

H M L A U N C H E S S U L T A N H A I T H A M C I T Y

TO HOUSE 100,000 RESIDENTS



MUSCAT: By the grace of the Almighty Allah and His divine support, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over the inaugural ceremony of the ‘Sultan Haitham City’ at Al Baraka Palace on Wednesday.

When His Majesty the Sultan arrived at the inauguration hall, he was received by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. Then, His Majesty listened to a complete description of the smart futuristic city. The demonstration showcased a model of the city, which is coming up in the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

The city constitutes a new model for setting up sustainable cities, and it simulates modern life and the aspirations of youth in the Sultanate of Oman.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan took note of the facilities of ‘Sultan Haitham City’. He viewed display panels that outline a spectrum of structures, including a diverse range of residential prototypes embedded in a modern setting that epitomises the country’s cultural heritage.

His Majesty the Sultan was also briefed about the brand identity and message of Sultan Haitham City, code-named ‘Treasure the Future’. The brand identity and message of the city reflect a vision for building the most unique and dazzling city in the Sultanate of Oman.

The visual logo of the city was inspired by pure nature, along with golden touches denoting luxury and power. After that, His Majesty watched a visual presentation

**His Majesty:
Only the beginning**

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik said, during the ceremony marking the inauguration of Sultan Haitham City at Al Baraka Palace, that futuristic planning he witnessed was inspiring and would constitute an initiative for layouts in subsequent stages. His Majesty the Sultan congratulated Omani designers and intellectuals. He hoped they would have a mark in all parts of Oman. His Majesty the Sultan stressed that man is capable of overcoming all challenges. He added that the city’s inauguration was just the beginning for more outstanding cities in future that keep pace with modern developments. He exhorted all operators across different sectors to work as one team.

on the model of Sultan Haitham City’s masterplan, its residential quarters, facilities and amenities. The visual display quotes figures about the assorted structures of the city (the numbers of schools, hospitals, mosques, etc).

The briefing also outlines the stages of implementation of the project, which transcends the concept of ordinary urban life - since it envisages civilised society shaping its present-day life and modelling a brighter, more prosperous future.

At the end of the inaugural ceremony, His Majesty the Sultan viewed a book describing the project of ‘Sultan Haitham City’, which will be an ideal icon for smart cities. The ceremony was attended by Royal family members and high-ranking officials.

The model of ‘Sultan Haitham City’ features sustainable lifestyles embracing an architectural vision to accommodate all segments of society, giving them access to all social and recreational facilities and earning them a feeling of belonging. The city focuses on twelve global standards on quality of life and welfare. The criteria range between affordable cost, advanced integrated facilities and modern lifestyles.

‘Sultan Haitham City’ project, planned to cover an area of approximately 15 million square metres, lays emphasis on utilising green spaces estimated to be 2.9 million square metres. The city will house 100,000 residents and will have 20,000 residential units of different styles. — **ONA**

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SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

A T R E A S U R E F O R T H E F U T U R E



MUSCAT: The ‘Sultan Haitham City’ constitutes a futuristic urban icon, a treasure for the future and a sustainable gift from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to future generations and all segments of society.

Sultan Haitham City emerges as the fruitful outcome of the comprehensive transformation approach espoused by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. It envisages transition into sustainable urban development that benefits thriving communities through the implementation of national strategic projects for urban development in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Sultan Haitham City represents the cornerstone of upcoming projects and a new model for building sustainable cities. It simulates modern life and epitomises the aspirations of young people in Oman.

The city, which occupies an area of 14,800,000 square metres, has been planned to reflect sound and sustainable urban planning based on the utilisation of green spaces on an area of 2,900,000 square metres. It is designed to house 100,000 people and it will have 20,000 housing units ranging between separate villas, semi-attached villas, townhouses and flats.

The housing units are distributed over 19 integrated residential neighbourhoods, supplied with various facilities and services to meet the needs of the residents. It will have 23 mosques and a grand mosque.

The city will also have 11 health facilities, including two health centres that cater to the needs of 20,000 patients and another set of six health centres with a capacity to serve 10,000 patients.



The city will have a referral hospital with a capacity of 1,200 beds, a private hospital and a centre to serve persons with disability and elderly people. It will also have 39 government and private schools, which cover all educational levels.

The city will have an internal transport network whose distances are carefully calculated to provide access to the largest possible number of facilities. The network will be suitable for public and private transport vehicles that smoothly crisscross the roads from the centre to the periphery.

In the meantime, there is scope in the city for green spaces, shaded corridors and lanes allowing the flow of gentle breeze and give an

extra sense of comfort.

The city boasts other features like pedestrian passages and bicycle paths to help diversify the methods of traffic, healthy lifestyles and sustainability of the environment. These include options for the use of renewable energy and measures for water conservation. The city’s overall configuration enhances interaction and communication among various segments of society that benefit from common spaces and designs of neighbourhoods.

The city’s designs also respond to climatic changes and cater to future developments, with its engineering infrastructure tailored to adapt to the needs of population growth and the cost of maintenance.

The city welcomes all segments of society, with their diverse social and cultural backgrounds. It allows all segments easily access to its social and recreational facilities, thereby consolidating the bonds of belonging and cultural diversity.

In Sultan Haitham City, community facilities occupy strategic locations that have been carefully selected to allow residents to access them with complete ease. The strategy allows residents to jointly use public facilities, such as parking lots, playgrounds and parks, and contributes to achieving optimal use of spaces and amenities in the heart of metropolis.

The designs of the city’s external areas are inspired by the natural surroundings, with options for utilising the natural shade of trees during the daytime — which will be much in harmony with the urban structures. The overall idea is to provide natural outdoor spaces in the vicinity of buildings and well-designed streets.

The city has also been designed to raise the quality of life by optimising the use of solar energy as a sustainable source. In this setup, waste energy production systems and wastewater outputs will act as key factors in the protection of natural resources. The outcome will be the control of waste and the recycling of materials.

With its fascinating and captivating designs, the city promises transition into a future of happiness and prosperity. Yet, its concepts will never miss out on the country’s heritage. While it builds a vision for the future of generations that celebrate modern life, it will also build solid grounds for harmony among cultural groups. — ONA

Legacy of the Future

Sultan Haitham City is the legacy of the future and a sustainable gift from His Majesty the Sultan - may God protect and preserve him - for future generations.



مدينة السلطان هيثم
SULTAN HAITHAM CITY

Vision of the City

Total Landscape	Total Land Area
2,900,000 m ²	14,800,000 m ²
Total Residents	Central Park and Wadi
100,000 Residents	1,640,000 m ²



Total Residential Units **20** Thousand

| Attached Villas | Detached Villas | Semi-Detached Villas | Apartments



39 Schools

- 9 | Private Schools
- 30 | Public Schools
- 10 | High Schools
- 10 | Secondary Schools
- 10 | Primary schools



11 Healthcare Facilities

- 1 | Private Hospital
- 2 | CA health center (20,000 population)
- 1 | Special Needs Rehabilitation & Elderly Care Centre People With
- 6 | CB health center (10,000 population)
- 1 | Referral Hospital (1,200 Bed)



25 Mosques

- 23 | Prayer Rooms
- 1 | Mosque
- 1 | Grand Mosque

Integrated Neighbourhoods

19

Community Centres for Each Neighbourhood:

- | Shared sports facilities
- | Public Halls
- | A playground for team sports
- | Nursery / early education center
- | High School
- | Mosque
- | Car parking
- | Clinic
- | Prep school
- | Primary school

City Features

- | Accessible
- | Healthy
- | Compact
- | Affordable
- | Robust
- | A city for all
- | Efficient
- | Comfortable
- | Sustainable
- | Safe
- | Smart
- | Attractive





Oman Future Fund with RO 2 billion capital

HIS MAJESTY PRESIDES OVER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MEETING

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik presided over a meeting of the Council of Ministers at Al Baraka Palace on Wednesday.

