

OIA develops project in Germany

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) announced the success of its Eclipse Tower development in the German city of Düsseldorf, a real estate project which has been successfully sold to Union Investment, a renowned German-based institutional investor months before the completion date, despite the challenges facing global supply chain of building materials. **DETAILS ON P13**



P11

KIPLIMO WINS COMMONWEALTH GAMES TITLE



P13

24 MENA IPOs RAISE \$13.5 BN IN H1 2022



P20

FROM OMAN TO EUROPE, ON A CLASSIC CAR



■ KHASAB

MOU TO SUPPORT 10M-TREE INITIATIVE

The Environment Authority on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sohar Aluminium company on supporting the “National 10-million-tree Initiative” in the Governorate of Musandam. The MoU seeks to develop degrading areas, safeguard biodiversity and augment green cover as a source of relaxation for society. According to the MoU, the company will meet financial obligations related to the planting of 100,000 tree in the Governorate of Musandam, as well as any other direct consultancy services, depending on the agreed budgets and cultivation sites. **DETAILS ON P2**

■ SALALAH

FIRST GOVERNORATES MARATHON UNVEILED

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Sabco Sports company have outlined the first edition of “Governorates Marathon” — which reflects the ministry’s keenness in encouraging the society to take up sports and make it a ‘health and life style’. The Governorates Marathon is being organised in implementation of a decision issued by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth. He issued instructions to form a supervising committee tasked with developing “a professional tourist sport” and establish such a popular sports extravaganza in all governorates. **DETAILS ON P5**

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Study on loggerhead turtles in Masirah begins

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

Since May, the Environment Authority has been studying the nesting of loggerhead turtles on Masirah Island and following up with hatching after 60 to 65 days. This is part of the framework of the memorandum of understanding signed between the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and the United States Government, Fish and Wildlife Service, in the field of environment and wildlife conservation to study the pattern of loggerhead turtles for the next five years. According to the marine environment specialist at the Environment Authority, the objective of this project is to



understand the factors affecting the nesting and hatching of turtles to boost their population. They have been studying three types of beaches in terms of density - high, medium and low to

know if that has an impact on their rate of reproduction. Specialists from the Environment Agency are participating in the field work of a project to study the success of nests of loggerhead turtles on Masirah Island, titled ‘Study of Nesting and Hatching Success of Loggerhead Turtles in Masirah.’ Aida al Jabri, marine environment specialist, said the nests had been marked, but they also came across hatchlings coming out from other unmarked ones by default. The five-year project will help experts to analyse the situation of loggerheads turtles population in Oman. “We are studying the nests and the success rate of the nests, and we have marked the nests and wait to see the babies,” Aida said. The study will only focus on loggerhead turtles and specifically in Masirah Island in the Arabian Sea. **TURN TO P2**

Biden hails Oman’s role in securing Yemen truce extension

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden of the United States of America has hailed the central role played by the Sultanate of Oman, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, in securing the extension of the truce in the Republic of Yemen. In a statement issued by the White House, President Biden expressed his gratitude for Oman’s role in advancing the truce through calls which took place between Sayyid



Badr Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and his American counterpart Tony Blinken, along with Rashad al Alimi, President of the Yemeni Presidential Leadership Council. The United Nations announced on Tuesday that the Yemeni parties reached an agreement to extend the truce for two more months. Yemen’s warring sides agreed to renew a two-month truce expiring on Tuesday, the United Nations envoy said,

includes a commitment from the parties to intensify negotiations to reach an expanded truce agreement as soon as possible,” special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said in a statement. Grundberg had been pushing for a six-month truce with additional measures, sources had said, but both sides have had grievances about implementation of the existing truce deal first agreed in April and mistrust runs deep. — ONA

Oman signs Treaty of Amity with Southeast Asian nations

TO PROMOTE COOPERATION WITH ASEAN COUNTRIES



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) to consolidate common cooperation and boost strategic partnership. The agreement was signed by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs. The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) meeting of foreign ministers, currently held in Cambodia’s capital Phnom Penh. The treaty, which brings together 40 countries that are partners with Asean nations, seeks to achieve the principles of amity and enhance cooperation and peace between member states. Meanwhile, current Asean chair Cambodia warned Myanmar not to execute any more prisoners after the hanging

of four people which has caused international outrage. Foreign ministers from the Asean are discussing how to address the growing crisis in Myanmar at talks in Phnom Penh. The 10-nation regional bloc has spearheaded so far fruitless efforts to restore peace to the country after a coup last year. Agreed in April last year, the plan calls for an immediate end to violence and dialogue between the army and coup opponents. “If more prisoners are to be executed, we will be forced to rethink our role vis a vis Asean’s five-point consensus,” Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said as he opened the foreign ministers’ gathering. Malaysia, which has led efforts to get tough on Myanmar’s junta, told reporters there must be progress before the Asean summit in November. — **Agencies** **SEE ALSO P7**



Study on loggerhead turtles in Masirah begins

FROM PAGE 1

“The breeding season is from April to September. But to understand their situation we must study the beginning and that is from laying of eggs to hatching. We wait for the turtles to arrive, make the nest and then we mark the nests. After 60 days we check on the hatchlings,” she said.

On Wednesday they came across more hatchlings from an unmarked nest, although over a couple of months since May most of the hatchlings have found their way to the sea.

“All the marked nests have already been checked,” she pointed out.

The conservation status of loggerhead turtles is categorised as ‘endangered’.

In 2020, there was publication of a scientific paper

on loggerhead turtles by various collaborative partners including Environment Authority, Environment Society of Oman, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - National Marine Fisheries Service and Five Oceans Environmental Services.

The paper was a result of extensive research on loggerhead turtles, which had been conducted over 30 years. It was this study that evaluated the long-term population trend that could etch out management priorities. The study, most importantly, had found that 79 per cent decline in the nesting population on the island that is considered as one of the largest nesting grounds of loggerhead turtles, making the current five-year project highly significant.



EA inks MoU for 10m-tree initiative in Musandam

KHASAB: The Environment Authority on Wednesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Sohar Aluminium company on supporting the “National 10-Million-Tree Initiative” in the Governorate of Musandam.

The MoU seeks to develop degrading areas, safeguard biodiversity and augment green cover as a source of relaxation for society.

The MoU, signed under the auspices of Musandam’s Governor Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, was signed by Musallam bin Mubarak al Mahri, Acting Director of the Environment Department in the Governorate of Musandam, and Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kharousi, Sohar Aluminium’s General Manager, HR and Corporate Affairs.

According to the MoU, the company will meet financial obligations related to the planting of 100,000 trees in the Governorate of Musandam, as well as any other direct consultancy services, depending on the agreed budgets and cultivation sites.

The National 10-Million-Tree Initiative, which lasts till 2030,



seeks to improve plant cover and enhance natural resources, including grazing areas in depleting zones. It is also aimed

at raising awareness about the benefits of green cover, both to the environment and society. It highlights the significance of

social segments’ contribution to environment conservation and the economic potential of some species of local plants. — ONA

■ SHABAB OMAN II ARRIVES IN DENMARK



COPENHAGEN: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) vessel Shabab Oman II has arrived at the Port of Aalborg in the Kingdom of Denmark as part of its sixth international voyage themed “Oman, Land of Peace”. For five days, Shabab Oman II, will welcome visitors to introduce them to the vessel’s message of friendship and fraternity between Oman and different countries of the world. While on the go, the vessel highlights Omani culture, maritime history and centuries-old heritage. — ONA

Salalah Food Festival begins today



SALALAH: Salalah Food Festival, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism at Hawana Salalah Hotel, will open on Thursday, August 4 and continue till August 13.

The opening ceremony will

be held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The extravaganza will see the participation of 55 cooks, showcase a range of food products and comprise

competitions and entertainment activities, including a drama, a song and music operetta and children’s games.

The event seeks to support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and promote tourism activity. — ONA

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Over 100 homes affected in South Al Batinah

TOP PRIORITY WILL BE TO OPEN TEMPORARY ROADS IN AFFECTED PLACES

VINOD NAIR
@VINOT_NAIR

South Al Batinah is the worst-affected governorate after the recent spell of rains though adequate preparedness and timely weather updates ensured that no human lives were lost.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, the mountains of Al Awabi and Al Rustaq received nearly 300 mm of rainfall (290 mm) as water from wadis swept the villages of Wadi Bani Kharus, unprecedented in several decades.

High-level delegates including the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance visited the rain-affected areas on Wednesday and reviewed damages caused by the torrential rains.

Speaking to the media, Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi said as per initial assessments nearly 100 homes were affected in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq in the South Al Batinah Governorate, including the utilities and infrastructure.

The rebuilding process and compensation to the affected families are expected to cost millions of rials to the state exchequer.



“There have been interruptions in electricity and water services, which will be gradually restored. Road traffic has been restored with the opening of alternative and temporary roads in the affected areas,” Al Jashmi said.

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shaithani, Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said the ministry has assessed affected roads in South Al Batinah and priority will be given to finding alternative roads

to get traffic back to normal at the earliest.

Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development, was also part of the high-level delegation.

Hamoud bin Mohammad

al Mandheri, coordinator of the relief and shelter sector at the National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM), said that special shelters are in place in the South Al Batinah Governorate and will be used whenever the need

arises.

The centre in the Wilayat of Al Awabi received two families on Monday and they left on Tuesday when the road link between the Wilayat of Al Awabi and Nakhl was reopened.

NCEM has conducted a field survey of some of the affected sites, which showed damages as water from the wadis entered homes leading to the collapse of boundary walls and fences in some places.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) has warned the users of the Nakhl-Al Awabi road saying one of the bridges in the Al Hashiyah area has been damaged due to strong water pressure from the wadis.

The municipality department in Al Awabi stepped in efforts to open a temporary road that will link the wilayats of Nakhl and Al Awabi and facilitate the movement of individuals.

Meanwhile, Oman Meteorology said that the chances of rain will decrease gradually by Thursday and added that temperatures dropped to 30-35 degrees in July this year, compared to the same period in 2021.

Rains replenish Nizwa recharge dams



NIZWA: Eng Nasser bin Abdullah al Salmi, Director of Water Resources at the Directorate-General of Agriculture and Water Resources, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, said that recharge dams falling in the course of three wadis in the Wilayat of Nizwa

were fully replenished during recent heavy rains.

The Wilayat of Nizwa has three main dams, which are the Wadi Al Mu'aydin Dam, Tanouf Dam and Wadi Al Masla Dam, said Al Salmi.

He explained that the Wadi

Al Mu'aydin Dam collected 2.5 million cubic metres of water (exceeding its full-mark by 20 cm). Wadi Tanouf Dam was replenished with 680,000 cubic metres (rising 80 cm above full-mark), while Wadi Al Masla surged by 2 metres above full-mark. — ONA

SAF sustains efforts on alleviating impacts of climatic condition

MUSCAT: The Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), represented by the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) and the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), are maintaining technical efforts and backup operations to support local communities that got the brunt of the recent heavy rains.

The RAO provided technical, humanitarian and social support to impacted areas in a number of wilayats in the Governorate of South Al Batinah Governorate.

Meanwhile, the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) conducted medical evacuation of patients who had to be airlifted to Al Rustaq Hospital due to the inability of their respective health centres (in Hatt, Balad Sayt and Al Taikha) to continue to support them during the wet spell.

In the same context, RAFO transported a team of medical personnel and a consignment of medical supplies to Wadi Bani Auf area in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq.

In the meantime, the Defence Ministry's Engineering Services division offered technical assistance by opening main roads in the Wilayat of Nakhl and Wadi Al Maawil in the rain aftermath, replicating its experience in the Governorate of Musandam.

The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) also put its vessels at the service of the local communities. It operated trips for the transportation of equipment and basic commodities to Lima in the Governorate of Musandam, which was recently impacted during the tropical condition. — ONA





SUPPLEMENT YOUR SOURCE OF INCOME — GROW ALOE VERA PLANT

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 3

Among the diverse home based projects in the Sultanate of Oman, the most distinct is making of soap and perfumed products from the aloe vera plant.

The aloe vera plant is the miracle plant and considered the friend of women and some women are keen to allocate a small area of their garden for cultivating it. The plant is one of the essential basics for women as it is a natural pharmacy that women use in many diverse medical and cosmetic fields.

Amira al Nasari from the Wilayat of Ibri has embodied it in her own home project. She is using the aloe vera plant in making aloe vera soap. She said the environment in the Sultanate of Oman is conducive for its cultivation. Once the plant is saturated with water, it becomes useful. The marketing of its products can be done through social media platforms and by participating in local exhibitions.

The aloe vera plant is characterised by its ability to retain a large amount of water, forming a therapeutic gel that is used in many products. It is spread in various regions of Oman and is a successful project for those interested in investing in it due to its increasing medical and cosmetic uses.

As for the method of extracting the gel from a plant, it is done by cutting the leaves of the plant into two halves, so that the juice is collected where it is used when needed and kept for long periods without losing its effect.

Domestic works are a new stream to the national economy, as they reduce unemployment rates and decrease job opportunities. The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a wide activity in the emergence of a large number of home projects, which benefit from the remarkable development in the methods of advertising and electronic marketing on the Internet and social media.

It began to receive government support, including recent decisions issued by The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion via Ministerial Decision No 473/2022 regarding the regulation regulating the practice of home productive work.

THE ALOE VERA PLANT IS THE MIRACLE PLANT AND CONSIDERED THE FRIEND OF WOMEN AND SOME WOMEN ARE KEEN TO ALLOCATE A SMALL AREA OF THEIR GARDEN FOR CULTIVATING IT





First edition of Governorates Marathon unveiled



SALALAH: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Sabco Sports company have outlined the first edition of “Governorates Marathon” — which reflects the ministry’s keenness in encouraging the society to take up this sport and make it a ‘health and lifestyle’.

The details were made during a briefing held on Wednesday at Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment. The briefing was attended by officials, media personnel and members of the public interested in the sector of sports and youth.

Mohammed bin Ahmed al

Amri, Director-General of Sports Activities at the Ministry, gave a speech in which he declared that the Governorates Marathon will kick off for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman. He noted that, besides being a local sports event, the Governorates Marathon will highlight Oman as a sports

tourism destination.

