankfully, we are a few months away from winter. This means that the night temperature isn't too bad anymore. For weekends, you can definitely pack a picnic set and go for that much-needed night camp preferably by the beach. If you're in Muscat, Bandar Khairan and Fins are amazing destinations for a family camp.

LEARN A NEW HOBBY.

If you haven't tried bowling yet, then you definitely owe your bowling arena a visit. This activity can be

apt for the whole family and it will provide everyone with the kind of entertainment and physical activity that will get you sweating. Different locations also offer fun activities like archery, ice skating and even self-defence and dancing classes. Just because it's summer doesn't mean you can't find a meaningful activity that you and your family can engage in.



GO ON A BOAT RIDE OR SNORKELLING ACTIVITY.

The seas of Oman are ideal for a lot of fun activities and learning. Just within the city, it's easy to find an adventure that will allow you to interact with nature. Whether swimming with whale sharks or snorkelling with sea turtles, several tour groups can offer a sunset cruise that will allow you to enjoy some water activities. As of late, Dimaniyat Islands has grown in popularity because of its pristine beaches and beautiful underwater corals. To cut costs, arrange for a group trip where you and your friends can share the fees.

GO FOR A LONG DRIVE TOWARDS COOLER DESTINATIONS.

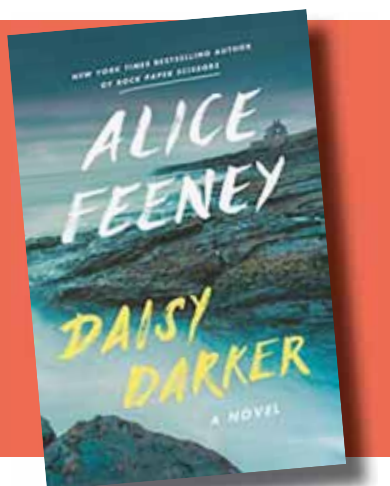
If you're the more outgoing type, then driving for a few hours definitely won't be a problem for you. Oman has several wadis with great canyons that protect you from the sun while going out and about. Wadi Mibam and Hoqain for example are great places to enjoy the water while the cliffs provide you shade while you explore the area. Mountain areas as well are relatively cooler so a trip during the weekend to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and Jabal Shams will definitely at least help you find a different climate. Drive towards Ashkarah and you will discover pristine locations with cooler weather as well.

READ

DAISY DARKER

BY ALICE FEENEY

A family reunion on a tidal island turns deadly as the characters are isolated by a storm and killed one by one.



FASHION TREND

A model wears an outfit by Redondo Brand during the Mercedes Benz Fashion Week in Madrid, Spain. — Reuters



DESTINATION

People look over a cliff edge as they visit the Gwongeumseong Fortress rock formation on Seoraksan Mountain in Sokcho, in eastern South Korea. — AFP





Benin bronzes get final Berlin show before return

STOLEN DURING the colonial era, dozens of Benin bronzes that once decorated the royal palace of the Kingdom of Benin will go on show for one last time in Berlin from Saturday before being repatriated to Nigeria.

The renowned pieces of African art and their tumultuous journey up to the exhibition at the Humboldt Museum speak to Germany's gradual reckoning with the colonial era and the injustices of the past.

The move to return some of the bronzes is the latest in a series of steps taken by Berlin to try to take responsibility for the crimes of the colonial era, including the official recognition in May 2021 of a genocide perpetrated by Germany in Namibia.

Among the items being exhibited are a pair of thrones and a commemorative bust of the monarch of the Kingdom of Benin, in modern-day Nigeria.

Two rooms in the sprawling museum are being dedicated to the art and the history of the kingdom, an exhibition realised "in close cooperation with partners in Nigeria", according to the German side.

The removal of the precious objects is explained in the gallery, while educational workshops are also planned around the display.

"When it comes to colonial injustice, I think we're on the right path," said Hermann Parzinger, president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, which oversees the national museums in the German capital.

"We're nowhere near the end," Parzinger added, but the museums were open to continuing on their journey to better understand the past "together" with international partners.

- 'LUCID VIEW' -

Thousands of Benin bronzes, metal plaques and sculptures are now scattered around European museums after being looted by the British at the end of the 19th century.