At the outset of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan gave thanks and praise to the Almighty Allah for the bounties of security, stability and progress with which He endowed Oman. He prayed to the Almighty to eternalise these bounties and grant all health, welfare and success in what they aspire for.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed local, regional and international conditions.

On the domestic front, His Majesty the Sultan spoke about the ongoing government initiatives aimed at achieving rapid economic growth and finalising a financial and investment comprehensive system.

In this context, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to establish an investment fund, to be named “Oman Future Fund”, that will have a capital of RO 2 billion.

The fund is aimed at enhancing economic activity and encouraging the private sector to enter into partnerships or finance feasible investment projects in the sectors of economic diversification targeted by Oman Vision 2040.

His Majesty gave directives to allocate part of the fund's capital to stimulate bold investment in SMEs and startups registered at the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development.

Speaking about the inauguration of the ‘Sultan Haitham City’ in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that the inception of the project stems from a trend to set up modern cities with international planning standards, integrated and interconnected facilities, and equipped with all services that meet the needs of residents. The city seeks to ensure the stability of families and spearhead model development in building sustainable cities, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed.

Acting from its keenness on providing proper health cover and managing it in modern ways, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of a National Centre for Women and Children's Health at Sultan Haitham City.

In pursuance of the attention accorded by His Majesty to national competencies' development, the Council of Ministers approved the consolidation of the 2023-2027 External Scholarships Programme by introducing a scheme for grooming graduates who are capable of playing leading roles in various economic sectors. The candidates will be dispatched to major in important future specialisations at top international universities.

The scheme provides for 150 such scholarships over a period of five years, starting from this year (2023) to the tune of RO 36 million.



To encourage private higher education institutions to play a greater role in boosting the academic educational process, the Council of Ministers decided that private higher education institutions which were given some lands (lease-based) shall get ownership of those lands, while at the same time exempting them from prescribed fees. This applies to the institutions that meet the terms and conditions set for private

higher education establishments.

To mitigate the cost of high electricity bills for citizens, particularly low-income segments, during the summer season, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to maintain a 15 per cent discount on the total sum of the electricity bill for all residential units' subscribers during summer months from May to August 2023.

In the same context, the Council of Ministers approved an increase in financial allocations within the housing assistance programme at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. The hike stands at RO 26.4 million for the remaining years of the 10th Five-Year-Plan. The sum is allocated to construct housing units for the people from some distant villages or shift them from their impacted areas of residence to safer places or to provide the areas with some public services or to establish service projects in them.

The Council of Ministers commended the efforts made by the authorities concerned in cooperation with farmers in various governorates to encourage them to grow improved varieties of Omani wheat. The Council also approved a plan to support local wheat production by allocating RO 5 million until the year 2027, in addition to usufruct lands in some governorates for wheat cultivation.

With the aim of operating more direct flights to and from Salalah Airport at competitive prices during the khareef season, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to the authorities concerned to provide direct subsidies in fuel prices at Salalah Airport on a par with fuel prices at Muscat International Airport.

The Council of Ministers listened to a briefing about the progress made in initiatives of the National Employment Programme and the efforts made by the authorities concerned to improve economic growth in general and to develop economic sectors. Accordingly, His Majesty the Sultan gave directives to extend the disbursement of benefits from the Job Security System, for citizens whose services were terminated at private sector establishments, until December 2023.

The Council of Ministers agreed to exempt small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from some fees prescribed by the Tender Board. This was made in pursuance of the support accorded to the SME sector, being a basic pillar in the national economy and is hoped to have a major role in contributing to the gross domestic product and employment of Omani citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan also spoke about regional and international affairs. He reviewed bilateral relations of the Sultanate of Oman with a number of Arab and foreign countries. He underlined Oman's continuing to espouse its permanent positive neutrality, as well as the country's persistent endeavours to achieve security and stability for the region and to extend bridges of cooperation with all countries.

At the end of the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan touched on various aspects of concern to the country and the citizens. He wished citizens continued success in all that realises the good of the nation. — **ONA**





New facility offers more genetic testing for cancer

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Oman Cancer Association programme for genetic testing of cancer patients was inaugurated by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, on Thursday evening at Grand Hyatt, Muscat.

The evening saw the signing ceremony between Oman Cancer Association and Occidental Oman for the genetic cancer programme.

This new development will see an opportunity to conduct more tests than before.

Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Lamki, a Board Member of the Oman Cancer Association, spoke about the Genetic Centre collaboration project with the Ministry of Health, Oman Cancer Association and Occidental Oman.

Dr Sulayma al Lamki, Director of the National Genetics Centre, introduced the



gathering to Precision Oncology. “Molecular profiling of tumours identifies targeted alterations. This is a rapidly advancing and developing milestone in the stream of clinical practice. The aim is to identify the therapy for the patients to give them the maximum survival opportunity and quality of life,” she said.

The procedure is performed on patients of metastatic disease or with diseases with fewer or no standard treatment available,

cancers on which decisions depend on multiple molecular markers.

Treatment of cancer has surgery, radiation and medication.

“We have got chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, immunotherapy and now we can target cancer itself, so this is fighting cancer with less or no side effects,” she pointed out.

This is done by attaining the molecular profile, which will give diagnostic markers and different markers related to genetics and the treatment to target the genes.

“Gene therapy has been used for a while and had started with breast cancer, but now we have Precision Oncology, which can treat many cancers. The patient walks in, gets sample collected which goes to histopathology where they process and examine, after which it goes onto DNA and RNA profiling that leads to Precision Oncology data analysis and the patient receives targeted therapy,” explained Dr Al Lamki.

Monitoring of commercial kitchens in Dhofar

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
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Dhofar Municipality has come out with a policy to ensure food safety to customers through digital monitoring of commercial kitchens.

The first phase of the electronic control imposed by the Dhofar Municipality is targeting the activities of restaurants, cafes, bakeries and commercial kitchens by asking them to install HD surveillance cameras at food and beverage preparation sites.

Under the plan, the commercial kitchens have been advised to install TV screens with a minimum size of 32 inches in the dining halls. This thoughtful addition allows customers to conveniently observe the culinary activities in the food and beverage preparation and processing areas.

This electronic control initiative seeks to qualify health requirements

for food trading activity, monitor the behaviour of workers involved in food preparation, facilitate work control through modern technologies, and food safety and reduce violations.

Salah al Ajili, Director of the Food and Laboratories Department in Dhofar Municipality, mentioned that holders of new licences for the targeted activities in the first phase are required to comply with the conditions before issuing the municipal license. As for the existing targeted activities, there is a deadline of August 15, 2023, to implement the decision.