The logo of the Governorates Marathon was screened during a visual display alongside the logo of Oman Broadband company, sponsor of the first edition of the event. Related contracts were signed by the three parties of the sports project. — ONA



Agriculture ministry, PDO ink cooperation MoU

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in different areas towards the realisation of a joint vision to achieve sustainable development.

The MoU was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Steve Phimister, PDO Managing Director.

The agreement stipulates that the ministry taps the experiences of the company in implementing Lean methodology through a set of training courses. It also provides for supporting agricultural initiatives by means of technical knowledge and the creation of joint investment projects to develop the national economy.

The agreement will also help study all aspects of utilisation of water supplies accompanying oil output operations. — ONA

Female guides of Dakhiliyah participate in Dhofar camp

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, AUG. 3

Female guides of the General Directorate of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate participated in the summer camp programme 21 for female guides and advanced scouts in the scout camp in the Governorate of Dhofar in Sahel Jabal Ashoor plain.

The General Directorate of Scouts and Guides supervises this camp. About 13 female guides from the governorate, accompanied by a delegation leader and a female guide supervisor, participated in the programme committee.

The programme comes this year under the slogan (Together we thrive) for six days until the fourth

of this month. The programme is a path for the Girl-Led Guiding Movement to make every girl feel confident in the leadership and empowered to create a better world. The programme includes many activities and events that, in turn, help to develop the skills of female guides, practice leadership, and enjoy time at work.

The scout camp aims to promote human values, principles and positive attitudes among female guides and enable them to plan for positive change. The camp also seeks to activate the role of female guides in community service. Moreover, it aims to achieve the goal of coexisting with nature, practise guiding traditions, enhance the Omani national identity in the



participants’ hearts and contribute significantly to developing their abilities to explore nature.

Among the most prominent programmes the camp will witness is a discussion session on (STEM) programmes in science,

technology, engineering and mathematics. The programme will also include workshops on female health, discovering nature through hiking trails, and challenging and adventurous stations. The guides will also train in paragliding skills.



University of Nizwa obtains patent for anthocyanin food colour

RAWAN AL NADABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 3

The University of Nizwa obtained an Australian innovation patent on anthocyanin food colour, a substitute for synthetic colours, which have a toxic effect, and cause cancer in some cases. In Europe, synthetic colours are banned for usage in food, drugs and cosmetics. This patent drew attention to the food industry of natural colours.

In this patent, anthocyanin food colour is produced by extracting anthocyanin (purple-pink colour) from black carrot. Anthocyanin colour is known for its poor transparency and stability. To achieve the best transparency, the anthocyanin colour needs to be in a maximum purity.

By source value, berries have been and are projected to be the leading source for anthocyanin food colourants, followed by red sweet potato. Anthocyanin food colours derived from these two sources are usually added to soft drinks, beverages,



confectioneries, desserts and baked goods. Anthocyanins are also used as colourants in packed foods including ice cream, sauces, fruit juices, energy drinks and salad dressings.

Dr Tanveer Alam, a Scientist in Natural Product Chemistry Labs, at University of Nizwa and Head of the Experiment Team, said, “I used microporous polymer (Translucent beads) having high surface area and got the high purity anthocyanin. The novelty of this technique is to enhance the transparency and solubility of the anthocyanin (purple-pink colour).”

Anthocyanin are the polyphenols with antioxidant



activities. Eating food which is anthocyanin-rich will prevent inflammation and protect you against cancer. It also may benefit your memory and brain health. Organic anthocyanin attaches health benefits such as reducing the risk of heart disease and respiratory disorders. This has fueled the consumption of the anthocyanin food colours market. The anthocyanin food colour market is driven by its rising demand in food and beverage industries owing to its functional properties such as being anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, anti-allergic, anti-diabetic and antioxidant.

Food manufacturing corporations are shifting their focus towards additives,

ingredients and colourants such as anthocyanin that promote the health profile of food products, in an attempt to cope with the changing consumer preferences.

Economically, the North American anthocyanin food colours market is expected to register a 4.4-per cent CAGR between 2022 and 2032, according to Future Market Insight, a certified market research organisation.

In 2021, the North American anthocyanin food colours market was valued at \$130 million and the US anthocyanin food colours market contributes over 32 per cent of the global Anthocyanin food colours market.

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors/consultant specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
20/2022	Operation and Maintenance Works (District cooling system) – MTC/Muscat	Excellent - minimum of ten (10) years experience in Operation and Maintenance Services of the Facilities and Equipments (District cooling system) *	18 th August 2022	19 th September 2022	300/- R.O.
21/2022	Operation and Maintenance Works (Elevators) – MTC/Muscat	First & above - minimum of ten (10) years experience in Operation and Maintenance Services of the Facilities and Equipments (Elevators) *	18 th August 2022	19 th September 2022	125/- R.O.
25/2022	Building Works – Salalah	Excellent	18 th August 2022	19 th September 2022	600/- R.O.

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Musaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Musaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Manpower (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (bill 1&2 separated file from bill 3).
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

■ PYRAMIDS AIR SHOW



K-8E Karakorum aircraft of the Egyptian Air Force “Silver Stars” aerobatic team perform during the Pyramids Air Show 2022 above the (R to L) Great Pyramid of Khufu, the Pyramid of Khafre, and the Pyramid of Menkaure at the Giza Pyramids Necropolis on the southwestern outskirts of the Egyptian capital on Wednesday. – AFP

Yemen’s warring parties agree to renew truce for two months, says UN

ADEN: Yemen’s warring sides agreed to renew a two-month truce expiring on Tuesday, the United Nations envoy said, despite international pressure for an extended and expanded deal that would build on the longest stretch of relative calm in over seven years.

“This truce extension includes a commitment from the parties to intensify negotiations to reach an expanded truce agreement as soon as possible,” special envoy for Yemen Hans Grundberg said in a statement.

Grundberg had been pushing for a six-month truce with additional measures, sources had said, but both sides have had grievances about implementation of the existing truce deal first agreed in April and mistrust runs deep.

Biden, welcoming the renewal of the truce, said that while it was an important step and essential to saving lives it “is not enough in the long run.”

“We urge the Yemeni parties to seize this opportunity to work constructively under UN auspices to reach an inclusive, comprehensive agreement

that includes steps to improve freedom of movement and expanded salary payments and that paves the way for a durable, Yemeni-led resolution to the conflict,” he said.

The conflict, pitting a coalition led by Saudi Arabia against the Ansar Allah fighters, de facto authorities in north Yemen, has killed tens of thousands and caused millions to go hungry.

Riyadh has been trying to exit a costly war that has been a point of tension with the Biden administration, which halted support for offensive coalition operations.

The Saudi foreign ministry said on Wednesday the truce primarily aimed to establish a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire and “start the political process” between the internationally recognised government and the Ansar Allah.

It urged the movement to comply with terms regarding port revenues and to swiftly reopen roads in disputed Taiz, effectively under Ansar Allah siege. Both parties have been frustrated over truce implementation.

— Reuters

Former Iraqi activists dismayed as powerful groups use protest tactics

BAGHDAD: Iraqi activists who demonstrated three years ago against powerful parties and militias that run the country have watched with resentment as those same groups now use street protests to exert political pressure on each other, with impunity.

They say it makes a mockery of the demonstrations in 2019 which called for the downfall of a political class whose corruption and mismanagement have kept Iraq mired in dysfunction despite its vast oil wealth and relative peace in recent years.

A political deadlock that pits the populist cleric Moqtada al Sadr against rivals has kept the country without a government for nearly 10 months as both sides compete for power.

Ali Saad, a former activist, watched one protest on Monday, where demonstrators militia groups tore down concrete barriers and pelted security forces with stones, without much resistance from police.

During the 2019 protests, hundreds of demonstrators were shot dead for less by security forces and militiamen from the same groups that took to the streets this



Supporters of Moqtada Sadr, protesting against a rival bloc’s nomination for prime minister, raise a banner bearing the name of one of the tribal clans (Masoud Clan) at their sit-in inside Iraq’s parliament headquarters in Baghdad’s high-security Green Zone, on Wednesday. – AFP

week, he said.

“Let them fight it out among themselves. At least we’ll see some action,” Saad said. “I gave up civil disobedience years ago. They killed so many of my friends.”

Thousands of followers of Sadr stormed Baghdad’s Green Zone last week, taking over the parliament building to prevent his opponents from forming a government. Sadr’s rivals then staged Monday’s counter-protest

outside the Green Zone calling his moves a coup and demanding his supporters leave parliament.

Each side is backed by heavily-armed paramilitaries, making the rival protests a dangerous prospect for Iraq and threatening to drag it into more violence.

Government officials and spokespeople for the parties protesting did not immediately respond to requests for comment for this story. They have previously

denied any involvement in corruption and mismanagement, and privately blame each other. The protests by each camp look almost identical.

Demonstrators march outside government buildings, careful to wave only Iraqi national or religious flags. They chant against corruption and say they represent the country and its people.

They are well supplied with water in the sweltering Baghdad summer heat, and provide transport to supporters making the journey from southern Iraq.

“This group chants against corruption, that group chants against corruption - this group says it represents all Iraqis, that group says it represents all Iraqis. They’re all thieves,” Saad said.

Sadr’s social-political Sadrist Movement has long run some of Iraq’s worst-managed government departments.

His opponents, including former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki who helped stir up Monday’s counter-demonstration, are widely accused of corruption and nepotism that sent Iraq into chaos as IS took over a third of the country in 2014.—Reuters

SHORT TAKES

TELAVIV

Israel on alert after arrest of PIJ leader

Israel remains on heightened alert following the arrest of a leader of the PIJ. Areas around the Gaza Strip remained closed for the second day in a row, the army announced on Wednesday. This was done to prevent a retaliatory attack on civilians.

On Monday evening, PIJ leader Bassem Saadi was arrested in the West Bank town of Jenin during an Israeli anti-terror operation.

The military arm of the organisation, the Al Quds



Brigades, then threatened attacks.

The PIJ is particularly active in the Gaza Strip and regularly launches rocket attacks on Israel from there.

TUNIS

Ennahda says leader faces new inquiry

Tunisia’s opposition party Ennahda on Wednesday accused the authorities of attempting to intimidate opponents, saying police had opened a new investigation into its leader Rached Ghannouchi.

The party said Ghannouchi was being investigated on suspicion of describing the security forces as tyrannical, and it denied that he had said this. Tunisian politics has grown more acrimonious over the past year since President Kais Saied dismissed parliament and seized



most powers last year, enshrining them in a new constitution that was passed in a referendum last week. He said his moves were necessary to save Tunisia from years of political failure.

GENEVA

UN experts urge probe into Beirut blast

A group of United Nations experts on Wednesday urged the UN Human Rights Council to launch an international investigation into the deadly 2020 Beirut explosion, saying its victims needed justice.

The August 4 mega-blast killed more than 200 people and destroyed thousands of homes in the Lebanese capital.

The explosion was blamed on a fire that ignited tonnes of ammonium nitrate fertiliser haphazardly stored for years at



Beirut harbour.

“This tragedy marked one of the largest non-nuclear blasts in recent memory, yet the world has done nothing to find out why it happened,” the six experts said.



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THURSDAY | AUGUST 4 | 2022

7

In brief

■ NEW DELHI



INDIA NIXES PRIVACY BILL THAT ALARMED BIG TECH FIRMS

India's government on Wednesday withdrew a controversial data protection and privacy bill which was first proposed in 2019 and had alarmed big technology companies such as Facebook and Google, announcing it was working on a new comprehensive law. The 2019 law had proposed stringent regulations on cross-border data flows and proposed giving the Indian government powers to seek user data from companies, seen as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's stricter regulation of tech giants. The decision came as a parliamentary panel's review of the suggested amendments.

■ YANGON



RARE WHITE ELEPHANT BORN IN MYANMAR

A rare white elephant has been born in western Myanmar, state media said on Wednesday, unveiling what many in the Buddhist-majority country believe to be an auspicious creature. Born last month in western Rakhine state, the baby weighs about 80 kilogrammes and stands roughly 70 cm tall, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper. Footage released by state TV showed the tusker tot following his mother to a river and being washed by its keepers, and later feeding from her. The mother — a 33-year-old called Zar Nan Hla — is kept by the Myanma Timber Enterprise in Rakhine state.

■ CALIFORNIA



DEATH TOLL RISES TO 4 IN WILDFIRE THIS SEASON

Search teams have located two more bodies in an area scorched by a forest fire raging for a fifth day in northern California near the Oregon border, bringing to four the number of lives lost in the state's biggest blaze this year, officials said on Tuesday. The latest two victims were found on Monday at separate homes along a highway that runs through the fire zone in the Klamath National Forest about 483 km north of San Francisco, according to a statement issued by the Siskiyou County Sheriff's Office. The remains of two other people were discovered on Sunday inside a burned-out car of another home.

First Ukrainian grain shipment sails through Istanbul



An aerial view shows the Sierra Leone-flagged cargo vessel Razoni sailing en route to Tripoli, Lebanon, along the Bosphorus Strait on Wednesday, after being officially inspected. — AFP

ISTANBUL: The first shipment of grain from Ukraine since the Kremlin's attack five months ago sailed through Istanbul on Wednesday under a landmark deal designed to help alleviate a global food crisis sparked by the war.

The Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni's voyage from the Black Sea port of Odessa to Lebanon is being watched closely for signs of how the first agreement signed by Moscow and Kyiv since Russia attacked its pro-Western neighbour holds.

A deal brokered by Turkey and the United Nations last month lifted a Russian naval blockade of Ukraine's Black Sea cities and set terms for millions of tonnes of wheat and other grain to start flowing from Ukraine's filled silos and ports.

Ukraine exports roughly half of the sunflower oil used on the

The Sierra Leone-flagged Razoni's voyage from the Black Sea port of Odessa to Lebanon is being watched closely for signs of how the first agreement signed by Moscow and Kyiv since Russia attacked its pro-Western neighbour hold

world market and is one of the world's main supplies of grain.