But many museums have begun looking at restituting the artworks.

"Just like the Netherlands and Belgium, Germany has established a museums policy that has a lucid view of the colonial past," French historian Pascal Blanchard, a specialist on the era, said.

The Africa museum in Tervuren, near Brussels in Belgium, which reopened at the end of 2018, claims to take a "critical look" at the past and the history of the objects collected by Belgian King Leopold II, who for a long time kept the Congo as his private property in the 19th century.

Likewise, the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam takes a long look at the Netherlands' colonial past.

Unlike some countries, such as France, Germany lost its empire after its defeat in World War One and as such does not have a significant community of people repatriated from Africa.

"It does not play politically, which makes it easier to come to terms



The highly symbolic location — the former residence of the Hohenzollern dynasty, who oversaw Germany's colonial adventures — was set to exhibit objects from the period.

Berlin's Ethnological Museum currently holds 530 items that were



26 artefacts from the royal treasures of Abomey to the country of Benin, next to Nigeria.

The pressure is also growing on the British Museum, which has around 700 bronzes. It has long argued that its vast trove of foreign artefacts, such as the Elgin Marbles



with the past," said Blanchard.

- BENIN CITY -

Nonetheless, Germany has been the target of criticism in recent years over the origin of many of the objects in its museums, following in the wake of a greater public reckoning with racism.

The outrage grew louder with the opening of the first part of the new Humboldt Museum in December 2020, which is housed in a partially rebuilt Prussian palace.



taken from the Kingdom of Benin, including some 440 bronzes, considered to be the second-largest collection, behind the British Museum in London.

According to the Berlin museum's director, Lars-Christian Koch, a portion of the objects will soon be returned, another third will be kept as a loan, and the rest, not on display, will be studied by researchers.

Germany is not the only country to begin returning stolen artefacts. In November 2021, France returned



taken from the Parthenon in Athens, are best housed there.

The repatriation of the Benin bronzes from Germany has been a long time coming, according to historian Benedicte Savoy.

"The requests for return go back to independence in the 1960s. They have been silenced, refused, forgotten for years," she said.

Nigeria is planning to build a museum in Benin City, in the south of the country, to bring together the works on their return. — AFP

INSPIRING STORIES

'Just doing my job,' says record-setting Nepali climber



SUMMITTING THE world's 8,000-metre mountains is the ultimate bucket list dream for ambitious climbers, a feat managed by fewer than 50 people, and Sanu Sherpa is the first to do it twice.

The Nepali climber's summit of Pakistan's Gasherbrum II (8,035 metres, 26,362 feet) last month completed his unprecedented double ascent of the eight-thousanders — as the 14 peaks are collectively known.

As usual, he was guiding a paying customer — this time a Japanese climber — to the top.

"What I have done is not something that is impossible," the 47-year-old said. "I was just doing my job."

Sherpa, who began working in mountaineering as a porter and kitchen aid, climbed his first 8,000-metre peak in 2006 while guiding a South Korean group to the summit of Cho Oyu.

"I felt like the Korean climbers would not be able to summit the mountain, but I had to as I would not get work if I returned unsuccessfully," he said.

- DEATH ZONE -

Nepali guides — usually ethnic Sherpas from the valleys around Everest —

the world's fifth-highest mountain.

He was farming potatoes and corn, and grazing yaks at the age of 30 — when many of his peers were making more money on the peaks.

"I used to ask myself, if those who could not even carry as much as me were returning to the village after climbing mountains, why couldn't I?" he said.

He eventually decided to follow suit, hoping the work would help him support his family of eight, and fulfil his dream of "wearing mountain gear".

He donned another climber's hand-me-down boots for his Cho Oyu summit, which paved his way to working as a guide on other eight-thousanders.

By 2019, he had double summits on half of the 14 peaks, and a foreign climber suggested he try to complete the set.

- EVEREST X 7 -

Long in the shadows as supporters of their paying foreign customers — it costs more than \$45,000 to climb Everest — Nepali mountaineers are slowly being recognised in their own right.

In recent years, several films have helped shine a light on the key role of



are considered the backbone of the climbing industry in the Himalayas. They carry the majority of equipment and food, fix ropes and repair ladders.