There has been a significant increase in consumer interest regarding the production of food. This interest stems from the realisation that electronic control plays a crucial role in ensuring public health protection, preventing cheating and fraud, averting food contamination, and facilitating trade for food industry owners.

Tender at Buraimi Industrial City

The Public Authority for Industrial Estates (MADAYN) is pleased to announce a tender in Buraimi Industrial City for investors, contractors and developers to construct and develop an integrated fuel station.

Opportunity Number	Project Name	Last date of buying	Date of submission	Fee (R.O)
3/2023	Constructing and Developing an Integrated Fuel Station	15/06/2023	29/06/2023	20

The following procedures apply:

- Tender Documents can be obtained from Madayn Support Department at Buraimi Industrial City (Tel: 25657768 / 25657764) during official working hours, against non-refundable fee as mentioned above.
- Completed bids according to the terms of the tender document shall be deposited in the Bid Box at Buraimi Industrial City administration office before 12 pm on the specified date.
- For further inquiries, please contact us at, 25657756 25657779

Oman participates in Arab child rights conference



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, took part on Wednesday via video-conferencing in the 6th High-level Arab Conference on Child Rights.

The event was held under the title “Effective and sustainable development investment that guarantees the rights of the Arab child”.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented during the meeting by Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed al Shamsi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Social Development.

The conference highlighted several agenda in a bid to devise child-friendly public policies and identify challenges. — ONA

Oman takes part in global research meeting in The Hague

THE HAGUE: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, is taking part in the Global Research Council's Annual Meeting 2023, held at The Hague in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

During the meeting, which runs till June 2, the Sultanate of Oman's delegation is headed by Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Hadabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation.

The meeting discusses means of enhancing international cooperation among research establishments and developing mechanisms to evaluate research projects. — ONA



ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PUBLIC AUCTION

Ministry of Interior would like to hold an electronic public auction in cooperation with Mazadcom Smart Auction for a number of scraps and movables. Note that the auction will be online through www.mzadcom.om

Items	Location	Period of Inspection	Period of the Electronic Auction
Compressors Miscellaneous items Used Furniture Electronic	Stores of the Ministry in Ghala and Al Maabailah	From 4/6/2023 to 8/6/2023 Timing 8 am to 1 pm	From 11/6/2023 To 13/6/2023

❖ **Requirements for entering the electronic auction**

- People interested should register and subscribe online www.mzadcom.om or through the application.
- Persons intend to register should provide proven approvals (commercial registration, taxation certification, environmental clearance).
- The subscriber should pay insurance bond totaling RO 500 through banking transfer. The insurance will be confiscated if the auction has been placed on the bidder and has not paid for the items during the designated period of payment.
- The successful bidder should pay for the items no later than 5 working days after the auction ends.
- The successful bidder is committed to move the purchased items which have been paid in full no later than 5 working days after the payment has been cleared. Else, the Ministry and the company are not responsible for any loss or damaged incurred on them.
- Inspecting the items can be made between 4/6/2023 and 8/6/2023 until the auction starts at the yards of the ministry's stores in Al Maabailah and Ghala between 8 am and 1 pm.

For further details, cooperation and inquiry, you may contact: 97387086 for Arabic 92970111 for English and 94162650 for electronic support

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Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
148/2023	Maintenance of two central and backup computers in the Ministry's General Office Building	Companies specialized in the field of information technology services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board at the level of excellent, first, second, third or fourth.	Tuesday 20-6-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 10-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Thursday 1/6/2023**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact through the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry “

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OAAAQA launches National Qualifications Framework

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 31

The Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) launched the National Qualifications Framework in the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday. The framework encompasses four main tracks, namely the academic track, the vocational and technical track, the professional track, and the technological track, each consisting of ten levels ranging from basic education to advanced tracks equivalent to a PhD. This significant event took place during a prestigious ceremony held at Kempinski Hotel Muscat. It was held under

the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance. The inauguration ceremony commenced with an enlightening speech by Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of the OAAAQA. She highlighted the significance of the National Qualifications Framework in the Sultanate of Oman and emphasised the framework's structure, objectives, scope, and the manifold benefits it offers. She also recounted the remarkable journey undertaken to develop a comprehensive national framework for qualifications in Oman, which involved benchmarking with regional and international



frameworks, conducting a thorough environmental survey of qualifications, formulating a strategy for consultation and communication, and designating responsible entities for governance, management, and implementation.

Dr Al Shukaili underscored the importance of the National Qualifications Framework in realising national priorities and strategic directions, particularly in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. She emphasised the imperative to establish an educational system

of international quality, foster community partnerships, and establish a self-regulating and comprehensive evaluation system in line with national standards. She also highlighted the National Strategy for Education's mandate to provide technical and vocational education opportunities for post-primary students. In her concluding remarks, the CEO of the OAAAQA expressed hope for cooperation from all stakeholders to ensure that the National Qualifications Framework becomes the primary point of reference for general education, higher education, and various training and qualification bodies. "It will play a crucial role in licensing

education and training programmes of all levels and types, evaluating foreign certificates, and recognising qualifications issued by any educational or training institution in the Sultanate of Oman." Additionally, two keynote speakers delivered enlightening presentations during the event. Dr Tariq al Sindi, Secretary-General of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and former CEO of the Education and Training Quality Authority in the Kingdom of Bahrain, shared regional experiences in implementing and developing national qualifications frameworks.

Dhofar Municipality discusses khareef season 2023

SALALAH: Dhofar Municipality on Wednesday organised a forum with strategic partners to discuss the activities of the 'Dhofar Khareef Season 2023', as part of ongoing partnership between the municipality and private sector institutions. The forum was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who felicitated private sector institutions and strategic partners. The forum included a visual presentation on Dhofar seasons, as well as discussions dealing with developing the season's facilities and events. — ONA



Taqah forum seeks to empower youth to achieve Oman Vision 2040 goals

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, MAY 31

The recently concluded Taqah Youth Forum targeted empowering young people, enhancing social connectivity, and identifying opportunities for their involvement in various sectors. The forum showcased a steadfast commitment to engaging youth for the betterment of Taqah in alignment with Oman Vision 2040. The forum was held under the auspices of Shaikh Tariq bin Khalid al Hinai, Wali of Taqah, in Dhofar Governorate. The forum recognised the importance of youth participation in shaping Oman's future and emphasised the need for a genuine partnership that supports Oman Vision 2040. It acknowledged the unique perspectives of young individuals essential for implementing practical projects on the ground, benefiting different sectors. By working together, the goal is to create a future that progresses in tandem with global advancements. The tenth five-year plan, serving as the first executive plan for Oman Vision 2040, has opened doors for significant youth involvement. A dedicated group has been formed within the plan's work teams, marking a historical precedent. Their main objective



is to develop the youth sector and ensure active participation in shaping programmes and initiatives aligned with the goals of Oman Vision 2040, particularly within the youth sector. Efforts are being made to implement projects and initiatives that cater to the strengths and insights of young individuals. Recognising their indispensable role in various sectors, necessary resources, opportunities, and platforms are being provided to empower them to make meaningful contributions towards the realisation of Oman Vision 2040, further advancing the nation's goals. Young people embody the values of generosity and hard work that underpin Oman's ongoing renaissance. To maximise their impact, it is crucial for them to seize this opportunity and invest in their talents and skills. By translating their abilities into tangible contributions, they can propel Oman's progress and elevate the nation to the ranks of developed countries.