An almost complete halt to its exports helped push up global food prices and make imports prohibitively expensive in some of the poorest countries in the world.

The Razoni took 26,000 tonnes of maize through a specially designated corridor in the mine-

infested waters of the Black Sea before reaching the northern edge of the Bosphorus Strait on Tuesday.

A team of 20 inspectors from the two warring parties and the UN and Turkey strapped on orange helmets and boarded the ship early on Wednesday for a mandated inspection that officials said lasted less than 90 minutes.

MORE SHIPS

The ship's passage is being overseen by an international team that includes Russian and Ukrainian officials in Istanbul.

"This marks the conclusion of an initial 'proof of concept' operation to execute the agreement between the Russian Federation, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations," the centre said after the ship was cleared for passage.

The 186-metre long vessel will

move on to the Marmara and Aegean seas before reaching the coast of Lebanon in the coming days.

Kyiv says at least 16 more grain ships are waiting to depart.

But it also accuses Russia of stealing Ukrainian grain in territories seized by Kremlin forces and then shipping it to allied countries such as Syria.

Turkish hopes that the grain deal could help build trust and lead to ceasefire talks have so far been disappointed. Russia has continued to pound southern Ukrainian cities near the Black Sea with missiles and pressed on with its grinding ground assault across the east. Officials in Mykolaiv said no one was killed on Wednesday in shelling on one of the southern city's supermarkets that came just days after the region's grain mogul and his wife died in a targeted strike on their house. — AFP

Tight-lipped Taliban leaders gather after Zawahiri killed by US

KABUL: Top leaders of Afghanistan's Taliban were holding discussions on Wednesday about how to respond to a US drone strike in Kabul that the United States said killed Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri, three sources in the group said.

The US killed Zawahiri with a missile fired from a drone while he stood on a balcony at his Kabul hideout on Sunday, US officials said, the biggest blow to the militants since Osama bin Laden was shot dead more than a decade ago. The Taliban have not confirmed Zawahiri's death.

Officials of the hardline group, long-time allies of Al Qaeda, initially confirmed the Sunday drone strike but said the house that was hit was empty.

"There are meetings at a very high level on whether they should react to the drone strike, and in case they decide to, then what is the proper way," a Taliban leader who holds an important position in Kabul told Reuters.

The official, who said there had been lengthy leadership discussions for two days, declined to be identified. He did not confirm that Zawahiri was in the house that the missile struck. How the Taliban react could have significant repercussions as the group seeks international legitimacy. — Reuters

ASEAN warns of Myanmar peace plan rethink

PHNOM PENH: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) will be forced to reconsider a peace plan agreed with Myanmar if its military rulers execute more prisoners, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen said on Wednesday.

The 10-nation bloc, which is hosting a big international gathering this week, has pushed the Myanmar junta to follow a peace "consensus" agreed last year and has condemned its recent execution of four activists linked to a resistance movement, its first executions in decades.

"If more prisoners are executed, we will be forced to rethink...our role vis a vis ASEAN's five-point consensus," Hun Sen, the chair of ASEAN, said in opening the meeting of its foreign ministers.

He said ASEAN's unity had been challenged by the Myanmar crisis, and while the peace plan had "not advanced to everyone's wishes" there had been some progress on providing humanitarian aid.

But Hun Sen said the situation had changed dramatically and was even worse than before the peace agreement, due to the

junta's execution of the activists, which he said ASEAN states "are deeply disappointed and disturbed" by.

A senior State Department official on Wednesday said the United States was "looking what can be done to both sustain and increase the pressure" on the Myanmar generals.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is among 27 foreign ministers set to join the ASEAN Regional Forum security meeting in Cambodia on Friday, which will also include counterparts from China, Russia, Japan, Britain and Australia.

The Myanmar junta last week defended the executions as "justice for the people", brushing off a deluge of international condemnation.

Those activists had aided "terror acts", it said, referring to attacks by militias fighting military rule and seeking to avenge a deadly crackdown on protests.

Myanmar is not represented at this week's ASEAN meetings after its military declined a proposal to send a non-junta representative.

— Reuters

Sri Lanka to restart IMF talks, president calls for unity govt

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka will restart bailout talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in August, its new president said on Wednesday, while calling on lawmakers to form an all-party government to resolve a crippling economic crisis.

In a speech in parliament, President Ranil Wickremesinghe said that constitutional amendments were required to curtail presidential powers - indicating he would meet a key demand of protesters who forced out his predecessor, Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

"The president of a country does not have to be a king or a god who is exalted above the people. He or she is one of the citizens," Wickremesinghe said.

The island nation of 22 million people is facing its worst financial crisis since independence from Britain in 1948 with its foreign exchange reserves at record lows, and the economy battered by the Covid-19 pandemic and a steep fall in government revenue.

Angered by persistent shortages of essentials, including



Sri Lanka's President Ranil Wickremesinghe (C), Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena and Speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardena leave Parliament after opening a new session in Colombo on Wednesday. — AFP

fuel and medicines, and skyrocketing inflation of over 60 per cent year-on-year, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in early July, forcing Rajapaksa to first flee the country and then quit office.

Wickremesinghe, who was then prime minister, took over as acting president and was later confirmed in the job by parliament.

Discussions with the IMF

for a four-year programme that could provide up to \$3 billion would resume in August, Wickremesinghe told lawmakers in his first major address to parliament since taking over.

The government is working with its financial and legal advisers Lazard and Clifford Chance to finalise a plan to restructure overseas debt, including about \$12 billion owed to bondholders.

— Reuters

How do great bosses do things differently?



Dr Anchan C K

The writer is an international adviser

Bosses are often the primary reason for people either loving or leaving their jobs.

A boss is the umbilical cord that connects employees to an organisation.

When I look back today, I feel great that I had great bosses who inspired me from time to time.

What makes a great boss really? It's a tough question to answer because different people will define it differently. I thought of sharing my learning curve.

A great boss is direct, but sensitive. He realises that communication is essential to build a great and effective team.

Great Bosses believe that

company is a community and not a machine, they see their company as a collection of individual hopes and dreams, all connected to a higher purpose.

They inspire employees to dedicate themselves to the success of their peers. A great boss sits down with an employee right from the beginning and identifies priorities.

A great boss views his position as both a leader and a coach, someone who educates and encourages, who leads the team by example.

They set a general direction and then commit themselves to obtaining the resources that their employees need to get the job

A GREAT BOSS REALISES THAT COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL TO BUILD A GREAT AND EFFECTIVE TEAM. HE IS DIRECT, BUT SENSITIVE

done. They strongly believe that management is service and not all about control.

Great boss stops by and says hello. He makes himself available. No matter what he is doing, when employees speak, he will stop and give them full attention.

They treat every employee as if he or she were the most important person in the firm. They have this firm belief that "My employees are my peers, not my children".

They inspire people to see a better future and how they'll be a part of it.

As a result, employees work harder because they believe in the organisation's goals, truly enjoy what they're doing and of course know they'll share in the rewards.

A great boss observes his employees to find out what they do best. He talks to them about what aspects of their job they enjoy the most.

A great boss taps into and

leverages the instincts and skills his employees have.

They see change as an inevitable part of life.

While they don't value change for its own sake, they know that success is only possible if employees and organisation embrace new ideas and new ways of doing business.

An effective boss encourages his employees not to be scared of making mistakes along the way.

I am thankful to all my bosses from whom I learned the way we can make difference, positive impact in the lives of the people around us. Wishing you all the best and be a 'Great Boss.'

Make stoves, not war: Ukrainian blacksmith helps troops

FRANKIE TAGGART

He'd hardly know a Beretta from a Bazooka, but Anton Zaika can sure find his way around a blacksmith's forge — and he is helping Ukraine's war effort in his own unique way.

The talented artisan had carved out a modest but successful business selling metal furniture to wealthy European clients, but war came five months ago and changed his priorities.

Now he makes anti-tank barriers to protect the local volunteer battalion in the northwestern frontline city of Sumy, and special iron stoves adapted to trenches to keep them warm.

His services come free-of-charge to the local territorial defence unit fighting the Russian war, and he has even started buying and converting beat-up old cars into makeshift armoured personnel carriers.

"After the first day of the war, there were no police any more in the city and not much army," Zaika, 32, said at his workshop in Sumy, a city of 260,000 people just 25 kilometres from Ukraine's border with Russia.

"So, we've mainly had a territorial defence. It was our citizens who took up arms and stopped the enemy from entering the city. I'm no good at weapons, so I did what I was good at to help them."

Sumy, which can trace its history back to its founding by the Cossacks in the mid-17th century, found itself battling for survival from the start of Moscow's attack on Ukraine in February.

Almost captured by the Russians, the city quickly fought back over six intense weeks of fierce street-to-street urban warfare as part of a wider Ukrainian counteroffensive.

But it remained surrounded and bombarded daily by artillery — with trains and buses out of the city suspended, roads and bridges pulverised, and its population trapped, their food and water running dangerously low.

Air strikes continued into summer, as Russian ground forces made repeated attempts to retake the city. Zaika, who has run the business for seven years since learning the metalwork trade from his father, had hoped to build another workshop with around €25,000 of metal he had bought.

But he used up the entire stockpile within the first month of the war as he began getting requests for help from the local territorial defence unit.

He has since made more than 500 stoves for fighters but also to make life more liveable for people in bomb shelters and in nearby towns and villages where the gas supply had been knocked out by shelling.

Eventually the public began to chip in, bringing materials they had found that could be put to use in the trenches or in military shelters. —AFP

Killing of Qaeda leader crystallises debate over Biden's Afghanistan strategy



Peter Baker

The writer is an American journalist and author

The sunrise missile strike that shredded the leader of Al Qaeda on the balcony of a house in Kabul finally validated President Joe Biden's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan.

Or perhaps the strike discredited it. Or maybe some combination of both.

The coming anniversary of the chaotic American withdrawal from Afghanistan was already sure to instigate a round of arguments about its wisdom, but the killing of Ayman al Zawahri by a CIA drone hovering over the Afghan capital has crystallised the debate in a visceral way.

To Biden and his allies, the precision operation that took out one of the patrons of the September 11, 2001, attacks without civilian deaths demonstrated that war can be waged against terrorists without large deployments of US troops on the ground.

To his critics, though, the stunning realisation that Al Zawahri had returned to Kabul evidently under the protection of the Taliban made clear that Afghanistan has again become a haven for America's enemies.

"The successful US strike vindicates those who've argued for an over-the-horizon counter-terrorism strategy in Afghanistan," Kate Bateman, who helped write reports for the American government on corruption, drugs, gender inequality and other issues in Afghanistan, said in a discussion hosted by the US Institute of Peace. "But Zawahri finding harbour in Kabul may also point to a graver threat than was assumed."

The dual conclusions emerging from the strike complicated an otherwise heady moment for a president who just authorised the operation that took out one of the most wanted men in the world.

Hunting down and killing Al Zawahri may not have resonated with the public in the same way the raid that dispatched Osama bin Laden did in 2011, but it was nonetheless seen across the board as a victory for the United States.

The implications of that victory, however, were still being sorted out the day after Biden's nighttime address to the nation announcing the drone strike from over the weekend.

The president now confronts the question of what, if anything, he will



President Joe Biden is seen on a screen speaking from the White House during a nationally televised address where he announced that a US airstrike in Afghanistan killed the Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahri in Washington.

THERE IS NO APPETITE IN THE WHITE HOUSE, OR FOR THAT MATTER MOST OF WASHINGTON, FOR A RETURN OF SIGNIFICANT MILITARY FORCE TO AFGHANISTAN

do in response to the revelation that the Taliban were once again sheltering the leader of a group dedicated to killing Americans.

The peace agreement that led to last year's troop withdrawal, negotiated by president Donald Trump before he left office and then carried out by Biden, specified that the Taliban would not allow Afghanistan to become a launching pad for future Qaeda

violence against the United States as it was before the September 11 attacks.

While the Biden administration called Al Zawahri's presence a clear violation of that deal, known as the Doha Agreement for the capital of Qatar where it was sealed, some analysts said the Taliban could maintain that it was not out of compliance because sheltering the fugitive head of Al Qaeda was not the same as serving as a staging ground for new attacks.

The White House did not see it that way.

"The Taliban have a choice," John F Kirby, the strategic communications coordinator for the National Security Council, told reporters.

"They can comply with their agreement" to bar terrorists from their territory "or they can choose to keep going down a different path.

If they go down a different path, it's going to lead to consequences."

But neither Kirby nor other officials would specify what kind of consequences Biden had in mind. There is no appetite in the White House, or for that matter most of Washington, for a return of significant military force to Afghanistan.

And the Taliban leadership that swept into power in the wake of last year's American withdrawal has successfully defied international pressure as it has reimposed a repressive regime, including a renewed crackdown on the rights of women and girls.—New York Times

In the name of security



SONIA AMBROSIO
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The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

a downpour, but about all of the angles that a story can have, including its profit focus. The same is true for war, conflicts, genocide, and attack reporting. These are lucrative businesses, and the longer a war or conflict lasts, the higher the profit.

Because of the social media approach to journalism, topics are treated in a trivial way. Opportunities for an informed opinion on any issue are barely provided. The social media approach does not engage its audience to think about why war or conflict exists.

The current humanitarian crisis in Ukraine which has killed thousands, displaced millions, and tossed effects around the globe is in the spotlight, but many conflicts only make footnotes, if that at all. Conflict and violence are currently on the rise, according to the UN. Enemies are fundamental. The International Crisis Group identified ten conflicts to monitor in 2022, but the list could be much longer

BECAUSE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACH TO JOURNALISM, TOPICS ARE TREATED IN A TRIVIAL WAY. OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN INFORMED OPINION ON ANY ISSUE ARE BARELY PROVIDED. THE SOCIAL MEDIA APPROACH DOES NOT ENGAGE ITS AUDIENCE TO THINK ABOUT WHY WAR OR CONFLICT EXISTS

a range of other services. Since the war, shares in some particular cases, have risen to 16 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. Not just arms, but there are also apparatus such as styled uniforms for specific situations, boots, goggles, and other expensive defence gear.