It can be a perilous occupation. Altitudes above 8,000m are considered a "death zone", where there is not enough oxygen in the air to sustain human life for long periods.

On average, 14 people die every year on the eight eight-thousanders in Nepal. About a third of deaths on Everest are Nepali guides and porters, underscoring the risks they take to enable their clients' dreams of reaching the world's highest peaks.

"I have seen many dead bodies while going up or descending the mountain," said Sherpa.

"I am walking the same route or the same mountain," he added. "How would my family and children live if I met the same fate?"

- YAK FARMER -

Sherpa grew up in Sankhuwasabha district in eastern Nepal — an impoverished and remote rural area that includes Makalu,

Nepali climbers, including "Sherpa" which was released in 2015, and more recently "14 Peaks: Nothing is Impossible".

Nepal's culture and tourism minister Jeevan Ram Shrestha said Sherpa's double ascent record had established him as "a source of inspiration for climbers around the world".

Sherpa has climbed Everest seven times and has triple ascents on another four of the 14 peaks.

Back in Kathmandu after last month's record-setting climb, he is preparing for a fourth summit of Manaslu, the world's eighth-highest mountain, with a client and is getting offers for other expeditions.

"I can do triple ascents," he said. "But, maybe that depends also on luck."

Sherpa says his family often tell him he has faced enough challenges in the mountains and the time has come to hang up his boots.

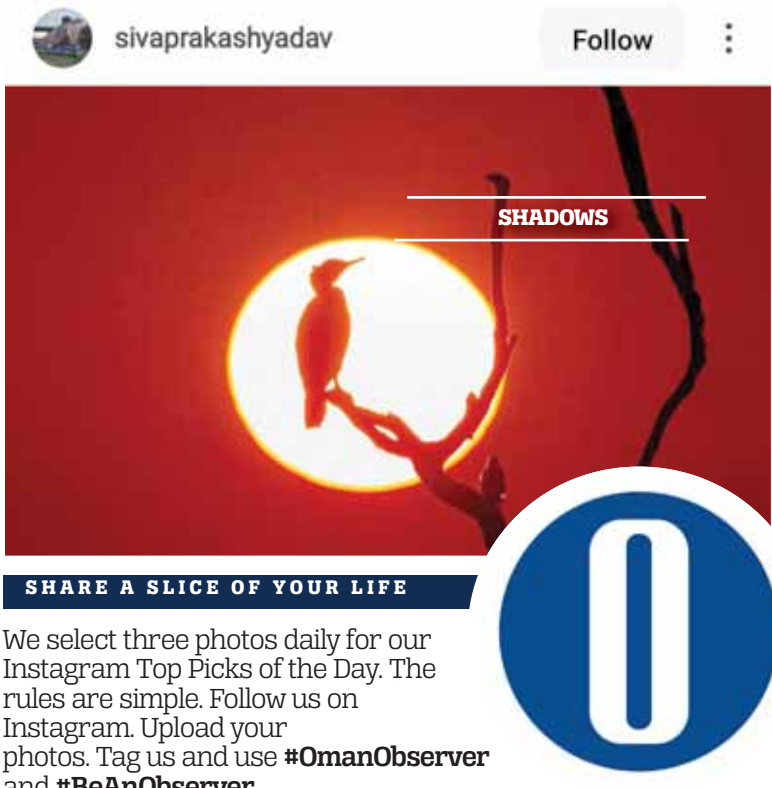
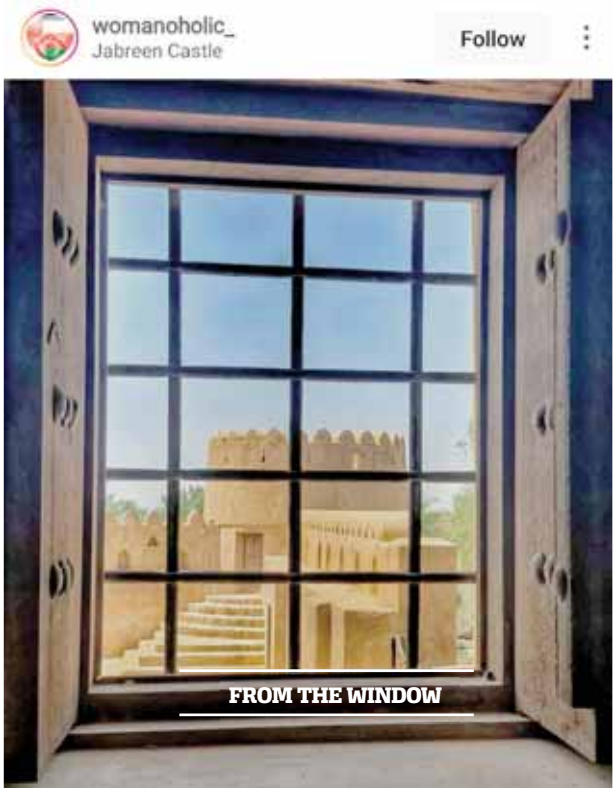
"Sometimes I want to go and sometimes I don't want to," he said.