Conference studies developments in financial system

MUSCAT: The 'New Age Banking Conference', organised by United Media Services on Wednesday, reviewed the financial systems and continuous digital developments in the sector. The opening of the conference was held under the auspices of Tahir bin Salim al Amri, the Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman. The conference included presentations and a panel discussion with participation of experts and professionals from Oman and abroad. The conferees took up common topics such as digital transformation, borderless financial ecosystem, financial technology among others. — ONA



Symposium highlights contributions of Omani researchers to medicine and science

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 31

The University of Nizwa hosted a symposium on Wednesday at Al Shahba Hall dedicated to the outstanding contributions of Omani scholars in the fields of medicine and science. The event, organised by the Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi Centre for Arabic Studies and Humanities, in collaboration with the Natural and Medical Sciences Research Center at the University of Nizwa, was held under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said bin Khalaf al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage. Dignitaries, including members of the Majlis Ashshura,

Municipal Council members from Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, representatives from various institutional departments, and individuals, attended the event. Dedicated to themes like astronomy, agriculture, mining, navigation, and medicine, the symposium showcased the research and academic work of scholars from both Oman and abroad. The primary objective of the symposium was to shed light on the significant contributions made by Omanis in medicine, natural sciences, climate, astronomy, and marine sciences, with a particular focus on preserving this knowledge for future generations. Additionally, the symposium explored the study and examination of Omani



manuscripts in medicine and the natural sciences and their publication. One notable highlight of the event was the recognition of Omani traditional medicine, which has a strong scientific foundation comparable to Chinese and Indian medicine. The symposium also emphasised the study of medicinal remedies derived from Oman's



diverse natural environment, including frankincense, seaweed, and crustaceans, which have demonstrated their efficacy through scientific experimentation. Furthermore, the symposium aimed to introduce the historical contributions of Omani military medical personnel, including doctors and nurses, who played

pivotal roles in defending their country during times of war. Oriental studies and the writings of foreign travellers who visited Oman and documented their observations on the Omani environment and the country's physicians were also showcased. The symposium encouraged researchers to delve into Omani history, publish their findings,

and proudly highlight the contributions of Omani scholars in enriching Arab and global heritage. The role of Omani universities, research institutions, and researchers in studying and promoting Omani contributions to medicine and natural sciences was also highlighted. Dr Ahmed bin Suleiman al Harrasi, Vice-President for Graduate Studies, Scientific Research, and External Relations, provided overall supervision for the working papers presented at the symposium. The research papers presented by the participating scholars will be published in a special edition of Al Khalil Journal, entitled 'Contributions of Omani Scientists to Medicine and Science.'



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In brief

■ BEIRUT



BLAST AT PALESTINIAN BASE IN LEBANON KILLS FIVE

Five fighters from a pro-Syrian Palestinian group were killed in an explosion at a base in eastern Lebanon, a Lebanese security source said on Wednesday.

A spokesman for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC) accused Israel of carrying out “overnight raids” at the base in Qusaya, near the Syrian border. “An old rocket exploded in an arms depot on the base and five fighters were killed,” the security source said, requesting anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media. PFLP-GC spokesman Anwar Raja said Israel had carried out “overnight raids”.

— AFP

■ THE HAGUE



UN BEEFS UP CONVICTIONS OF MILOSEVIC AIDES

UN judges on Wednesday sentenced two former Serbian spymasters who worked for Yugoslav ex-President Slobodan Milosevic to 15 years in jail as it beefed up their convictions before The Hague tribunal dating from the Balkan wars.

Appeals judges ruled that Jovica Stanisic and his subordinate Franko “Frenki” Simatovic were responsible for crimes in several parts of Bosnia and Croatia due to their role in helping finance and train Serb militias during the 1990s break-up of Yugoslavia.

They “shared the intent to remove the non-Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia”, presiding judge Santana said. — Reuters

■ LONDON



TRAIN PASSENGERS HIT BY FRESH STRIKE DISRUPTION

Rail passengers in Britain are suffering fresh travel disruption because of more strikes in long disputes over pay, jobs and conditions.

Members of the drivers’ union Aslef walked out and several operators are running no trains.

The Union’s Secretary Mick Whelan said no negotiations resolving the row are taking place, while the Department for Transport (DfT) insisted it has “facilitated a fair and reasonable pay offer”. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) has called a strike on Friday, while Aslef walk out will take place on Saturday. — dpa

Russia evacuates children from border as situation ‘alarming’



Russian President Vladimir Putin chairs a meeting with members of the government via a video link at the Kremlin in Moscow. — AFP

MOSCOW: Russia said it would evacuate hundreds of children from villages due to intensifying shelling in the border region of Belgorod, where the situation was deemed “alarming” by the Kremlin.

Russia has seen intensifying attacks on its soil over a year into its Ukraine campaign, with an unprecedented incursion last week in the southern region of Belgorod and a drone attack on Moscow on Tuesday.

“We are starting today to evacuate children from the Shebekino and Graivoron districts,” regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said, referring to the most affected border areas. The governor said

the first 300 children will be taken to Voronezh, a city around 250 kilometres further into Russia.

Gladkov said the situation was “worsening” in the village of Shebekino, which was hit by a rocket at 3:15 am local time.

He posted photographs of blackened burned cars lying in the grass near a playground, and a rocket that had apparently landed on a road.

On Tuesday one person was killed and two others were wounded in a Ukrainian strike on a centre for displaced people in the region.

The attacks have come as Kyiv says it is preparing for a major offensive against Moscow’s forces. “The situation is quite

alarming,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said when asked about shelling in the region.

“We have not heard a single word of condemnation from the West so far,” Peskov said, adding “measures are being taken.”

Several oil depots have been hit in recent weeks.

On Wednesday, authorities in the southern Krasnodar region said a drone hit the Ilsky oil refinery, in an area already hit twice since the beginning of May.

The Kremlin has accused Ukraine of being behind the increasing number of reported attacks.

The foreign ministry said the West was “pushing the Ukrainian leadership towards increasingly

reckless acts” after a drone attack on residential areas in Moscow.

The Russian Defence Ministry said that eight drones were used in the attack, adding that five of them were downed and three disabled.

At least three buildings were lightly damaged, including two high-rise residential buildings in Moscow’s affluent southwest.

Ukraine, which has seen almost nightly attacks on its capital, denied any “direct involvement”.

The United States said it did not support any attack on Russian territory and said it was “focused on providing Ukraine with the equipment and training they need to retake their own sovereign territory.” — AFP

Sudan army quits truce talks with paramilitary foes

KHARTOUM: Artillery blasts rang out on Wednesday in Khartoum, after the Sudanese army suspended its participation in US and Saudi-brokered ceasefire talks, accusing its paramilitary foes of failing to honour their commitments.