A peek under the hood of the mechanism that drives war, armed conflict, or genocide, raises more questions than it does answers. It's important to bring public attention to the production and transfer of armaments. It should also include the selling or smuggling of firearms to civilians and groups of mercenaries' fighters. War is hell for many, but highly lucrative for a few.

The Conversation, an online publisher, had an article about the world's defence giants quietly making billions from the war in Ukraine. That was eye-opening! Since February, the dominant media narrative has focused on the legitimate fear of a revived Russian empire ambition and the possibility of a new world war. Following the events in Ukraine, and possible threats from Russia's offensive on other nations, European countries are looking up to modernise their forces. The exposure of conflicts of interest between the defence sector, beneficiaries, and decision-makers is scarce outside of specialised media.

On the other side of the business complexity, Russia has just announced that its unique Zircon hypersonic cruise missiles and a new naval doctrine of Russia's maritime greatness are within months to roll out. Russia is the world's second-largest arms exporter, behind the United States. Russia exports nearly 90 per cent of its arms to 10 countries. The US supplies arms to at least 100 nations, many in the Middle East.

It is time for the media to pay attention to the money-spinning performance of the defence industry, and the implications it has for the regular citizens. The media has a responsibility to report on these aspects in the same way it has to report on other social and economic issues.

When teaching news writing to journalism students, I always make a point of focusing on the areas of business, sports, and a toe in the finance aspects of weather reporting. Great subjects with a lot to learn and appreciate.

The reason for these fields is that it is not just about the price of fish, or winning a game, or whether or not there is

if we look cautiously at situations in the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

The winners of the Ukraine attack and other conflicts are the weapons suppliers. From a drone attack to regional tensions, and threats, defence companies are benefiting from the chaos. The eyeing of upgrading security has already been reflected with stocks shooting up towards a special niche of companies dedicated to defence equipment, including research, development, manufacturing, training, engineering, cybersecurity, and



DISPLACED BY WAR

A girl stands at a camp for Syrians displaced by conflict near the Syrian northern city of Raqa on Wednesday. — AFP

Biosecurity is a national security

MATTHEW MCKNIGHT AND NEIL MANIAR

JUST AS THE ADVENT OF THE INFORMATION AGE UNDERScoreD THE NEED FOR CYBERSECURITY, THE GROWING THREAT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES SHOULD SPUR SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN BIOSECURITY. TO PREVENT FUTURE PANDEMICs, WE MUST BE AS FOCUSED ON ADAPTING AND SURVIVING AS THE VIRUSES WE ARE FIGHTING

If a cyberattack upended the global economy, effectively shut down major cities like New York, and put millions of lives at risk, governments and institutions worldwide would undoubtedly respond by investing heavily in defensive capabilities.

They would beef up their cybersecurity, install new safeguards, and collect data and intelligence on future threats – just as many already do in response to acts of cyber warfare.

When it comes to the equally disruptive Covid-19 pandemic, however, the response has been far less decisive. As new variants ravage the health and economic security of the world's population, biosecurity measures – the early warning and monitoring technologies meant to prevent the spread of infectious diseases – are still not as layered, pervasive, or formidable as the cybersecurity systems we use to contain and mitigate the activities of computer hackers.

But as Covid-19 continues to remind us, public health and biosecurity are vital for national security. Biological viruses, much like computerised ones, attack living systems.

They are ubiquitous, and though we may not always be able to escape them, we can study them and learn how to defend ourselves. New biotechnologies are analogous to software patches that protect against cyberattacks.

The mRNA Covid-19 vaccines are a case in point. The scientists who developed them programmed cells to produce “good” code, giving our bodies instructions to neutralise the virus’s “bad” code.

Covid-19 vaccines demonstrate biotech’s potential to save lives, but vaccines are only one part of our defence against future pandemics.

We have the tools to predict the next pandemic and turn the tide on

various health threats to individuals and communities. We need to leverage this new era of public-health technology and build a biosecurity infrastructure that mirrors our approach to cybersecurity in terms of both investment and engagement.

To save as many lives as possible, governments must emphasise investments in biosecurity systems and technologies.

The focus should be on expanding monitoring systems to discover biosecurity threats before they become widespread.

More innovation is necessary. A safer future entails a strategic shift to regular testing in non-traditional places like schools and airports to detect infectious-disease threats before they overwhelm us.

Patients with common respiratory symptoms – few of whom were ever tested for infectious disease in the pre-Covid-19 era – should be routinely tested to get a definitive diagnosis. Pathogen detectors should be more affordable and widely available.

By incorporating these data, a global infectious disease “weather map” – conceived and built as a layered and nimble system that evolves in response to the variety of threats facing humanity, much like cybersecurity systems – would help cities, states, and countries understand potential threats.

Before the Covid-19 shock, complacent governments and institutions did not invest in large-scale infectious disease surveillance systems.

While Covid-19 remains the centre of attention, a disturbing rise in monkeypox cases is now occurring across several continents, and we are just now understanding the root causes of the increase in acute paediatric hepatitis cases that had confounded medical experts.

Then there is the looming threat of new strains of bird flu and other viruses mutating and adapting to infect humans even more easily. We need to improve our ability to anticipate future outbreaks

and understand where new variants are emerging. Most importantly, we need to detect novel pathogens before they become pandemics.

The current pandemic is still far from over. In late May, a study posted on the pre-publication server MedRxiv suggested that the undercounting of Covid-19 cases may be 30 times higher than reported.

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cases are nearly six times higher than they were this time last year, primarily owing to the emergence of new variants.

This is particularly worrying because current mRNA vaccines reduce the risk of hospitalisation and death but are less effective in preventing long Covid.

Recent reports indicate that lingering disease can affect as many as 20 per cent of Covid patients.

The economic consequences are staggering, as evidenced by Covid-driven inflation threatening the global economy and supply networks.

Public-health leaders warn that the growing threat of infectious diseases, whether naturally occurring or human-engineered, means we can't afford the neglect-panic-neglect cycle that has defined the Covid-19 era.

Pathogens are relentless in their ability to adapt, mutate, and thrive; they don't care about “Covid fatigue” or our desire to return to the old normal.

To prevent future pandemics, we must be as focused on adapting and surviving as the viruses are.

We must address our vulnerabilities by funding technologies to help us identify and fight dangerous viruses and develop new defences against potential outbreaks.

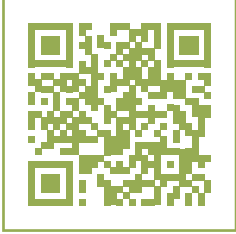
Just as the advent of the information age underscored the need for cybersecurity, the rapid growth of biotechnology and the growing threat of pandemics should spur significant investments in biosecurity. Now is the time to build our public-health toolkit to fight future viral threats. ©Project Syndicate, 2021



When it comes to the equally disruptive Covid-19 pandemic, however, the response has been far less decisive.

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‘The dream of a continent’: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay submit joint World Cup 2030 bid



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Paraguay submitted a joint bid on Tuesday to host the 2030 World Cup, an effort that if successful would bring the global tournament back to Uruguay a century after it hosted

the first World Cup in 1930. “This is the dream of a continent,” said Alejandro Dominguez, president of the South American Football Confederation (CONMEBOL). “There will be more World

Cups, but the Cup only turns 100 one time, and it needs to come home,” Dominguez said in an event at Montevideo’s Centenario Stadium, where Uruguay defeated Argentina to win the first ever World Cup.



Argentina and Chile have since also hosted the games, in 1978 and 1962, respectively. “It’s just for the World Cup to be hosted where it all began 100 years later,” Ignacio Alonso, president of the Uruguayan Football

Association, told reporters. Dominguez said there are “more than sufficient” reasons for FIFA to accept the four countries’ single candidacy. The 2030 World Cup will follow the 2026 World Cup, which will be

jointly hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States. For now, the South American countries’ top competition appears to come from Spain and Portugal, which last month submitted a joint bid to host the tournament. — **Reuters**

Shihab to lead training course for Eritrean volleyball coaches



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 3

The Eritrean National Volleyball Federation will host the FIVB Level 2 Coaches Course which is sponsored by Olympic Solidarity. Oman’s FIVB International Volleyball coach instructor, Dr Shihab Aldin bin Ahmed al Riyami, will present the training course which begins on Thursday at ASMARA Eritrea Training Centre. The course, which will be attended by 38 coaches, will run for a duration of five days (eight hours daily) of theoretical and practical sessions.

Euro-Asia coaching programme group expert at Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) said that this will be my first presence in Africa to present a FIVB international mission and International course.

“I am very glad to deliver this

course which assists coaches to improve their skills and also to support Eritrean future plans in volleyball. I am pretty sure that the Eritrean National Volleyball Federation is working hard to improve the talent of coaches and building a coaching programme in enhancing knowledge and skill. Also, this kind of course provides a golden opportunity for African coaches to enable them to acquire the required knowledge and experience which will reflect on the game and the players when they lead technically in clubs and national teams,” Dr Shihab added.

A total of 38 coaches representing former national players, sporting teachers at school/university, physical education and club coaches will take part in this course. The nationality of the learners in this course are from Eritrea,

Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan. A set of theoretical and practical sessions are arranged for the participant and will cover fundamentals of volleyball, coaching skills, physical conditioning, training and the basics of mini-volleyball. The venue is set with all required facilities. “Even though I received invitations previously from many African volleyball federations including South Africa, Rwanda and the Republic of Mauritius to lead a volleyball development coaching programme, this will be my first experience in Africa, and I am interested in this as we can learn from African volleyball schools,” he added. The Development Committee Head at Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) recently concluded FIVB Level 2 Coaches Course in Saudi Arabia.

Al Riyami crowns champion for singles TP competition; Royal cavalry clinches teams title

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 3

As part of underway activities of the Equestrian Week in Dhofar, Oman Equestrian Federation launched on Tuesday Dhofar tent pegging Championship on the equestrian field in Salalah under the auspices of Salem bin Madin Salem Fadel, the chief guest, in presence of Ahmed bin Saif al Abri, Secretary of Oman Equestrian Federation, officials and a number of people interested in equestrian sports. The event featured participation of ten teams from different government units including Royal Cavalry, the Cavalry Police Command, the Nameer Equestrian School which participated in two teams, the Royal Guard of Oman Cavalry, Dhofar Equestrian Committee, Al Mudhaibi Equestrian Committee and S3 Stable participated in one team. The competition comprised of six rounds using a javelin weapon, two individual rounds, two rings and wedge rounds, and two team system rounds. The Royal Cavalry team managed to achieve first place with 218 points, and the Cavalry Police Command team came in Second position with 201 points. The Royal Guard of Oman team finished in third place with 195.5. At the singles competitions, the rider Hamad bin Nasser al Riyami won the first place, the rider Hamad bin Saif al Raisi from the Royal Cavalry came in second place and the rider Khalid bin Amer al Habsi from the Al Mudhaibi Equestrian Committee claimed the third place award. At the end, the chief guest gave away the medals and trophies to the winning teams.





LONDON: Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo made light of the absence of two-time world 10,000m champion Joseph Cheptegei by destroying his compatriot's Commonwealth Games record to win gold on Tuesday.

Kiplimo, who took bronze at the recent world championships, celebrated with a dance on crossing the line after finishing in 27min 09.19sec to finish ahead of Kenyan pair Daniel Ebenyo and Kibiwott Kandie.

"I think for me for winning this Commonwealth Games title was everything, the most important thing for me this season," said Kiplimo.

"But I still have a lot of things to do in the future at the Olympics and world championships."

Jamaica's Elaine Herah-Thompson, another bronze medallist at the worlds in Eugene, Oregon, vowed to "work my way back to the top" after ending second-fastest in qualifying for the 100m semi-finals.

The 30-year-old, who retained her Olympic 100m and 200m titles at last year's Games in Tokyo, could only finish third behind compatriots Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce and Shericka Jackson at the worlds.

But, with both of them absent for the 100m in Birmingham, she is the clear favourite.

There were golds medals for Australia's Nina Kennedy, who built on her bronze in the world championships to take the pole vault title with a best of 4.60 metres, and Chioma Onyekwere of Nigeria in the discus (61.70 metres).

Kiplimo faced just eight rivals but he gave the packed stadium a rousing performance on the first day of track and field in

Kiplimo dances to stunning 10,000m Commonwealth Games title



Birmingham.

With two laps to go the race was on a knife-edge but although Ebenyo moved into the lead at the

bell it was the Ugandan who eased past on the final bend to take gold.

Thompson-Herah eyes gold
Thompson-Herah has yet to

win an individual Commonwealth gold but, barring misfortune, she should set that record straight on Wednesday.

"You have to believe in yourself because no one else can believe in you," said Thompson-Herah after winning her heat in 10.99sec.

"I wanted to do well this year. It's not on God's watch, it's on my watch."

Australia's Kennedy said she had felt flat after the world championships but admitted to being "so proud of myself because it was so hard to come here".

"That was fun, amazing," she added. "And there was the sunset just before I won. It was really cool."

Her task was made easier when Olympic bronze medallist Holly Bradshaw of England withdrew just before the final.

The 30-year-old, who was injured when her pole snapped in a freak accident at the world championships, tried a few practice runs but decided she was not in the right shape to contest the event.

"This was going to be my last Commonwealth Games, and a chance of a medal but it wasn't meant to be," the English athlete told the BBC.

"I'm glad I gave it a go and wasn't sat at home."

Herah-Thompson's compatriot and fellow Olympic champion, Hansle Parchment, is also keen to make up for a disappointing worlds when he had to withdraw from the 110m hurdles final due to leg cramps. The 32-year-old looked comfortable in his heat as he breezed into the final, winning in 13.33sec.

However, he could face a fierce battle against compatriot Rasheed Broadbell, who won the other heat in a season's best 13.16 and showed some swagger, wiggling his finger at the crowd. England's Keely Hodgkinson and Laura Muir of Scotland both qualified for the women's 800m final along with Kenya's world bronze medallist Mary Moraa. — AFP



Under-performing Hasan dropped for Netherlands tour, Asia Cup

KARACHI: Pakistan on Wednesday dropped under-performing fast bowler Hasan Ali for the tour of the Netherlands and the Asia Cup later this month.