"What to do except climbing? There is no other job." — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

TRAVEL TALES

Transylvanian village shines under new British king's patronage



The Romanian village of Viscri, in the picturesque region of Transylvania, won the heart of the then prince Charles when he first visited in 1998.

Enchanted by its dirt streets, horse-drawn carriages and brightly coloured houses nestled in green hills, the environmentalist and nature lover became a regular visitor.

In 2006, he even bought his first house there: a bright blue building known to all the locals.

What was initially an occasional princely residence has since been transformed into a museum dedicated to botany, another of the new king's passions.

"His Majesty the King has not stayed here for a few years, but he has left many traces," Caroline Fernolend, president of the Mihai Eminescu Trust, told AFP.

Under Charles's sponsorship, the foundation has renovated several properties in Transylvania with traditional methods and materials to preserve the heritage. "He also financed an ecological wastewater treatment plant based on reeds and a new water drainage system for the village, without advertising it," she said.

Every year, tens of thousands of tourists discover the timeless atmosphere of Viscri.

Guest houses have sprouted up in response to its popularity — in contrast to the abandonment that characterises much of the Romanian countryside, one of the EU's poorest members.

"Viscrist was a forgotten village and now small houses are selling for over 40,000 euros (\$40,000!)", said retired sports teacher Ion Stoica, who cycles from his neighbouring village to Viscrist every evening.

That sum is a small fortune in this region, he added.



ROYAL STAMP

Not all residents of the hamlet, home to 400 people and dominated by a UNESCO-listed church, share Stoica's enthusiasm.

Royal honours "did not bring prosperity" to Viscrist's inhabitants, says another resident, seated on a bench in the village.

Yet no one denies the restoration efforts undertaken under the leadership of Charles.

Charles claims descent from a 15th-century prince known as Vlad the Impaler, the historical inspiration for Bram Stoker's "Count Dracula". He has even said that Transylvania is "in my blood".

"It's such a beautiful region," said Ana Maria Plopeanu, 35, whose grandparents are from Transylvania and who visited Viscrist with her partner.

"Everything is so simple here, so calm... we understand why the prince fell in love" with the region.

But rather than staying at Viscrist, in recent years Charles has stayed in Valea Zalanului, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) west. There, his residence is hidden away at the end of an unpaved road, where a black veil is now affixed to the gate as a sign of mourning following the death last week of Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II. — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

From bombs to ballet: Ukraine dancers perform 'Giselle' in London



AT THE LONDON COLISEUM theatre, a cast of Ukrainian dancers rehearse a new production of "Giselle", as Russian-born choreographer and former Bolshoi Ballet director Alexei Ratmansky watches from the sidelines.

The performers are part of The United Ukrainian Ballet, a company of 60 refugee

of the classic ballet.

"Giselle" is a dramatic story about love and death and forgiveness and it is relevant. It's a beautiful story to show the strength of these dancers," Ratmansky said.

"Each of these dancers have their own quite dramatic stories, how they left home. Many of them have relatives

father is Ukrainian.

"I felt the world crushing and I had no choice. I had to leave the country that commits such a crime right away."

Russia denies targeting civilians, saying what it calls its "special military operation" in Ukraine aims to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities. Kyiv and the West



Ukrainian dancers, technicians and creatives who fled their home country after Moscow launched its invasion in February.