The mediators of the talks in the Saudi Red Sea city of Jeddah have acknowledged repeated violations of the truce by both sides but have so far held off imposing any sanctions in the hope of keeping the warring parties at the negotiating table.

The army walked out “because the rebels have never implemented a single one of the provisions of a short-term



Sudan’s General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan walks with troops, in an unknown location, in this picture released on May 30. — Reuters

ceasefire which required their withdrawal from hospitals and residential buildings”, a Sudanese government official said.

It also took the decision because the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had “repeatedly violated the truce”, added the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The mediators admitted the truce had been “imperfectly observed” but said the extension “will permit further humanitarian efforts”.

But despite the pledges of both sides, fighting flared again on Tuesday both in greater Khartoum and in the flashpoint western region of Darfur. — AFP

Peacekeepers step up security after Kosovo clashes

ZVECAN: Nato-led peacekeepers stepped up security around a town hall in northern Kosovo on Wednesday, where hundreds of ethnic Serbs gathered again at the scene of clashes earlier this week that left more than 80 people injured.

Nato has decided to deploy hundreds of reinforcements to strengthen Kosovo’s international peacekeeping mission (KFOR) after Monday’s violence in the town of Zvecan. Hundreds of ethnic Serbs rallied outside Zvecan’s town hall on Wednesday for a third consecutive day and held aloft a huge Serbian flag that stretched over 200 meters from the municipal building to the town centre.

KFOR soldiers encircled the town hall, additionally securing the building with a metal fence and barbed wire, a journalist said.

Kosovo’s ethnic Serb minority boycotted local elections in the north last month, allowing ethnic Albanians to take control of local councils despite a turnout of less than 3.5 per cent. Many Serbs are demanding the withdrawal of Kosovo special police forces, as well as the ethnic Albanian mayors they do not consider their true representatives.

The demonstrators decorated the fence — erected by KFOR soldiers — with Serbian flags.

Three vehicles of ethnic Albanian Kosovo special police — whose presence sparks controversy in Serb-majority northern areas — remained parked outside the town hall. Nato-led peacekeepers used shields and batons in a bid to disperse the crowd but were met by a hail of rocks, bottles and Molotov cocktails.

A total of 30 peacekeepers were wounded in Monday’s clashes, according to KFOR. — AFP



A US Kosovo Force (KFOR) soldier, under Nato, stands guard near a municipal office in Leposavic, Kosovo. — Reuters

N Korea satellite crashes, Seoul saves wreckage

SEOUL: North Korea attempted to launch a spy satellite on Wednesday but it crashed into the sea after a rocket failure, with the South Korean military retrieving part of the likely wreckage in a potential intelligence bonanza.

North Korea does not have a functioning satellite in space and leader Kim Jong Un has made developing a military spy satellite a top priority for his regime, despite UN resolutions banning its use of such technology.

Pyeongyang had said in the build-up to the launch attempt that the satellite would be vital to monitoring the military movements of the United States

and its allies. But the rocket lost thrust and plunged into the sea with its satellite payload, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

It added that authorities would investigate the “serious defects” revealed by the launch and conduct another test as soon as possible.

South Korea’s military said it had managed to locate and salvage a portion of the suspected debris.

It released images showing a large barrel-like metal structure with thin pipes and wires at the bottom, which experts said might be a liquid fuel tank. “Technical experts will be able to gain tremendous insight into



People watch a TV broadcasting a news report on North Korea firing what it called a space satellite toward the south, in Seoul. — Reuters

North Korea’s proficiency with large, multi-stage boosters from the recovered debris,” US-based analyst Ankit Panda said.

The launch prompted confusion and panic in Seoul, as city authorities sent an early morning emergency evacuation alert to residents and blasted an air raid siren across the downtown area.

This sparked widespread consternation online, before the interior ministry clarified minutes later the alert had been “incorrectly issued”.

“I was taking my two young children to a basement parking lot as advised, in shock,” Yoon said, a 37-year-old father. — AFP

Am I a good parent?



Saif al Shaibany
SaifalShaibany@hotmail.com

The writer is a banker by day and a storyteller by night

Now that I have children I ask the questions am I a good parent, am I keeping them safe, are they happy, am I doing my best as a parent? I wish I could stop doubting and know that I'm doing my best, but is that ever possible?

Never knew being a parent is hard and there is no manual or guide in being a parent, only the teaching we had from our own upbringing. We try our best and hope it will work out in the end.

Challenges are part of life, and it starts from an early age, life paves the road which is full of obstacles and challenges and it is never always a straight road. We navigate through life to the best of our judgment and abilities, passing through childhood to our teenage

then on to adulthood. As adults we face new set of experiences, we are given responsibilities and the freedom to forge our own path which will carve out our future. Wherever that path may lead us, we aren't always in control of it.

But we make best of the situation and learn from our mistakes. But the real challenge is when we are introduced to a second person in our life. Now no longer living it ourselves, but with another person, with it includes new set of responsibilities.

As we start to build a new life around our family, they start to grow — one becomes two, three or more. We now have children — the reality starts to sinks in — we are parents now. That also means our

BUT ONE THING HAS TO BE SAID. PLEASE TAKE IT EASY, DON'T BE HARD ON YOURSELF YOU'RE DOING YOUR BEST EVEN IF YOU DON'T SEE IT

responsibilities and priorities have changed and a new path has been written. Of course responsibilities are shared between partners and children are being considered a blessing.

Like any blessing you have to be grateful, work hard to uphold it, love them unconditionally for

as long you breathe. We will do everything to protect, provide, support and love them as long as we can. As parents we would have made a promise to our children that we will give them a better life.

Now that's not to say our life was ever bad, our parents had provided us a life where we didn't have to think nor worry.

So the promise is like a passage in becoming a parent.

Much of it we could try taking examples of our parents, how they loved, cared and supported, which we try to instil into our own parental style in the hope that our children will grow up having the right upbringing.

But truth be told we never really understood what our parents went

through until we had become parents ourselves.

The sweat and tears, pain and dedication put in creating a safe and loving childhood. But the doubt never seems far away, questioning ourselves as parents.

The truth of parenting is a full time job with all the perks included. Never a dull moment.

But one thing has to be said. Please take it easy, don't be hard on yourself. You're doing your best even if you don't see it.

The fact we are asking ourselves these questions means we care and will do our best for them. Which means 'Yes we are good parents'. If there is any other indication that it is when they come to us saying "I love to the moon and back".

Why North Korea's satellite launch may be 'first of many'

JOSH SMITH AND SAKURA MURAKAMI

North Korea is unlikely to be deterred from its quest to place cargoes in space, analysts said, even though a malfunction sent a new launch vehicle and the country's first spy satellite crashing into the ocean on Wednesday.

The secretive country considers its space and military rocket programmes a sovereign right, and analysts say spy satellites are crucial to improving the effectiveness of its weapons. Focusing on satellites also shows a shift towards practical rather than political goals, they say.

Wednesday's setback, which state media blamed on an unstable and unreliable new engine system and fuel, will probably be followed by more attempts, said Atsuhito Isozaki, professor of North Korean studies at Keio University in Japan. "Even if this satellite launch is a failure, General Secretary Kim Jong Un himself has made clear that this satellite is the first of many," he said. "This won't be the end of those efforts."