The 28-year-old was player of the tournament in Pakistan's Champions Trophy win in 2017.

But Hasan took just three wickets in two Tests in Sri Lanka last month, claimed only three wickets for 222 runs in his last three one-day internationals and went wicket-less in two of his last three Twenty20 internationals.

Chief selector Mohammad Waseem said Hasan needed a break.

"Hasan has been given a break from international cricket and he has been replaced by Naseem Shah," Waseem said in a Pakistan Cricket Board statement.

Pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi will also rest for the three-match ODI series in the

Netherlands on August 16, 18 and 21 before coming back for the six-team Asia Cup in United Arab Emirates beginning on September 28.

Pakistan squad for Netherlands ODIs: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan, Abdullah Shafique, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Imam-ul-Haq, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Haris, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Junior, Naseem Shah, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Zahid Mehmood

Pakistan squad for T20 Asia Cup: Babar Azam (captain), Shadab Khan, Asif Ali, Fakhar Zaman, Haider Ali, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim Junior, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Usman Qadir — AFP

Osaka makes triumphant return, will face Gauff in San Jose

LOS ANGELES: Four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka made a triumphant return from a two-month layoff by defeating Chinese teen Zheng Qinwen on Tuesday at the WTA San Jose hardcourt tournament.

The 24-year-old Japanese star outlasted the gritty 19-year-old 6-4, 3-6, 6-1 in a first-round match at the US Open tune-up tournament.

Osaka had not played a competitive match since losing in the first round of the French Open due to a left Achilles tendon injury.

"It's really cool to be back playing," Osaka said after the victory. "I haven't played since May. I didn't know that. Somebody told me that. It's really good to be back"

Former world number one Osaka, whose ranking has slid to 41st, will play for a quarterfinal berth against 18-year-old American sixth seed Coco Gauff, this year's French Open runner-up.

Gauff routed Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina 6-1, 6-0 in 54 minutes.

Osaka's match marked the return of her father, Leonard Francois, as her coach. Osaka had been working with Wim Fissette for the past two years.

"It's good for him to be back because he always makes me smile," Osaka said. "It's just good to be back so I'm really happy."

In the first set of her return match, Osaka broke Zheng for a 2-1 lead, saved a break point to hold in the fourth game and held

from there to capture the first set after 45 minutes with a service winner.

World number 51 Zheng broke for a 5-3 edge in the second set and held at love on a service winner to force a third set.

Osaka broke twice for a 4-0 lead in the final set, denied Zheng's fightback bid with a second-serve ace on a break point and held for a 5-0 lead.

After Zheng held, Osaka did the same to capture the match on a service winner after two hours and two minutes.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina of Kazakhstan lost on Monday in her first match since capturing her first major title, falling to 12th-ranked Daria Kasatkina.

—AFP



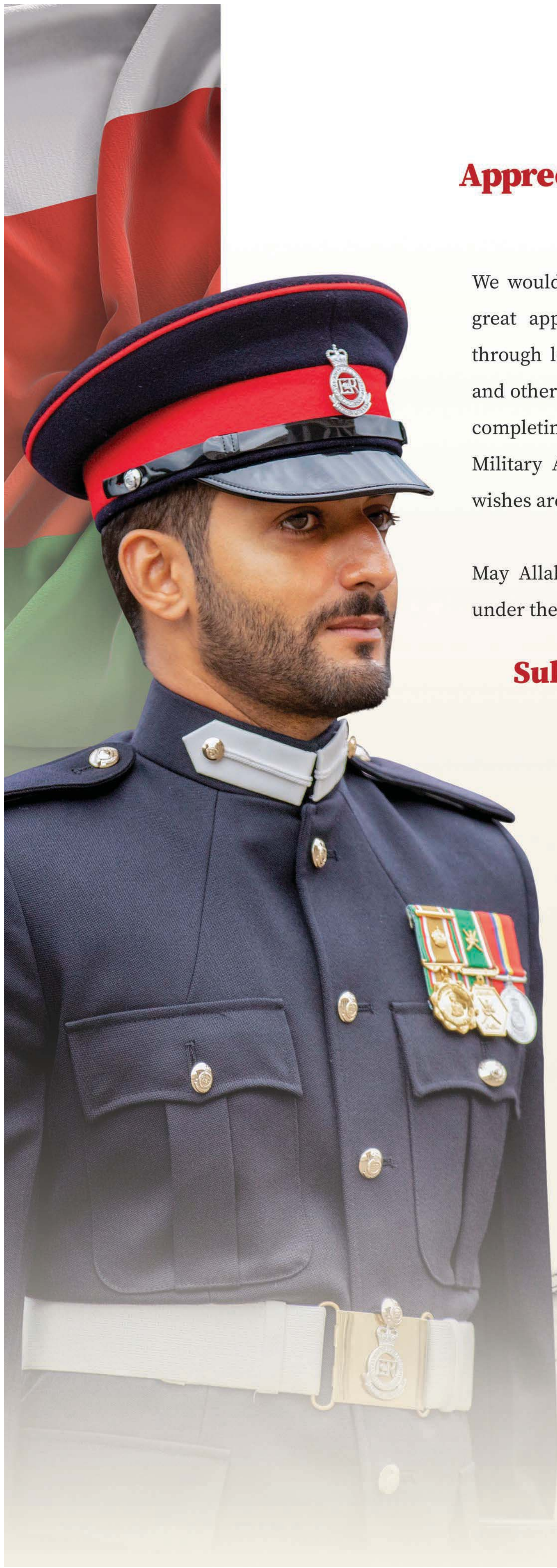
Germany's Olympic cycling champion Brennauer set to retire

BERLIN: Olympic track cycling champion Lisa Brennauer of Germany has said she will end her career after the Eur open championships in Munich later in the month.

Brennauer, 34, won seven world titles and was part of the pursuit team that won gold at last year's Tokyo Games.

"It is the right time. I am happy that I can leave the sport with this positive energy and that I could decide for myself when to quit, and wasn't forced to do so," Brennauer said.

Brennauer said she would be competing in track and road events in Munich and then hoped to share her knowledge and experience in the sport in the future, possibly as a coach. — dpa



Appreciation For Felicitations

We would like to express our sincere thanks and great appreciation to all who congratulated us through local newspapers, social media networks and other means of publication, on the occasion of completing the training program at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Your greetings and wishes are highly appreciated.

May Allah help us all to serve our country well under the wise leadership of His Majesty

Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

may Allah protect him

Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said

business

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4,664.77



CRUDE
OIL PRICE
Oman Crude \$99.21
Brent Crude \$101.79
Light Crude \$96.03



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To know more





making life easy

Gulf Drilling LLC wins 6-well drilling contract from Maha Energy

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 3

Swedish energy firm Maha Energy AB has announced the signing of an agreement with Gulf Drilling LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of MB Petroleum Services Worldwide, based in Muscat, for the drilling of a minimum of six wells, on Block 70, onshore Oman.

The drilling rig, Gulf Drilling 109, is a 1,000 hp rig currently located in the Wilayat of Adam in the Sultanate of Oman. The rig will now be prepared for the campaign and expected mobilisation is in October 2022.

The drilling programme will consist of a minimum of six wells on the Mafrag structure.

Immediate plans for the Mafrag oilfield include obtaining important reservoir information to assist in developing a full Field Development Plan. Information that will be acquired from two appraisal wells includes, but is not limited to, the Oil Water Contact (OWC), petrophysical and structural properties, and the identification of possible water disposal zones.

Four horizontal pilot production test wells will also



be drilled on the structure to ascertain oil productivity. These four wells will be completed with state-of-the-art PCP pumps from Canada and then placed on an extended flow test.

Maha was successful in securing Block 70, which contains the Mafrag heavy oil discovery, in a 2019-2020 bid round. The Mafrag structure is a delineated heavy oil field that was extensively tested by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) in 1988 and 1991. The field tested 15,700 barrels of 13° API oil over a period of 24 days using a Progressive Cavity Pump (PCP) from a single well.

According to the independent reserve auditor, Chapman Petroleum Engineering Ltd of Calgary, Canada, the Mafrag field may hold approximately 35 million barrels of recoverable oil.

The oil flows freely in the reservoir at 51° C and is expected to cold flow to surface in commercial quantities.

OIA boosts Future Generation Fund through German investment

HAMMAM AL BADI
MUSCAT, AUG 3

With a view to enhancing the Future Generation Fund consisting of foreign and local assets in public and private markets and in properties, and in order to achieve greater returns for future generations, Oman Investment Fund (OIA) in joint venture German developer Projektentwicklung has announced the success of its Eclipse Tower development in the German city of Düsseldorf, a real estate project which has been successfully sold to a renowned German-based institutional investor Union Investment months before the completion date, despite the challenges that affected the building materials supply chain worldwide.

Ibrahim al Eisri (pictured), Director-General of Private Equity at OIA, said that OIA always looks for investment opportunities in promising areas that promote economic diversity and contribute to the maximisation of revenues to be used in forming reserves and savings for future generations and realising financial sustainability.

OIA's investments are currently distributed sectorally and geographically over more than 40 countries across the globe. Moreover, OIA's investment philosophy is aligned with the government's vision to strengthen areas of economic cooperation with other countries with the aim of maintaining joint interest and finding international partners to attract FDI to the Sultanate of



‘OIA looks for investment opportunities in promising areas that promote economic diversity and contribute to the maximisation of revenues to be used in forming reserves and savings for future generations



triangular shape and consists of 16 floors covering about 27,500m2 of leased space with contemporary offices, multi-purpose rooms, and terraces with panoramic views. The tower is 60m high and enjoys an attractive architectural and structural design.

The building uses a rooftop solar power system that supplies eco-friendly electricity to common areas of the office tower; in addition to 46 electric charging poles in the underground car parking and bicycle parking. The building is controlled by smart building technology.

It is noteworthy that OIA is targeting investments in the real estate sector according to a strategy that focuses on geographical diversity and building partnerships with countries and investors who demonstrate great expertise/experience in this sector.

OIA's real estate portfolio is spread across numerous development projects, value-added projects and key long-term projects; aiming to achieve good returns and mitigate risk rate in the long term.

Oman.

Alejandro Obermeier, Head of Investment Management at Union Investment which bought the Tower, said: "By buying Eclipse Tower, we now own a well-known and competitive building with high quality, modern and flexible office space and high sustainability.

Given the limited supply of high-quality spaces in remarkable locations in Düsseldorf, we expect to obtain good rental returns."

Eclipse Tower, to be completed in Q4 2022, enjoys a remarkable location that connects Dusseldorf city centre with the airport.

It is characterised by its

24 MENA IPOs raise \$13.5 billion in first-half of 2022

KEYTREND: H1 2022 witnessed a 500-per cent increase in IPO volume and 2,952-per cent increase in value when compared to H1 2021

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 3

According to the latest EY MENA IPO Eye report, the MENA region witnessed a 500-per cent year-on-year increase in the number of companies listing during H1 2022 with 24 IPOs raising proceeds of \$13.5 billion – an increase of 2,952 per cent in value when compared to the same period in 2021.

During the second quarter of 2022, MENA IPO markets saw nine IPOs raise approximately \$9 billion in proceeds. Although the number of IPOs decreased by 40 per cent when compared with Q1

2022, the proceeds raised increased by 133 per cent.

Globally, 630 IPOs raised \$95.4 billion in proceeds during H1 2022, which is a significant drop of 46 per cent in the number of IPOs and 58 per cent in the proceeds raised, as compared to H1 2021.

Heightened volatility caused by geopolitical tensions and macroeconomic factors, declining valuation and poor post-IPO share price performance led to the postponement of many global IPOs during the first half of 2022.

Brad Watson, EY MENA Strategy and Transactions Leader, says: "MENA IPO activity continues to defy global trends and remains a bright spot in a challenging market. The number and value of deals in the second quarter of this year confirms that investors still have an appetite for growth, yield and diversification. Several MENA listings from a range



of sectors were oversubscribed, which is encouraging for companies looking to list during the second half of this year."

In the United Arab Emirates, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority PJSC (DEWA) raised over \$6 billion, becoming the biggest IPO in EMEA since 2019

and the largest IPO to date in the UAE. The order book was oversubscribed by 37 times.

Borouge plc, the second-largest IPO during H1 2022, raised \$2 billion with an aggregate oversubscription of almost 42 times. TECOM Group raised \$454 million and saw an

oversubscription level of more than 21 times.

ADC Acquisition Corp PJSC became the first special purpose acquisition company (SPAC) to ever be listed in the MENA region, raising \$99.9 million with its listing on the Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange (ADX). ADC was established by ADQ through its Alpha Oryx special purpose vehicle, and Chimera Investment as a SPAC for the purpose of identifying and acquiring one or more businesses.

In Saudi Arabia, Saudi Home Loans Company was listed on the Tadawul during Q2 2022 and raised \$160 million, with the book being oversubscribed by 50 times. Retal Urban Development Company raised \$384 million with its institutional order book being 62 times oversubscribed.

On the ADX, GFH Financial Group BSC completed its fourth

regional listing, with its shares already listed on the Bahrain Bourse, Boursa Kuwait and the Dubai Financial Market (DFM). In April 2022, the ADX rebranded its Second Market into the Growth Market, with the Invictus Investment Company becoming the thirteenth company to be listed on the Growth Market during Q2 2022.

Gregory Hughes, EY MENA IPO and Transaction Diligence Leader, says: "The second quarter of 2022 continued the momentum of the first quarter, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading IPO activity in the MENA region. Despite concern from investors regarding the risk of a global recession, there remains a healthy pipeline of IPO candidates from KSA and the UAE, as well as quieter IPO markets such as Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, looking to come to market in the future."



Digital Private School to expand for academic year

MUSCAT: Digital Private School (DPS), is a destination for creativity, innovation, and technology. With its student-friendly facilities, DPS aspires to create a generation of knowledgeable and innovative thinkers.

After a successful first year filled with students eager to discover the world, combined with the help and support of teachers, the DPS family is ready to expand for the new academic year 2022-2023.