"The company was formed to give these dancers... a job, to give them something to do and to rehearse, to dance, to receive money," Ratmansky told Reuters. "And to tell the world that Ukraine is strong, Ukrainian culture lives on."

Formed in the spring, the company is based in the Netherlands and draws dancers from all over Ukraine. Ratmansky, who was born in Russia and lived in Ukraine, has worked with them in a new interpretation

who fight in the military. They're constantly checking the news."

Ratmansky, a former principal dancer with the Ukrainian National Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet and Royal Danish Ballet, was director of the Bolshoi Ballet from 2004 before joining the American Ballet Theatre in 2009 as artist in residence.

He was working with the Bolshoi on a new production when the conflict began.

"I got a call from my wife from New York saying that Kyiv, the city where my family lives and my wife's family lives, is being bombed by Russia," said Ratmansky, whose mother is Russian and

say it is an unprovoked war of aggression.

"We all hope that as soon as war stops, these dancers will return to their home companies," Ratmansky said.

One of the dancers is Oleksii Kniazkov, principal dancer of Kharkiv National Opera House.

Rehearsals have allowed him to think of something other than the war: "I can prepare for my performance... it takes a lot off your mind," he said. The United Ukrainian Ballet is performing "Giselle" at the Coliseum until September 17 with ticket profits going to the DEC Ukraine Appeal and United Ukrainian Ballet Foundation. — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Viola Davis 'conflicted' as 'Woman King' faces crucial box office battle



VIOLA DAVIS SAID the future of big-budget Black female film-making in Hollywood is at stake as her groundbreaking African warrior epic "The Woman King" hits theaters this weekend.

The Oscar-winning actress told AFP on Wednesday she feels intense pressure and conflicting emotions, because she knows the movie's performance will be judged in a way that films with white directors and casts are not.

"First of all, the movie has to make money. And I feel conflicted about that — that we sort of have one or two chances," she said.

"If it doesn't make money then what it means overall, is that, what, Black women, dark-skinned Black women can't lead a global box office?"

"That's it, period. And now they have data on it because 'Woman King' did a, b and c. And that's what I'm conflicted about."

"Because it simply isn't true. We don't do that with white movies. We simply don't. If a movie fails, you do another movie, and you do another movie just like it."

Sony Pictures' "The Woman King", which portrays the real-life 19th century all-female warriors of Dahomey, in present-day Benin, is in many ways a step into the unknown for a major Hollywood studio.

With a Black female director, Gina Prince-Bythewood, and a majority Black and female cast, it will open in more than 3,000 domestic theaters, with a budget including marketing that reportedly approaches \$100 million.

Davis, the only African-American to win an Oscar, Emmy and Tony, spent six years trying to get "The Woman King" made, with studios and producers reluctant to take the plunge.

African kingdom and European slavers.

The all-female army of the Dahomey kingdom served as an inspiration for the elite women fighters in "Black Panther," which grossed \$1.3 billion worldwide.

Davis called on the movie-going public to prove that films like "The Woman King" can succeed without being part of the Marvel superhero franchise.

"We're all in this together, right? We know that we need each other. We know that we're all committed to inclusion and diversity," she said.

"Then, if you can plow down your money to see 'Avatar' if you can plow down your money to see 'Titanic,' then you can plow your money into seeing 'The Woman King.'"

"Because here's the thing. It's not even that it's just Black female-led, the cultural significance of it. It's a very entertaining movie."

"And if we are indeed equal, then I'm challenging you to prove it."

'YOU WON'T SEE US'

The movie received largely positive reviews following its world premiere at the ongoing Toronto International Film Festival.

Variety called it a "compelling display of Black power," with Davis in "her fiercest role yet."

But, Davis said, the film's muscular battle scenes had drawn criticism and misogyny from within the Black community.