Since 1998, North Korea has launched five satellites, two of which appeared to have made it into orbit, including in its last attempt in 2016. International observers said the 2016 satellite appeared to be under control, but there is debate over whether it sent any transmissions.

Previous space launches were widely seen as veiled weapons tests, and the US military said Wednesday's launch featured technologies related to North Korea's banned intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

But since 2016, North Korea has developed and launched three types of ICBMs, and now appears genuinely committed to placing working satellites in space. That would not only provide it with better intelligence on its enemies, but prove it could keep up with other growing space powers in the region, analysts said.

"North Korea has traditionally lacked robust strategic situational awareness capabilities, which contribute to its chronic sense of insecurity," said Ankit Panda of the US-based Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

North Korea could use such satellites to more effectively target South Korea and Japan or conduct damage assessments, he said.

On the other hand, if North Korea can verify, with its own satellites, that the United States and its allies are not about to attack, it might prove stabilising, Panda added.

Takeshi Watanabe, a senior fellow at the National Institute for Defence Studies, pointed out that in recent years North Korea appears to have focused on technological needs rather than prioritising political messages. — Reuters

AI could pose 'risk of extinction' akin to nuclear war and pandemics

JOSEPH BOYLE

Global leaders should be working to reduce "the risk of extinction" from artificial intelligence technology, a group of industry chiefs and experts warned.

A one-line statement signed by dozens of specialists, including Sam Altman whose firm OpenAI created the ChatGPT bot, said tackling the risks from AI should be "a global priority alongside other societal-scale risks such as pandemics and nuclear war".

ChatGPT burst into the spotlight late last year, demonstrating an ability to generate essays, poems and conversations from the briefest of prompts.

The programme's wild success sparked a gold rush with billions of dollars of investment into the field, but critics and insiders have raised the alarm.

Common worries include the possibility that chatbots could flood the web with disinformation, that biased algorithms will churn out racist material, or that AI-powered automation could lay waste to entire industries.

The latest statement, housed on the website of US-based non-profit Center for AI Safety, gave no detail of the potential existential threat posed by AI.

CHATGPT BURST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT LATE LAST YEAR, DEMONSTRATING AN ABILITY TO GENERATE ESSAYS, POEMS AND CONVERSATIONS FROM THE BRIEFEST OF PROMPTS

The centre said the "succinct statement" was meant to open up a discussion on the dangers of the technology.

Several of the signatories, including Geoffrey Hinton, who created some of the technology underlying AI systems and is known as one of the godfathers of the industry, have made similar warnings in the past.



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman addresses a speech during a meeting, at the Station F in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

Their biggest worry has been the rise of so-called artificial general intelligence (AGI) — a loosely defined concept for a moment when machines become capable of performing wide-ranging functions and can develop their own programming.

The fear is that humans would no longer have control over superintelligent machines, which experts have warned could have disastrous consequences for the species and the planet.

Dozens of academics and specialists from companies including Google and Microsoft — both leaders in the AI field — signed the statement.

It comes two months after Tesla boss Elon Musk and hundreds of others issued an open letter calling for a pause in the development of such technology until it could be shown to be safe.

However, Musk's letter sparked widespread criticism that dire warnings of societal collapse were hugely exaggerated and often reflected the talking points of AI boosters.

US academic Emily Bender, who co-wrote an influential papers criticising AI, said the March letter, signed by hundreds of notable figures, was "dripping with AI hype".

Bender and other critics have slammed AI firms for refusing to publish the sources of their data or reveal how it is processed — the so-called "black box" problem.

Among the criticism is that the algorithms could be trained on racist, sexist or politically biased material.

Altman, who is currently touring the world in a bid to help shape the global conversation around AI, has hinted several times at the global threat posed by the technology his firm is developing.

"If something goes wrong with AI, no gas mask is going to help you," he told a small group of journalists in Paris last Friday.

But he defended his firm's refusal to publish the source data, saying critics really just wanted to know if the models were biased.

"How it does on a racial bias test is what matters there," he said, adding that the latest model was "surprisingly non-biased". — AFP

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If Donald Trump returns...

As the 2024 US presidential primary campaign season begins, the most likely final contest is a rematch between President Joe Biden and Donald Trump. Judging by the electoral map in 2020, Biden would be well-placed to win. But American politics is unpredictable, and any number of health, legal, or economic surprises could change the outlook. Hence, many foreign friends have been asking me what would happen to US foreign policy if Trump were to return to the White House.

The question is complicated by the fact that Trump himself is unpredictable. The presidency was his first political office, and his background translated into a highly unconventional political style. His success as a reality-television star meant that he was always focused on keeping the camera's attention – often with statements that were more outrageous than true, and by breaking conventional norms of behaviour.

Trump also intuited that he could mobilise discontent by decrying the uneven economic effects of global trade and stoking resentment over immigration and cultural change, particularly among older white males without a college education. With a constant drip of populist, protectionist, and nationalistic statements, he earned himself equally constant media coverage.

Back in 2016, many expected Trump to move to the centre to broaden his political appeal, as most normal politicians would do. Instead, he continued to play to his loyal base, which he used as a bludgeon against any congressional members of his party who dared to criticise or contradict him. Those Republicans who openly opposed him tended to lose their primaries to Trump-endorsed challengers. As a result, Trump has established almost complete control of the Republican Party. In the 2020 election, however, his appeal to the extreme right may have cost him the support of some moderate Republicans and independents in key swing states. As president, Trump was different



Joseph S Nye, Jr

The writer is a professor at Harvard University and a former US assistant secretary of defence

WHAT WOULD A SECOND TRUMP PRESIDENCY MEAN FOR US FOREIGN POLICY AND THE WORLD?

from all his predecessors. He often announced major new policies (or the firing of cabinet secretaries) on Twitter, and seemingly on a whim. His administration thus was characterised by frequent changes in top personnel and contradictory policy messages, with the president undercutting his own top officials. What he lost in organisational coherence, however, he made up for with his near-complete domination of the agenda. Unpredictability was one of Trump's most potent political tools.

Insofar as Trump has deeply held political views, they are eclectic, rather than traditionally Republican. He has long expressed protectionist opinions on trade and channelled nationalist resentment by claiming that America's allies are taking advantage of it. He has openly challenged the post-1945 consensus on the liberal international order and proclaimed Nato obsolete, leading John Bolton, one of his former national security advisers, to worry that he would withdraw the US from the alliance if re-elected. For his part, Trump recently promised to “finish the process we began under my administration of fundamentally re-evaluating Nato's purpose.”

As president, Trump withdrew from the Paris climate agreement and abandoned the Trans-Pacific Partnership that former president Barack Obama had negotiated. He weakened the World Trade Organization; imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from allies; launched a trade war against China; withdrew from the Iran nuclear agreement; criticised the G7; and praised authoritarian leaders with well-known records of violating human rights. He was notably gentle in his relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and skeptical of US support for Ukraine.

Polls show that American soft power declined considerably during the Trump years. Though tweets can help to set a global agenda, their tone and substance also can offend other countries.