DPS is a candidate school for the International Baccalaureate (IB), which consists of the Primary Years Programme (PYP) from KG-1 to Grade 6 and the Middle Years Programme (MYP) from Grade 7 to Grade 10. As part of incorporating technology into the education students of DPS participate in free after-school extra-curricular activities such as assembling robots, coding, 3D printing, and Virtual Reality

(VR). To ensure that all students of DPS receive the needed support during lessons, the class size is less than 20 students.

At DPS, all nationalities are welcome. As an international school, DPS believes in diversity and sharing culture. Currently, the students are from Oman, India, Serbia, Nigeria, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan and others. As part of the IB values, commitment to high-quality education is the core of what DPS believes. All students from Grade 1 to Grade 10 receive a laptop; additionally, smart boards are used in all classrooms as a tool to deliver education interactively.

At Digital Private School, teachers follow the IB educational system, which focuses on student-centred, inquiry-based learning, allowing students to explore and expand their global awareness and to develop skills and abilities to equip them to face the outside world.

APICORP posts H1 net income of \$52 million

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 4

The Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation (APICORP), a multilateral financial institution, announced on Tuesday its financial results for the first six months of the year ending June 30, 2022.

APICORP continued its post-pandemic growth with major financial and operational achievements against a backdrop of market volatility and inflation concerns that have sparked significant rates hikes and asset pricing fluctuations globally. At the end of the first half of 2022, APICORP recorded a net income of \$52 million, a 67-per cent y-o-y increase.

The Corporation's balance sheet marginally grew by 3 per cent y-o-y to \$8.26 billion. Net income from operations grew

significantly to \$97.9 million in H1 2022 from \$40.7 million in H1 2021. APICORP's Treasury assets reached \$2.9 billion, representing an increase of \$712 million or 32 per cent y-o-y rise.

Dr Aabed al Saadoun, Chairman of the APICORP Board, said: "We continue to deliver robust and consistent results in the first half of 2022, despite growing market volatility and inflation concerns. Our structural and strategic resilience has facilitated exceptional performance in our business segments."

Khalid al Ruwaigh, Chief Executive Officer of APICORP, said: "APICORP recorded an increase in balance sheet and income y-o-y during the first six months of 2022. All business units continued to deliver growth showcasing alignment with our growth strategy."

Bank Muscat's QR code e-payments assists merchant partners

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat is offering its merchant partners a revolutionary payment experience that expedites digital payments by their customers at the checkout counter.

It is easy for businesses across the country to implement QR-code based payments. This means that retail outlets can easily accept digital payments by customers using the mBanking app or Wallet of any bank in Oman.

Merchants can easily implement the new payment solution by downloading the Bank Muscat Merchant Wallet App and transforming their smartphones into a payment channel using either Dynamic QR or Static QR codes.

Alternatively, merchants may also choose to implement Bank Muscat PoS machines, which enable QR-code based payments apart from those through regular Credit, Debit and Prepaid Cards. Most importantly, the QR-code scanning option allows merchant partners to accept e-payments



from customers quickly and securely, irrespective of their bank or wallet. Payments can be easily initiated from a customer's Mobile Banking application or Wallet application to the merchant's account by scanning a QR code. A merchant can also request money from a customer using the Mobile Payments System registered mobile number / Alias / QR code.

Says Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, on the occasion: "The currently ongoing digital transformation will bring about a huge positive change as both businesses and customers shift to digital

payments, which offers prompt and highly secure payment options that boost economic growth and development. QR-code payments enable small businesses to accept cashless transactions in secure and reliable manner in line with legal requirements. Merchants can easily track sales and payments, leading to better overall responsiveness and customer experience. We are delighted to have already onboarded over 800 merchants to the QR-based payments facility and look forward to welcoming more partners in the coming days."

QR-code payments are based on the Central Bank of Oman's Mobile Payment System (MPS), which also enables customers to easily make payments, transfer funds or request funds from others. Funds can be transferred instantaneously using one of the following modes. For person to person transfers, money can be sent or collected from the recipient's default account or wallet.

'Send money' can be initiated

by using mobile number, Alias or by QR code scanning and 'collect money' can be initiated using recipient Alias/Mobile Number if both the sender and recipient are registered on MPS. Bank Muscat customers have the facility to register on the MPS via both its BM Wallet and the mBanking app. Funds can be transferred instantly and at zero cost to both Bank Muscat and non-Bank Muscat accounts or wallets by using their MPS -registered mobile number/alias/QR code. There is no need to enter an account number. Beneficiaries can be instead selected from one's phone contact list to initiate a payment.

As Oman's largest financial services provider with 174 branches, over 800 ATMs and CDMs, and a large number of secure and convenient digital payment options that benefit its customers, Bank Muscat is committed to providing the largest portfolio of banking services that meet the varied needs of its customers.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds ties up with Nitol Niloy Group to expand Bangladesh operations

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong network of over 285 outlets spread across 10 countries is scheduled to open a new manufacturing facility in Modonpur, Bangladesh in partnership with Nitol Niloy group, a leading diversified business conglomerate based in Bangladesh.

The stone laying ceremony of this facility was held on July 28 by M D Sirazul Islam, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), in the presence of Abdul Matlub Ahmad, Chairman, Nitol Niloy Group, Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Ameer CMC, Director Finance, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, management team members of both the organisations and well-wishers.

The manufacturing facility, which is being set up in partnership with Nitol Niloy group, a diversified business conglomerate in Bangladesh, is the first venture of Malabar Gold and Diamonds into the country. "We are very excited to start our journey in Bangladesh,



a country offering a wide variety of opportunities and we are happy to have Nitol Niloy group as our partner in this journey. With our combined experience and expertise, we hope to replicate our transparent and sustainable business model in the country and turn Bangladesh into a jewellery manufacturing hub for the global audience while contributing positively to the country, its economy and society", said Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold and Diamonds.

The new facility will have a production capacity of 6,000 kg of gold per year with high quality & finish, utilising skilled craftsmen and the latest technologies like casting, CNC and CAD-CAM

(3D). It is expected to create approximately 250 jobs.

The facility, which is scheduled to open in October 2022 will include different departments for production including CNC cutting, chains, anklet, rings, bangles, 22K & 24K coins, as well as diamond setting.

The initial operations of the manufacturing unit will largely focus on exports and will provide numerous employment opportunities.

On the joint venture between Malabar Gold & Diamonds and Nitol Niloy group, Abdul Matlub Ahmad, Chairman, Nitol Niloy group commented, "Malabar Gold & Diamonds is a household name among the Bangladeshi community in the GCC and Far-east. We are

very excited to be diversifying our operations into jewellery sector by partnering with this brand that is synonymous with trust and quality. Through this partnership, we look forward to leveraging our business expertise in the region to add further value to the economy by generating jobs and providing skill training"

As a testament to the group's strong focus on sustainability, this facility will also be designed to incorporate various energy-efficient and environmentally friendly features and promote clean energy. In an effort to minimise wastewater pollution, effluent water released from the plant will be subjected to three layers of sedimentation treatment and will be released only after pH levels have been balanced to an adequate extent.

MD Sirazul Islam, Executive Chairman, Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA) commented, "I pledge my wholehearted support to this project, including fast-tracking all the required permissions and we will also look into export incentives for jewellery export."

Al Mouj Muscat wins two titles at Real Estate Asia Awards

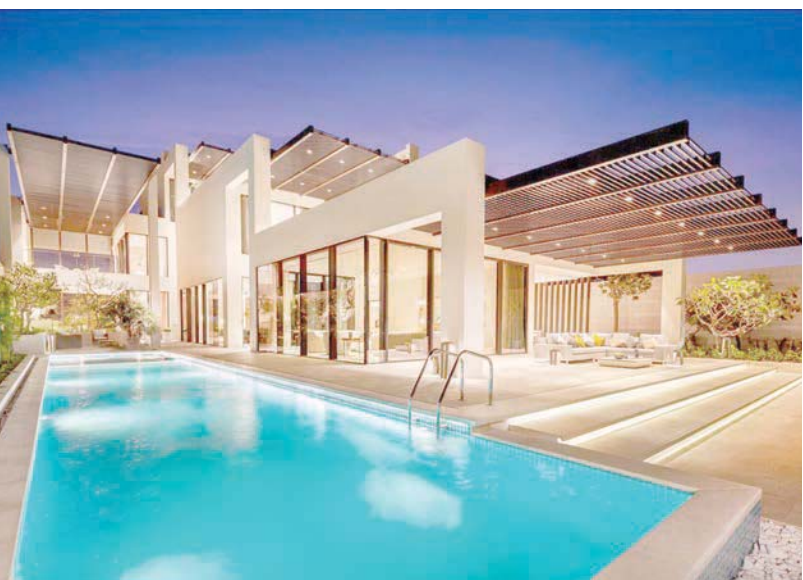
MUSCAT: Oman's premium lifestyle destination Al Mouj Muscat has received regional recognition at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2022, winning two titles in a prestigious awards programme that celebrates the innovative real estate developments and companies across the Asia Pacific region.

Al Mouj Muscat's magnificent Zunairah mansions received the Luxury Residential Development of the Year, and Beyond Dreams, a promotional campaign for its exclusive collection of contemporary Golf Beach Residences won Marketing & Brand Initiative of

the Year. The awards programme recognises major breakthroughs, innovations as well as key players across the real estate industry with the two awards providing external affirmation that Al Mouj has set a new benchmark for unparalleled and luxury living.

CEO Nasser bin Masoud al Sheibani says: "We are delighted with these awards as they honour excellence and endorse our ability to creating products that meet buyers' aspirations.

"Thanks to our guiding philosophy of Placemaking, our premium properties nurture a deep



connection between people and what's around them and it is fantastic to be recognised by Real Estate Asia as an innovator both in relation to our homes and how we communicate and engage with customers."

Golf Beach Residences' Beyond Dreams campaign impressed judges through a creative approach that was extremely effective as, in addition to the high number of hits on digital platforms, it generated [delete this: fact mentioned in par 2: over 38 million video views and became the most watched video in Oman and over 1,300 sales leads, resulting in 90 per cent of the villas selling within

four weeks of launch.

Salma al Hashmi, Vice President of Marketing says: "The high-end design of the villas meant we needed to capture the imagination of the most discerning customers and so we built on the insight that to 'live in luxury' today extends beyond the physical product to a desire for unique experiences and emotional equilibrium.

Al Mouj is Oman's first Integrated Tourism Complex (ITC), a master-planned lifestyle community with an ocean-side setting that since 2006 has become home to 8,000 people from 85 nationalities.

Entries open for Energy Future Leaders Programme

MUSCAT: The Energy Future Leaders Programme — organised as part of the 2022 edition of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman (GHSO) Global Conference & Exhibition – formally kicked off on August 1, 2022.

The novel initiative, will open the way for young energy researchers, from and abroad, to be part of Oman's premier green energy forum set to take place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Muscat from December 5 to 7, 2022.

Announcing the start of the Energy Future Leaders Programme, Dr Intisar al Busaidy – Team Leader, said: “For a limited period only, interested college and university students from Oman and abroad can register to be part of this exciting opportunity to showcase their research work on green hydrogen at this year's GHSO 2022 Global Summit and Exhibition. The winning submissions will be invited on stage to speak about their research work and receive

prestigious awards as well.

As many as 120-plus leading universities from around the world, including all of the universities in the Sultanate of Oman, are expected to participate in the Energy Future Leaders Programme, says Dr Al Busaidy, a well-known Omani Petroleum Engineer.

“We expect interest to be strong primarily because green energy is an emerging discipline with huge potential across the world. Participants will have the opportunity to network with industry professionals and peers, giving them valuable exposure to this exciting industry.”

But the programme will have broader spin-offs for the goal of human capacity building and R&D, Dr Al Busaidy adds. “We envision the potential for this programme to prepare a new cadre of young professionals for jobs in the future green hydrogen industry, as well as enhance R&D opportunities in the green energy space.”



Abstracts of student research work must be submitted in the prescribed format latest by July 31, 2022 to be eligible to enter the programme. Following an evaluation phase by an eminent jury, a shortlist of merit-worthy candidates will be invited to submit a detailed paper on their work. While all of the finalists will be provided space in the exhibition area to showcase their

work, three of them will receive the distinct honour to present their work during the Summit.

“We look forward to working closely with Dr Intisar and her all-Omani team in delivering an impactful Energy Future Leaders Programme as part of GHSO 2022,” said Abdullah Al Harthy, Chairman, Birba Energy, the lead organisers of the Green Hydrogen Summit Oman event.

“By opening up the programme to participants from both Oman and abroad, we envision the potential for cross-border collaboration in R&D and academic filed, knowledge sharing and skills development in new cutting-edge disciplines.”

Organised by Birba Energy in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the 3-day summit and exhibition will focus on Oman's strategy to develop a world-class industry that, on the one hand, meets the energy requirements of the Sultanate of Oman's future low-carbon economy, and on the other, serve as a major global supplier of the carbon-neutral fuel.

Given the strategic national significance of this forum, GHSO 2022 has received strong sponsorship support from a number of leading energy companies, developers and technology providers. Oman Society for Petroleum Services (OPAL), and energy Development Oman has signed

up as Host sponsor Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) has signed up as main sponsor. Sohar Port and Freezone as Diamond Sponsor.

ThyssenKrupp, Technip energies and Worley as platinum sponsors. Sohar Aluminum and TUV SUD as silver sponsors. ZL OER chemicals and STS as session sponsors. Also backing the event are leading global organisations notably the International Energy Agency (IEA), Green Hydrogen Lab, Arab- German Chamber of Commerce and Industry, AKH German Industry and Commerce, and World Hydrogen Leaders.

For further details regarding registration, sponsorship, partnership and exhibition space, check out the dedicated website: greenhydrogensummitoman.com. For details about eligibility and registration criteria, interested students are requested to check out dedicated page: www.greenhydrogensummitoman.com.