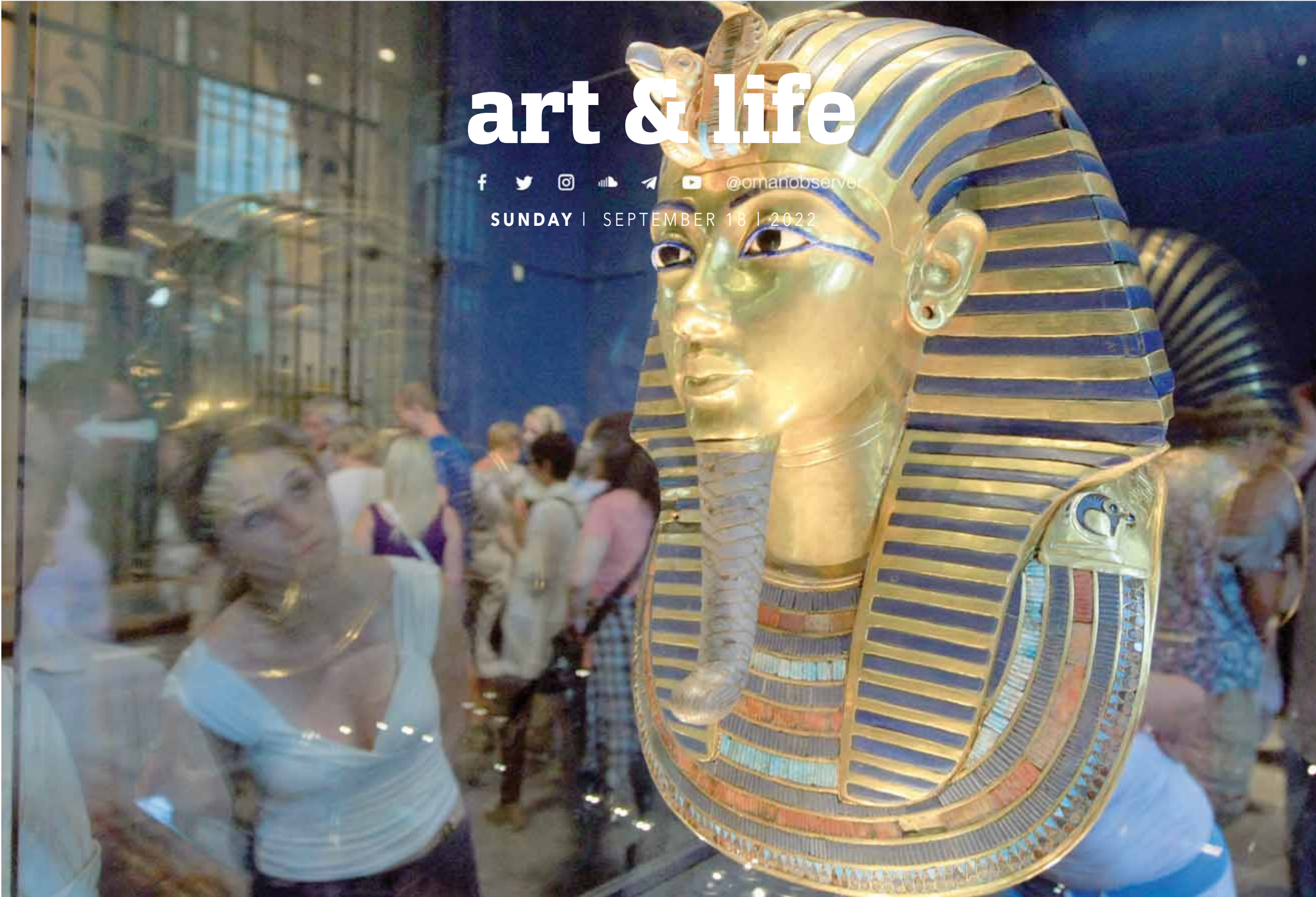
"You even have people in the Black community saying, 'Ah, it's dark-skinned women, why do they have to be so masculine? Why can't they look prettier? Why couldn't it be a romantic comedy?'" she told AFP.

"Well, guess what, if this movie doesn't make money on September 16 — by the way, I am 150 per cent certain it will — but if it doesn't, then guess what? You won't see us at all," she said.

"That's the truth. I wish it were different." — AFP

'PROVE IT'

She plays veteran warrior Nanisca as she trains the next generation of recruits fending off a larger, rival



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SUNDAY | SEPTEMBER 18 | 2022

Tutankhamun: Egyptians bid to reclaim their history

IT'S ONE OF THE 20TH century's most iconic photos: British archaeologist Howard Carter inspecting the sarcophagus of Tutankhamun in 1922 as an Egyptian member of his team crouches nearby shrouded in shadow.