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TEMPORAL MILESTONE



Indigenous people take part in a demonstration against the so-called legal thesis Marco Temporal (Temporal Milestone), a bill that stops the demarcation of indigenous territories, in front of the National Congress in Brasilia, Brazil, on Tuesday. – AFP

The IMF’s turn to lead on climate

RAKESH MOHAN, IRENE MONASTEROLO AND RISHIKESH RAM BHANDARY

Emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) are feeling the financial squeeze. Two-thirds of low-income countries are already in or at high risk of debt distress, Russia's war in Ukraine is compounding financial shocks with high food and energy prices, and the rising cost of capital is leaving governments with little, if any, fiscal space.

At the same time, several EMDEs are bearing the brunt of a looming climate crisis to which they contributed little. Pakistan's catastrophic flooding last year caused damages and economic losses totalling more than \$30 billion, with reconstruction estimated to cost an additional \$16 billion. In the Caribbean, tropical cyclones regularly cause damage and loss equivalent to around 100 per cent of GDP, and global warming implies that the intensity and frequency of extreme weather is set to increase. And yet, with limited fiscal space and poor access to international markets, EMDEs are unable to invest in climate resilience as needed.

As a key multilateral body charged with promoting global macroeconomic and financial stability, the International Monetary Fund is facing a now-or-never moment to help facilitate a just transition to a

WHILE THE IMF HAS MADE GREAT STRIDES ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN A SHORT TIME, EMERGING MARKETS AND DEVELOPING ECONOMIES NEED RESOURCES TO INVEST IN RESILIENCE MORE URGENTLY THAN EVER

low-carbon, climate-resilient economy.

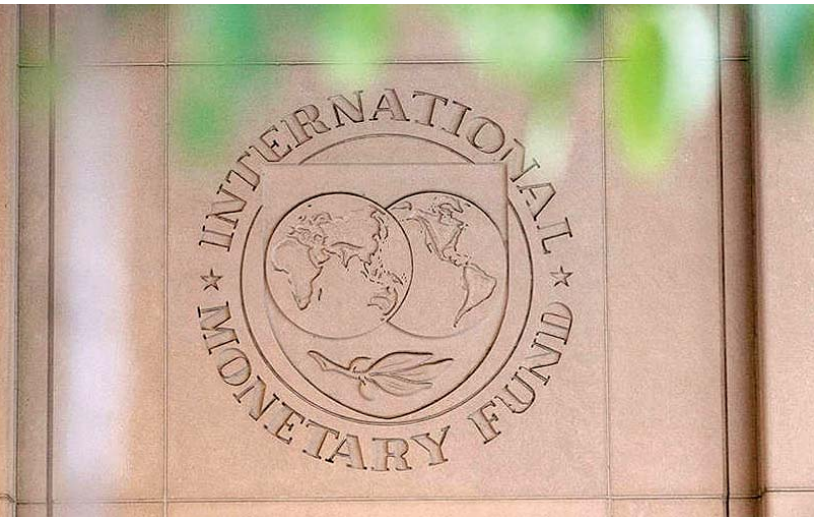
Since recognising the profound macroeconomic implications of rising global temperatures, the IMF has released a climate-change strategy, which outlines its plans for integrating the issue into its work, especially its macroeconomic surveillance and lending programs. Most notably, following its historic allocation of \$650 billion in special drawing rights (SDRs, the IMF's reserve asset) in 2021, the Fund established the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) in part to support climate action in EMDEs.

The latest United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report sounds the alarm about the rapidly mounting dangers of global warming and the limited time left to adapt. Against this backdrop, a new report from the Task Force on Climate, Development, and the IMF, of which we are members, assesses how the Fund's climate actions stack up against current needs.

We found that while the IMF has made welcome strides towards integrating climate considerations into its operations, important gaps remain in four key areas: modelling climate risks into its debt-sustainability analysis (DSA); tailoring policy

advice to national contexts; upgrading its lending toolkit to address macro-critical imbalances and natural catastrophes arising from climate change; and, along with other institutions, facilitating the large-scale investments needed to help countries shift to a low-carbon pathway.

The IMF's preferred policy prescription has been to set a price on carbon emissions that is high enough to encourage polluters to emit less. Its working papers have suggested a globally coordinated and differentiated price floor to increase policy ambition and foster an orderly transition. Yet while establishing a carbon price is generally considered optimal in theory, implementation and impact raise many challenges.



The IMF has released a climate-change strategy.

The introduction of carbon pricing around the world is still uneven and poorly coordinated with national energy policies such as increasing fossil-fuel subsidies. Moreover, several governments are introducing a broad range of instruments to implement climate policies that are better aligned with their unique circumstances. To be sensitive to national needs, the IMF needs to move away from a one-size-fits-all policy and develop an effective method to assess the effects of explicit and implicit carbon prices, which can vary considerably within and across countries.

Carbon pricing is also being embraced as a tool to fund climate investments. But the revenue is unlikely to replace that produced from fossil fuels. This

is equally true for hydrocarbon producers, such as those in Latin America and the Caribbean, that rely heavily on fossil-fuel exports for public finance, and hydrocarbon importers that levy significant taxes on fossil-fuel usage.

In addition to expanding its surveillance activities and economic modeling to reflect the reality of diverse national circumstances, the IMF should encourage future-oriented measures such as a big investment push (albeit in a fiscally prudent manner).

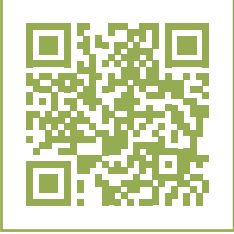
This would require the Fund to retool its DSA framework to take a broader view of a country's financing needs.

To meet the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and their commitments under the Paris agreement, EMDEs will need to mobilise substantial resources, estimated by some to be as much as \$2.4 trillion per year — over 2 per cent of current global GDP. Beyond that, IMF research has shown that investment in climate-friendly sectors can be a more powerful growth multiplier than investment in carbon-intensive sectors. And, in addition to avoiding costly future damages, investing in climate resilience helps reduce current sovereign risk.

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INDIA SMASH SOUTH KOREA 9-1 IN SEMIFINAL



INDIA MARCH INTO JUNIOR ASIA CUP FINAL

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 31

Boby Singh Dhami hit three goals as India powered past South Korea 9-1 to enter the Men's Junior Asia Cup hockey championship final in Salalah on Wednesday.

India will meet the winners of the second semifinal between Pakistan and Malaysia in the title showdown on Thursday.

India, who emerged Pool A toppers ahead of Pakistan and Japan, showed their intentions clear by slowly taking control of the first semifinal against South Korea.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex, Sunit Lakra put India ahead in the 13th minute with a brilliant field goal.

Star player Arajieet Singh Hundal made his mark as India went ahead 2-0 in the 19th minute.

After the half-time break, India quickly returned to business and Bobby Singh Dhami scored to make it 3-0 in the first minute itself.

In the 34th minute, Angad Bir Singh was on target as India extended the lead to 4-0.

Four minutes later, Uttam Singh joined the goal-scoring list as India moved 5-0 ahead against a hapless

South Korean defence.

Dhami found his second goal in the next minute as India netted their sixth field goal.

The Koreans finally succeeded in breaching the Indian defence as Keonyeol Hwang struck from a penalty corner in the 46th minute to make it 6-1.

However, Vishnukant Singh scored India's first penalty corner goal of the match in the 51st minute to power their lead to 7-1.