Egypt's tourism sector eyes stronger inflows



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

THERE ARE EXPECTATIONS OF MORE TRAVELLERS COMING TO EGYPT DURING 2023, AT A TIME WHEN THE TOURIST MOVEMENT IS CURRENTLY TANGIBLE AS A RESULT OF THE INCREASE IN TOURIST DEMAND AND THE RESUMPTION OF AIR AND TOURISM MOVEMENT GLOBALLY

Nobody denies that Egypt is one of the leading countries in the Arab world in terms of tourism. Millions of tourists visit Egypt annually, despite the congestion it suffers from, notwithstanding the great efforts being made to establish more highways, commercial centres and entertainment zones to attract tourists and families.

The tourism sector represents about 15 per cent of Egypt's GDP and is an important source of hard currency. Everyone knows that Egypt, like the rest of the tourist countries in the world, has suffered from the effects of the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic during the past two years, which has led to a significant decline in aviation, tourism and hotel traffic. As a result, tourism institutions have accumulated debts. But the situation has improved over the last several months.

During the first half of 2022, Egypt witnessed a good recovery and hotel occupancy rates rose compared to the same period last year, with Cairo hotels reporting an improvement of more than 60 per cent, according

to official data. Tourist inflows are expected to be stronger during the coming winter period, especially if global economic conditions improve and the Russian-Ukrainian war comes to a halt.

Egypt is working on reforms for issuing tourist visas and providing more facilities to attract tourists and foreign investments in construction and real estate projects despite the decline in the local currency of the Egyptian pound and the inflationary pressures resulting from global economic conditions.

More than a month ago, the Egyptian government launched a promotional tourism campaign within the framework of its strategy in the Arab market and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to attract tourists by presenting promotional films that talk about the most important Egyptian tourist destinations and components through artists, advertising channels, sites and social media platforms.

According to a local website, which specialises in tourism and travel affairs, Egypt ranked 9th in the world among the 17 most popular tourist destinations in the world in terms

of culture, history, distinguished geographical location, entertainment and various marine activities. There are expectations of more travellers coming to Egypt during 2023, at a time when the tourist movement is currently tangible as a result of the increase in tourist demand and the resumption of air and tourism movement globally.

Today, it's possible to obtain a tourist visa from various Egyptian access ports for about 180 nationalities who can enter this country for tourism – an important economic sector for the countries of the world in providing annual revenues in public budgets.

Egypt, among other countries of the world, is fervently hoping that the Russian-Ukrainian war comes to an end quickly. Russia and Ukraine, among other countries, have been important source markets for tourism in Egypt.

Meanwhile, the continuation of the war will increase the burden on countries in terms of access to foodstuff, notably grain, while high oil and gas prices high continue to have negative consequences for importing countries.

Commodity malware on the rise surpassing ransomware



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 3

Cisco Talos, one of the world's largest private threat intelligence teams released its latest quarterly report that examines incident response trends and global cyber threats.

According to the report, during April, May and June 2022, commodity malware outpaced ransomware for the first time in more than a year, comprising 20 per cent of the threats observed, followed by ransomware, phishing, business email compromise (BEC) and advanced persistent threats.

This quarter mainly saw an increase in commodity malware threats, widely available for purchase or download. This type of malware is typically not customised and is used by a variety of actors to deliver additional threats in various stages of their operation and/or to deliver additional threats. Cisco Talos also observed ongoing Qakbot activity, which leverages thread hijacking, allowing threat actors to use compromised email accounts to insert malicious replies into the middle of existing email conversations.

Compared to previous years, ransomware made up a smaller portion, comprising 15 per cent of all threats, compared with 25 per cent last quarter. The drop is attributed to various factors including the closure of several ransomware

groups, whether it be of their own volition or the actions of global law enforcement agencies and governments.

Targeted Industries
The top-targeted industry continues to be telecommunications, following a trend where it was among the top targeted sectors in Q4 2021 and Q1 2022, closely followed by organisations in the education and healthcare sectors.

Other targeted verticals include financial services, local government, food services, retail, automotive, information technology, production and manufacturing.

Meanwhile, the United States continues to be the top targeted country followed by Europe, Asia, North America and Middle East.

Commenting on the report's findings, Fady Younes, Cybersecurity Director, EMEA Service Providers and MEA said: “Organisations across countries of the Middle East and Africa hold a huge amount of sensitive data that is prone to cyber threats and needs to be secured. With cyberattacks becoming more sophisticated, the demand for comprehensive cybersecurity solutions is increasing.”

He added: “Cisco is uniquely positioned to support governments and businesses of all sizes and across industries in our region, addressing the cyber security challenges they are facing, and helping them increase their security resilience.”

Fiscal policy should return to fundamentals



KENNETH ROGOFF

The writer is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics, was the chief economist of the IMF from 2001 to 2003

Recent large interest-rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank suggest that monetary policymakers are intent on moving forcefully to bring down inflation. But where are the scores of economic commentators who for years have been arguing that fiscal policy – usually meaning deficit spending – needs to play a much more active role in managing business cycles?

If it really makes sense to use both monetary and fiscal policy to counter a routine downturn, why are central banks suddenly on their own in attempting to engineer a soft landing with inflation at a four-decade high?

Before the 2008 global financial crisis, the consensus was that monetary policy should take the lead in dealing with ordinary business cycles.

Fiscal policy should play a

supporting role, except in the event of wars and natural catastrophes such as pandemics.

When systemic financial crises occurred, the thinking went, monetary policy could respond immediately but fiscal policy should quickly follow and take the lead over time. Taxation and government expenditure are intensely political, but successful economies could navigate this problem in emergencies.

Over the past decade, however, the view that fiscal policy should also play a more dominant macroeconomic stabilisation role in normal times has gained increasing traction. This shift was influenced by the fact that central bank interest rates ran up against the zero-interest-rate bound. (Some, including me, believe that this argument ignores relatively simple and effective options for cutting rates below zero, but I will not take that up here.) But the zero-bound was by no means the

entire argument.

It is true that “helicopter money” and other transfer programmes proved extremely effective during the initial stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, helping to cushion individuals while reducing long-term economic scarring. But here's the rub: No country, and certainly not a large, politically divided one such as the United States or the United Kingdom, has really figured out how to conduct technocratic fiscal policy on a consistent basis, because politics is hardwired into fiscal policy.

There are myriad ways for governments to spend money, and myriad possible criteria for deciding who merits support and who should foot the bill. Horse trading and implementation issues mean there will always be inefficiencies, and these tend to be bigger as the spending bill increases.

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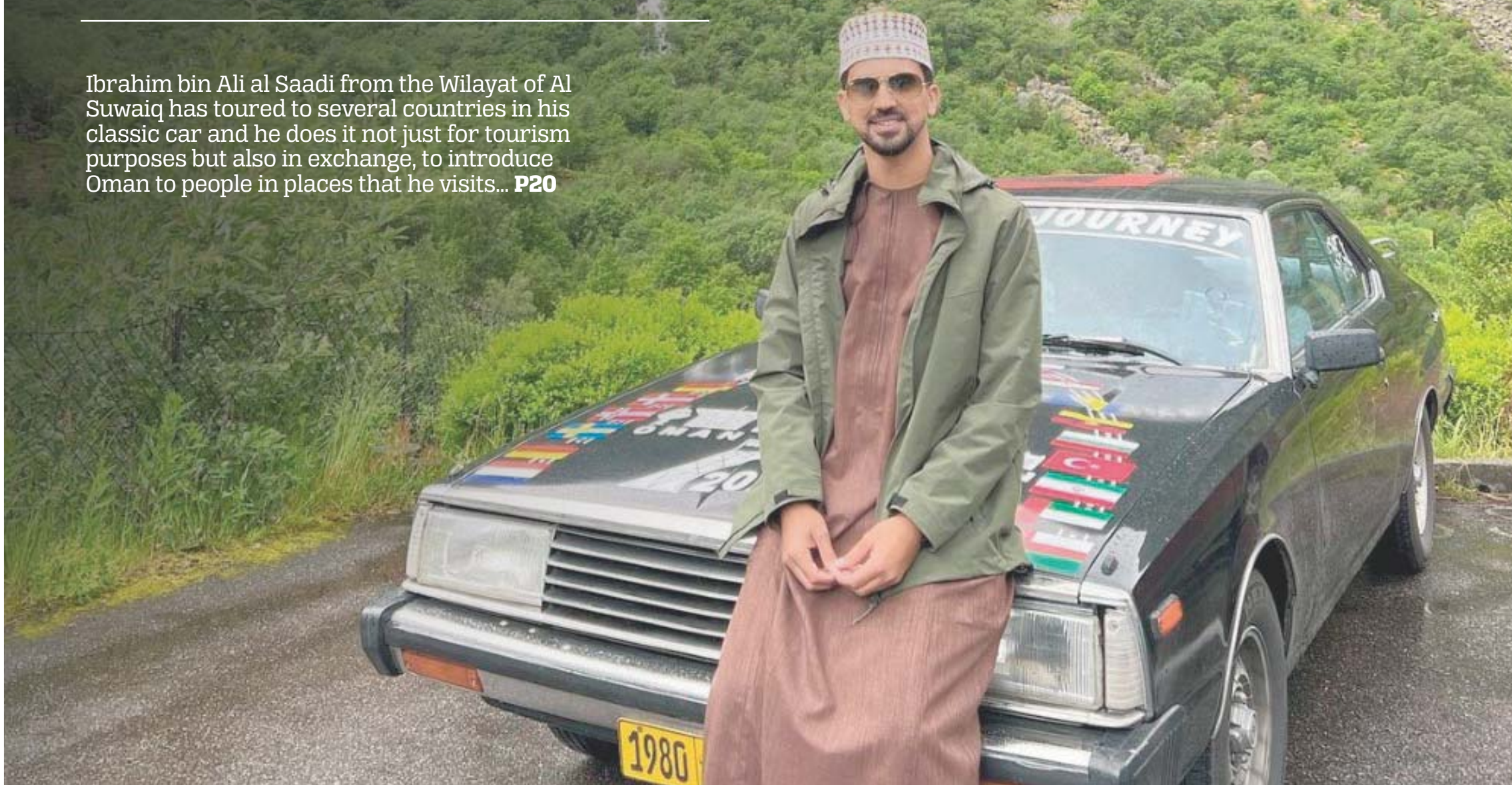


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From Oman to Europe, in a classic car

Ibrahim bin Ali al Saadi from the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq has toured to several countries in his classic car and he does it not just for tourism purposes but also in exchange, to introduce Oman to people in places that he visits... **P20**



Gorgosaurus sells for \$6.1 mn at New York auction

THE FIRST SKELETON of a Gorgosaurus dinosaur to go under the hammer sold for \$6.1 million at auction in New York on Thursday, Sotheby's said. The specimen is 10 feet tall (three meters) and 22 feet long, and had been expected to fetch between \$5 million and \$8 million.

"The result places the Gorgosaurus among the most valuable dinosaurs ever sold at auction, and establishes a new benchmark for a Gorgosaurus skeleton," Sotheby's said in a statement.

The Gorgosaurus roamed the earth approximately 77 million years ago.

A typical adult weighed about two tonnes, slightly smaller than its more famous relative, the Tyrannosaurus rex.

Paleontologists say it was fiercer and faster than the T-Rex, with a stronger bite of around 42,000 newtonnes compared to 35,000.

The skeleton was discovered in the Judith River Formation near Havre, in the US state of Montana in 2018.

The sale marked the first time that Sotheby's had auctioned a full dinosaur skeleton since it sold Sue the T-Rex in 1997 for \$8.36 million.

"Today's Gorgosaurus came to auction without a name, providing the buyer the exclusive opportunity to name the dinosaur," Sotheby's said.

Sotheby's did not reveal the buyer.

Unlike other countries, the United States does not restrict the sale or export of fossils, meaning the skeleton could end up overseas. — **AFP**



READ

JUST MERCY BY BRYAN STEVENSON

A civil rights lawyer and MacArthur grant recipient's memoir of his decades of work to free innocent people condemned to death.



A TIGER'S DEATH

Two Sumatran tiger siblings were put down at Berlin's Tier park zoo within two weeks due to health problems. The decision to put down male tiger Willi was taken after an examination showed significant deterioration to his right knee joint, the zoo announced on Thursday evening.

— **dpa**



SOUTH AFRICA ON THE MAP

South African musical export Amapiano has crossed borders and cultural barriers, reaching as far as Japan. To top female artists Kamo Mphela and DBN Gogo, who helped put the dance music genre on the map, it is about inclusivity. Mphela, 22, from Johannesburg's Soweto township, took a leap of faith four years ago and jumped into the world of Amapiano. Now she is a household name in South Africa and tours the globe. — **Reuters**





Solar electric tricycles give Zimbabwean women a lift

FOR YEARS, selling eggs was a joyless business for Danai Bvochora, as most of the money she made went to cover minibus fares to the market in a rural area of Zimbabwe.

That was until an earth-brown solar-powered electric tricycle changed her life.

"We used to carry loads on our heads before. The tricycle has lessened the burden," said the 47-year-old from Domboshava, about 40 kilometres (25 miles) north of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

She carefully loads eggs onto the tricycle's trailer before embarking on a bumpy eight-kilometre journey to the market.

"We even use it to go to church and worship," Bvochora said, explaining a single trip to buy chicken feed from a local business centre used to cost her \$12.

But charging her new solar-powered vehicle sets her back only \$2.50 every two weeks, and the mother of two is now making a profit.

Bvochora is among groups of women in Domboshava, a district renowned for its picturesque hills and giant boulders, who received a tricycle last year as part of a European Union-funded project to assist small-scale farmers.

Assembled by Harare-based social enterprise Mobility for Africa, the three-wheelers were first introduced in Zimbabwe in 2019 to help women develop their businesses, said the company's director Shantha Bloemen.

Transport has historically been inadequate in sparsely



populated rural areas of Zimbabwe, where women often have to walk long distances carrying heavy loads on their heads to trade products — which sometimes spoil on the way in the heat.

Electric push
Yet the idea of addressing that with electric three-wheelers raised a few eyebrows at first, said American-born Bloemen, who is a permanent resident in Zimbabwe and lived in the country in the 1990s when she worked for Unicef.

"It was very lonely when we started," Bloemen said, explaining her team had to work hard to prove to funders that the idea was viable.

"No one was talking about electric mobility in Africa let alone for rural women."