It is also an apt metaphor for two centuries of Egyptology, flush with tales of brilliant foreign explorers uncovering the secrets of the Pharaohs, with Egyptians relegated to the background.

"Egyptians have been written out of the historical narrative," leading archaeologist Monica Hanna told AFP.

Now with the 100th anniversary of Carter's earth-shattering discovery — and the 200th of the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone which unlocked the ancient hieroglyphs — they are demanding that their contributions be recognised.

Egyptians "did all the work" but "were forgotten", said chief excavator Abdel Hamid Daramalli, who was born "on top" of the tombs at Qurna near Luxor that he is now in charge of digging.

Even Egyptology's colonial-era birth — set neatly at Frenchman Jean-François Champollion cracking the Rosetta Stone's code in 1822 — "whitewashes history", according to specialist researcher Heba Abdel Gawad, "as if there were no attempts to understand Ancient Egypt until the Europeans came."

The "unnamed Egyptian" in the famous picture of Carter is "perhaps Hussein Abu Awad or Hussein Ahmed Said," according to art historian Christina Riggs, a Middle East specialist at Britain's Durham University.

The two men were the pillars, alongside Ahmed Gerigar and Gad Hassan, of Carter's digging team for nine seasons. But unlike foreign team members, experts cannot put names to the faces in the photos.

'UNNOTICED AND UNNAMED'

"Egyptians remain unnoticed, unnamed, and virtually unseen in their history," Riggs insisted, arguing that Egyptology's "structural inequities" reverberate to this day.

But one Egyptian name did gain fame as the tomb's supposed accidental discoverer: Hussein Abdel Rasoul.

Despite not appearing in Carter's diaries and journals, the tale of the water boy is presented as "historical fact", said Riggs.

On November 4, 1922, a 12-year-old — commonly believed to be Hussein — found

the top step down to the tomb, supposedly because he either tripped, his donkey stumbled or because his water jug washed away the sand.

The next day, Carter's team exposed the whole staircase and on November 26 he peered into a room filled with golden treasures through a small breach in the



tomb door.

According to an oft-repeated story, a half century earlier two of Hussein's ancestors, brothers Ahmed and Mohamed Abdel Rasoul, found the Deir el-Bahari cache of more than 50 mummies, including Ramesses the Great, when their goat fell down a crevasse.

But Hussein's great-nephew Sayed Abdel Rasoul laughed at the idea that a goat or boy with a water jug were behind the breakthroughs.

Riggs echoed his scepticism, arguing that on the rare occasions that Egyptology credits Egyptians with great discoveries they are disproportionately either children, tomb robbers or "quadrupeds".

The problem is that others "kept a record, we didn't", Abdel Rasoul told AFP.

'THEY WERE WRONGED'

Local farmers who knew the contours of the land could "tell from the layers of sediment whether there was something there," said Egyptologist Abdel Gawad, adding that "archaeology is mostly about geography".

Profound knowledge and skill at excavating had been passed down for generations in Qurna — where the Abdel Rasouls remain — and at Qift, a small town north of Luxor where English archaeologist William Flinders Petrie first trained locals

in the 1880s.

Mostafa Abdo Sadek, a chief excavator of the Saqqara tombs near Giza, whose discoveries have been celebrated in the Netflix documentary series "Secrets of the Saqqara Tomb", is a descendant of those diggers at Qift.

His family moved 600 kilometres (370 miles) north at the turn of the



20th century to excavate the vast necropolis south of the Giza pyramids.

But his grandfathers and great-uncles "were wronged", he declared, holding up their photos.

Their contributions to a century of discoveries at Saqqara have gone largely undocumented.

'CHILDREN OF TUTANKHAMUN'

Barred for decades from even studying Egyptology while the French controlled the country's antiquities service, Egyptians "were always serving foreigners", archaeologist and former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass told AFP.

Another Egyptologist, Fatma Keshk, said we have to remember "the historical and social context of the time, with Egypt under British occupation."

The struggle over the country's cultural heritage became increasingly political in the early 20th century as Egyptians demanded their freedom.

"We are the children of Tutankhamun," the diva Mounira al-Mahdiyya sang in 1922, the year the boy pharaoh's intact tomb was found.

The same year Britain was forced to grant Egypt independence, and the hated partage system that gave foreign missions half the finds in exchange for funding excavations was ended.

But just as Egyptians' "sense of ownership" of their heritage grew, ancient Egypt was appropriated as "world civilisation" with little to do with the modern country, argued Abdel Gawad.

"Unfortunately that world seems to be the West. It's their civilisation, not ours."

While the contents of Tutankhamun's tomb stayed in Cairo, Egypt lost Carter's archives, which were considered his private property.

The records, key to academic research, were donated by his niece to the Griffith Institute for Egyptology at Britain's Oxford University.

"They were still colonising us. They left the objects, but they took our ability to

ples, the twin Colossi of Memnon — built nearly 3,400 years ago — standing vigil over the living and the dead.

Four Qurnawis were shot dead in 1998 trying to stop the authorities bulldozing their homes in a relocation scheme.

Some 10,000 people were eventually moved when almost an entire hillside of mud-brick homes was demolished despite protests from UNESCO.

In the now deserted moonscape, Ragab Tolba, 55, one of the last remaining residents, told AFP how his relatives and neighbours were moved to "inadequate" homes "in the desert".

The Qurnawis' dogged resistance was fired by their deep connection to the place and their ancestors, said the Qurna-born excavator Daramalli.

But the controversial celebrity archaeologist Hawass, then head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, said "it had to be done" to preserve the tombs.

Egyptologist Hanna, however, said the authorities were bent on turning Luxor into a sanitised "open-air museum... a Disneyfication of heritage", and used old tropes about the Qurnawis being tomb raiders against them.

Sayed Abdel Rasoul's nephew, Ahmed, hit back at what he called a double standard. "The French and the English were all stealing," he told AFP. "Who told the people of Qurna they could make money off of artefacts in the first place?"

'SPOILS OF WAR'

Over the centuries, countless antiquities made their way out of Egypt.

Some, like the Luxor Obelisk in Paris and the Temple of Debod in Madrid, were gifts from the Egyptian government.

Others were lost to European museums through the colonial-era partage system. But hundreds of thousands more were smuggled out of the country into "private collections all over the world," according to Abdel Gawad.

Former antiquities minister Hawass is now spearheading a crusade to repatriate three of the great "stolen" treasures — the Rosetta Stone, the bust of queen Nefertiti and the Dendera Zodiac.

He told AFP he plans to file a petition in October demanding their return.

The Rosetta Stone has been housed in the British Museum since 1802, "handed over to the British as a diplomatic gift", the museum told AFP.

But for Abdel Gawad, "it's a spoil of war".

Nefertiti's 3,340-year-old bust went to Berlin's Neues Museum a century later through the partage system, but Hawass insisted it "was illegally taken, as I have proved time and again."

The Frenchman Sebastien Louis Saulnier meanwhile had the Dendera Zodiac blasted out of the Hathor Temple in Qena in 1820.

The celestial map has hung from a ceiling in the Louvre in Paris since 1922, with a plaster cast left in its place in the southern Egyptian temple.

"That's a crime the French committed in Egypt," Hanna said, behaviour no longer "compatible with 21st century ethics." — AFP



produce research," Hanna added.

This year, the institute and Oxford's Bodleian Library are staging an exhibition, "Tutankhamun: Excavating the Archive", which they say sheds light on the "often overlooked Egyptian members of the archaeological team."

EXCAVATORS' VILLAGE RAZED

In Qurna, 73-year-old Ahmed Abdel Rady still remembers finding a mummy's head in a cavern of his family's mud-brick house that was built into a tomb.

His mother stored her onions and garlic in a red granite sarcophagus, but she burst into tears at the sight of the head, berating him that "this was a queen" who deserved respect.

For centuries, the people of Qurna lived among and excavated the ancient necropolis of Thebes, one of the pharaohs' former capitals that dates back to 3100 BC.

Today, Abdel Rady's village is no more than rubble between the tombs and tem-