Three years later, the social enterprise is planning to more than triple its current fleet of 88 motorised vehicles

by the end of 2022.

It operates three solar-powered stations, where drivers can come to swap their lithium battery for a fully charged one when running low on energy — and foots the bill when something breaks.

Zimbabwe has for more than two decades faced tough economic conditions, with rural areas particularly hard hit. The country's economy is mainly driven by the informal sector, to which Domboshava women farmers such as

these belong.

While some of the three-wheelers — nicknamed "Hamba" or "go" in the local Ndebele language — were bought by the EU and then rented out for \$5 a day.

Phyllis Chifamba, a 37-year-old mother of four, uses her rented vehicle as a taxi.

Her clients include sick people going to a clinic, pregnant women going for medical checks, and villagers and farm dwellers going to do their shopping and other errands.

"I am able to provide food for my family and pay school fees for my children with the money I make from using the Hamba," she said.

Mobility for Africa said it was planning to expand operations to other areas.

"African women are the most entrepreneurial, most productive but no one takes them seriously," said Bloemen. "If we solve the transport problems, rural economies will work. Small farmers will get more produce to the market."

Beneficiary Frasia Gotosa said her small business has improved since she has been driving to the market as her vegetables no longer rot while waiting for the bus or pushing a wheelbarrow.

"Now I get to the market while my produce is still fresh," she said. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

New orchestra goes on tour on Ukraine's 'cultural front'



SINCE RUSSIA invaded Ukraine in February, the air raid sirens disrupt Svyatoslav Yanchuk's concerts, forcing musicians and audience members to seek refuge underground.

"When the alarm stops, we can return to the stage. When it lasts more than an hour, the concert is called off," said Yanchuk, a percussionist with the Odessa Philharmonic.

"It happens almost every concert," he said.

But in August, Yanchuk will finally be able to play without interruptions on an international trip with the newly created Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra.

Along with dozens of

but whatever comes from Russian culture is on hold for the moment," said bassoon player Mark Kreshchenskiy.

Kreshchenskiy and his brother Dmytro, a violist, played for the Saint Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra in Russia for eight years and were there when the attack began.

"We left Russia in the first days of the attack. It was hard but there was no other decision to take," Kreshchenskiy told.

The two brothers fled to neighbouring Estonia, carrying their instruments.

Ukraine has stopped all fighting-age men from leaving the country



other musicians, Yanchuk will be on a tour of Europe and the United States, which started in Warsaw this week and will include the Proms in London on Sunday.

The orchestra, assembled from musical ensembles in Ukraine and Europe, is the brainchild of Canadian conductor Keri-Lynn Wilson, whose grandparents were from Ukraine.

Wilson was in Warsaw when the war broke out.

"As I witnessed the refugees streaming into Poland, I had a dream of uniting Ukrainian musicians in an artistic force to help them fight for their freedom," she said.

The project quickly took shape with the support of the Polish National Opera in Warsaw and Metropolitan Opera in New York.

RUSSIAN MUSIC 'ON HOLD'

Despite never having played together before, the orchestra came up with a concert programme in just 10 days.

The concert starts with Ukrainian composer Valentyn Sylvestrov's Symphony No. 7 — a homage to the victims of the war.

There is "no Russian music", according to orchestra members, whose lives and careers have been turned upside down by the war.

"Russia has geniuses

under martial law in case they have to be drafted, but some orchestra members have temporary permission to do so.

"I was able to see my 10-year-old daughter again after five months of separation because she is a pupil at the Gdansk Opera" in north-east Poland, said Dmytro Ilin, from the Kyiv Philharmonic.

Once the Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra tour is over, Ilin will return to Kyiv — along with percussionist Yevgen Ulyanov, whose son was born when the war broke out.

"My son is waiting for me," he said.

CULTURAL FRONT

Like many of their colleagues, Ilin and Ulyanov want to continue practising their craft in their native country.

"I have the feeling that we are soldiers of music because we are doing our best at the cultural front," said Nazar Stets, a double bass player and Kyiv resident.

Stets is particularly keen on the Ukrainian repertoire, saying: "It's now the time to play even more Ukrainian music."

"If we don't play our Ukrainian music, nobody will," he said.

Asked if music could really be a weapon, Ilin said: "Since childhood, music has been what we do. We have to act in one way or another." — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

LIFESTYLE

Top model Bella Hadid joins metaverse with NFT collection



US SUPERMODEL Bella Hadid has stepped from the catwalk into the metaverse with the launch of CY-B3LLA — a collection of Non-Fungible Tokens featuring artwork based on 3-D scans of her face and body.

Hadid, 25, said in an interview from New York that she was intrigued by shared virtual world environments and that she wanted to make “cool versions” of herself after becoming obsessed with video games during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Earlier, she said on her Instagram account that she had created the NFTs to “encourage travel, community, growth, fantasy and human interactions”.

NFTs are a digital asset that exist on blockchain, a record of transactions kept on networked computers. All kinds of digital objects - including images, videos, music and text - can be bought and sold as NFTs.

“It was super fun,” Hadid said of the process, saying the end results really have her “exact facial expressions”.

Her collection comprises 11,111 NFTs and they were made in collaboration with the NFT minting platform reBASE.

Inspiration for the CY-B3LLA NFTs came from 10 different countries, with input from local artists.

“To see what kind of version of me that their brain concocted was really interesting... There are so many different versions of me that you could make and not ones that I could ever dream up,” she said.

The locations and accompanying digital assets are set to be revealed between now and September, with the first batch featuring images of a robotic-style Hadid inspired by Japan.

Each NFT also works as a passport to a global community, unlocking rewards and enabling the holder access to real events attended by Hadid.

The date when these NFTs can be snapped up is yet to be announced, but interested buyers can register online.

“It’s really exciting to see that people actually, like, want to be involved,” said Hadid.

“Every time I put something out, it feels like a birthday party, like no one’s going to show up. And so it’s been really nice to see... people actually... kind of tuning in and understanding it.” — Reuters

ENTERTAINMENT

Comanche warriors take spotlight in ‘Predator’ prequel ‘Prey’



HAVING BATTLED mighty heroes across time and space, the invisible extra-terrestrial hunters of the “Predator” films have a new — or rather, old — foe in an 18th-century female Comanche warrior.

Prequel film “Prey,” out on Friday on Hulu in the United States, is perhaps the most unlikely direction yet for the “Predator” franchise, which first hit screens with Arnold Schwarzenegger’s 1987 action classic.

Since then, the blood-thirsty trophy-hunting creatures have slaughtered humans in Central American rainforests, Los Angeles and faraway planets, even battling the monsters of the “Alien” franchise in two crossover films.

The latest instalment is set centuries earlier, landing its predator in 1719 North America, where it takes up the trail of Comanche hunters, French fur-trappers and buffalo.

Director Dan Trachtenberg told a packed preview screening at Comic-Con in San Diego last month he had been inspired to make the film because “Native American and Comanche specifically have often been relegated to playing the sidekick or the villain, and never the hero.”

During the 19th century, Comanches clashed with Europeans and other

Native American peoples across the Southern Plains of the modern-day United States, earning a reputation for fearsome military prowess.

Hollywood has mostly portrayed them as brutal enemies, such as in John Ford’s classic Western “The Searchers.”

In the new film, Amber Midthunder plays the heroine Naru, a young woman who must battle sexism

walking around doing cool stuff, you know?”

While “Prey” was shot in English, French and Comanche, its Native American actors later re-recorded their lines so that the whole movie can be played in Comanche — a first for a major studio film, according to producer Jhane Myers, who is herself Comanche.

For Midthunder, “what I really honestly thought



within her own tribe as well as the film’s villain.

Disney-owned 20th Century Studios’ decision “to get behind a movie like this that has not just a female action hero, but an Indigenous female action hero... that’s something that I don’t recall seeing, maybe possibly ever,” she said.

The film’s setting is “a real time in history for us, that is not that long ago, (when) I had ancestors

about every day I came to work, was not wanting to let down Comanche people first and foremost, but specifically Indigenous people.”

“And that if it did work, and we did pull it off, then how great that would be for us — to have something where we feel like we can look at a movie and feel represented and reflected in a way that you’re proud of,” she said.

“Because we don’t often get that.” — AFP



Dr Yousuf Ali al Mulla

Reframing what happiness means

TIME FLIES fast these days. The hours go so quickly that before you know it, you just woke up, went to work, and the day is already ending.

In the same manner, even the corona pandemic is passing by as if it is being ‘fast forward-ed’. Just when we thought we’ve cured one variant, a new strain emerges on another day.

On top of this, another surprise is coming right at our doorsteps. The talk of another epidemic developing in some parts of the world has begun to dominate headlines making many people relive the misery and loneliness they’ve to contend with in the past years.

Perhaps amid these events, there is an opportunity to think more about other subjects like happiness!

However, that doesn’t mean happiness is just about getting every little detail of life right. Each of us must also bear in mind some great truth from the science of happiness that can transcend circumstances and time, where it will guide us through all the events of our lives, from the trivial to the gross.

Have you ever wondered about this — that perhaps the biggest mistake people make about happiness is assuming that it will happen naturally if we follow our instincts, if it’s okay, do it! This is somewhat realistic, as humans desire many worldly rewards, such as money, power, pleasure and admiration.

Perhaps what is more important here, is to be aware that happiness remains your responsibility as an individual above all else. One must realise that sometimes, we need to limit our worldly appetite and follow what brings truly lasting happiness, such as faith and contemplation of God’s prominent and clear blessings in everything around us

and family relationships, true friendship and purposeful work.

On the other hand, we always notice that we live in a culture of finding shortcuts to achieve goals that take time. We see, for example, that the Internet is full of – if you can call it that – happiness tricks, which are supposed to enhance your happiness in surprising ways, with little effort. Indeed, you can use small, easy actions to quickly change your emotional state, such as turning off notifications on your phone, which I highly recommend. But let me be frank here and say that to withstand the changes of happiness, you need habits, not tricks. And by habits, I don’t mean mindless routine. Rather, I mean conscious daily practices to strengthen your relationships and reveal meaning in your life!

So the happiest people have a life centred on love: from family, friends and others through their work too and for the most part, it is the divine mercy that undoubtedly surrounds us. Moreover, what scientifically confirms this is looking at that research on people who end up happy (and I say healthy) – they get older, which showed that the most important part of life to raise, is a series of stable and long-term love relationships.

In the end, without a doubt, we do not forget one of the most important principles of happiness, which is gratitude, which greatly improves happiness. Indeed, in this spirit, I thank you for reading my previous articles on happiness. With love and appreciation, I dedicate these meanings – and many more to come – to you and wish you more happiness in the continuing journey of your life.

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THURSDAY | AUGUST 4 | 2022



From Oman to Europe, on a classic car

By Arwa al Hashimi

The world is filled with amazing places to explore which is why travel and hospitality is a multi-billion dollar industry. For many people, travelling is not only about embarking on a new adventure but it's actually learning from different places and people and using that knowledge to enhance one's lifestyle.

This trend of world travel has not escaped the Omanis. Having a powerful passport that allows them to enter several countries all over the world visa-free, many are embarking on their separate journeys, not just for the sake of travelling alone but to wander and see places and things beyond Oman.

Ibrahim bin Ali al Saadi from the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq has toured the world in his classic car and he does it not just for tourism purposes but also in exchange, to introduce Oman to people in places that he has visited.

Al Saadi has been to dozens of countries. Wherever he goes, he collects stickers of flags which he then decorates the hood of his car.

He shared that he embarks on this trip with his classic car not just to see new sceneries but to also understand different cultures.

His first trip began in 2015 when he visited Turkey. Falling in love with the amazing contrast the country offers – from green forests to fantastic bare mountains, he then decided to explore the European continent.

Ibrahim successfully navigated his way into the complexities of travelling requirements and has explored Germany, Austria, Switzerland, France, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

In 2019, Ibrahim and his friends started thinking about a road trip that was built upon the outcome of their rich experiences of travelling in Europe. They set a special plan that was distinct from the ones set by other Gulf travellers. So a route was planned to start from the Sultanate of Oman and end in the Kingdom of Norway, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this plan was unfortunately postponed.

Ibrahim shared that there had been several people who travel from the Middle East by land to Europe. Learning from those different accounts, they eventually pushed through with their plans in May starting from Oman and passing through UAE, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Serbia, Belgium, and France, Germany, Sweden,

Denmark, and Norway.

While travelling with a classic car has several challenges including getting the necessary permits, Ibrahim was dedicated to his goal.

Accompanied by his friends, they took 3 cars that they felt can last the long leg of their journey. Aside from his classic car, two modern cars joined the adventure and his friends Muath al Saadi, Nasser, Badr, Ahmed, Talib al Qarini and Khalil al Kharousi were all game for the daunting task.

"My choice of the classic car was kind of a challenge and fun at the same time, and on the other hand, it is a means of attracting and promoting the itinerary. As you know, classic cars have many fans. We decorated it and the rest of the cars with the flags of the Sultanate of Oman and the countries that we will pass by. Additionally, We have prepared in advance in anticipation of any malfunction that may occur to the cars through maintenance, purchase and exchange of some consumable parts, to carry throughout the trip in case of anything that may happen to the cars," Said Al Saadi, one of the participants said.

Throughout this long trip, the group faced many challenges along the way.

"We faced some difficulties during our travels from one country to another, especially in language and dealing with currencies, and we also noticed the difference in oil prices from one country to another," Al Saadi said.

"Embarking on such a long trip, you are bringing the burden of representing your country which is why it was important to act decently," he added.

"There are many people who stopped us to ask about my country and my journey and where I started, so I passionately told them about that brown land, its picturesque nature, its authentic culture, its charming tourist places and warm blue waters," Ibrahim shared.

Ibrahim said that they learned many things on the said adventure. Preparedness is one of the primary things one should consider.

"If you intend to travel, you must choose the right company, learn about the laws of the country and the requirements of border crossings, take health and comprehensive insurance for cars, respect the laws of the country and the policy of housing reservation, and do not forget to show the character and traits of a gentle Omani through your interactions with people, as well as to set a sufficient budget for a trip and not to forget the maintenance of cars comprehensively," Ibrahim said.