Four minutes later, Dhami netted his third and India raced to 8-1.

In the 57th minute, Sharda

Nand Tiwari made it 9-1 from a penalty corner to complete a dominant victory for India.

BANGLADESH WIN

In the placement match for 5-8th positions, Bangladesh beat Thailand 4-1 late on Tuesday.

In the first placement match on Tuesday, Japan thrashed hosts Oman 8-0. With this result, Japan will play for the 5/6th place, while the home team will play for the 7/8th Place on June 1.

The second match for the definition of the 5-8th place was between Bangladesh (third in Pool

B) and Thailand who finished fourth in Pool A.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Centre pitch, Bangladesh were on to the task in the first minute itself with a goal by Muhammad Ali.

In the 10th minute, Amirul Islam raised the lead to 2-0 from a penalty corner.

Thailand, coached by Jung Chul Kim, pressed ahead in the second quarter and Kritsana Phumee netted from a penalty corner for them in the 17th minute.

Bangladesh immediately sprang into action and Muhammad Hasan struck their third goal to make it

3-1 in the 18th minute.

The Thai players could not make further inroads into Bangladesh defence in the remaining period of the match. Muhammad Hasan's strike from a penalty corner in the 57th minute completed the 4-1 scoreline for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh will play against Japan and Thailand will play against Oman for the fifth and sixth places, while the other two teams will play for the seventh and eighth places.

Bangladesh goal-scorer Muhammad Ali won the player of the match award.

Oman placed in Group C for WAFF U23 tourney

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 31

The draw for the fourth West Asian Championship for the Olympic teams placed Oman national team in the third group, alongside Lebanon and Yemen, in the ceremony hosted by the Federation's headquarters in the Jordanian capital, Amman. The championship will be hosted by the Iraqi Federation from June 12 to June 20.

The draw ceremony, held at the federation's headquarters on May 29 and streamed live on its official channel, unveiled the composition of the tournament's nine participating teams, divided into three groups.

In Group A, the host nation, Iraq, will compete against the teams from the United Arab



Emirates and Jordan. Group B comprises Palestine, Iran, and Syria, while Group C consists of Oman, Lebanon and Yemen.

The West Asian Federation placed a special emphasis on the drawing process, ensuring that Oman, Syria and Jordan teams were distributed across different

groups. This decision was made to prevent the teams from being placed in the same group, as they are already set to face each other in the qualifiers for the AFC U-23 Cup.

Notably, the Iranian national team will participate as a guest and by invitation under the

union agreement between the West Asian Federation and the Central Asian Federation.

The matches of the two groups will be held in the vibrant city of Baghdad, including semifinals and final. Additionally, one group will be hosted in the city of Karbala. The specific

groups assigned to each city will be announced in due course, along with the final and official schedule of matches and stadiums.

According to the tournament format, the group stage will witness fierce competition, as each team vies for a spot in the

نتائج قرعة بطولة اتحاد غرب آسيا تحت ٢٣ العراق ٢٠٢٣ WAFF U23 CHAMPIONSHIP IRAQ 2023 DRAW RESULTS		
GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C
IRAQ	PALESTINE	LEBANON
UAE	IRAN	YEMEN
JORDAN	SYRIA	OMAN

semifinals. The group winners, along with the team securing the second-best position, will advance to the semifinals. From there, the two victors will battle it out in the final match, promising an exhilarating conclusion to this prestigious event.

In related news, the Olympic camp for Oman's national team, led by national coach Akram Habrish, concluded its internal camp on May 31. The camp commenced on May 19.

The fourth West Asian Federation U23 Football Championship is poised to showcase the exceptional talent and skill of the region's emerging football stars. Fans around the world can look forward to witnessing thrilling matches and a celebration of West Asian football at its best.

Gymnastics Academy wins 27 colour medals in Jordan

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

Gymnastics Academy took part recently in the Gymnastics GX 4th Gymnastics International Competition in full apparatus in Amman, Jordan.

The Gymnastics Academy gymnasts won a total of 27 medals including 11 gold, 12 silver and 4 bronze which resulted from hard work and talented skills.

As many as 350 participants participated in the event representing numerous international clubs across the world. The gymnastics competition is one of the strongest federation tournaments in the region.

From Muscat, Oman's top eight gymnasts participated in the competition in Level 1 represented by Mais al Habsi, Level 2 represented by Aleena al Adawi, Tala al Ali and Salma Hijazi while Level 3 was led by Emma Tarazi, Lily Tarazi, Charlotte, Le Jeune Jabre and Vitalia Egorova.

This achievement inspires Gymnastics Academy to be more motivated and to aim high and always hit the mark of perfection.



BB take on MIS Fighters in MTCL T20 final

MUSCAT: The highly anticipated MTCL T20 Grand Finale is just around the corner, featuring an epic showdown between Bombay Blues (BB)W and MIS Fighters. Taking place at the iconic Oman International Cricket Stadium on June 1 at 6 pm, this thrilling encounter will showcase the top two teams of the tournament.

Bombay Blues secured their spot in the finale by defeating the formidable Desert Warriors, while MIS Fighters emerged victorious against HCC in an intense semifinal clash.

Bombay Blues displayed their prowess in the semifinals, putting up a stellar performance against the Desert Warriors. Their batsmen delivered power-packed



performances and showcased their aggressive stroke play. The bowlers, led by their seasoned captain, demonstrated remarkable skills, effectively dismantling the

opposition's batting line-up. The victory in the semifinal not only secured their place in the grand finale but also boosted their confidence as they aim for the

ultimate glory.

MIS Fighters faced a tough challenge in their semifinal encounter against HCC. However, they exhibited immense grit and determination throughout the match. The bowlers, with their consistent line and length, made crucial breakthroughs, ensuring victory for the team. The triumph in the semifinals has propelled MIS Fighters into the finale, where they will leave no stone unturned to claim the championship.

The MTCL T20 Grand Finale promises to be a riveting clash between Bombay Blues and MIS Fighters. The Oman International Cricket Stadium will witness a cricket extravaganza as these two powerhouses go head-to-head for the ultimate prize.



Test win over England would be new high for Irish cricket

LONDON: Ireland captain Andrew Balbirnie said beating England in a Test would "easily be our best achievement in cricket" as the underdogs prepare to face Ben Stokes' men at Lord's this week.

The Irish have made their reputation on the back of their exploits in white-ball internationals.

They defeated Pakistan, England and the West Indies at the 2007, 2011 and 2015 50-over World Cups respectively and beat eventual champions England at the 2022 T20 World Cup.

Ireland, however, have played just six Tests in their history and are still searching for a first win in that form of the game.

Four years ago, in their previous Test at Lord's, they dismissed England for just 85, only to suffer a 143-run defeat after they themselves slumped to 38 all out in the fourth innings of the match.

"It didn't play out the way we wanted to but we got a glimpse into what would happen if we were to win a Test," said Balbirnie on Wednesday's eve of the four-day Test.

"And, I think if we were to beat England, it would easily be our best achievement in cricket in the game."

The odds, though, are stacked against Ireland, with England having won 10 of their 12 Tests since skipper

Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum joined forces last year.

"We know that this England team is in a really good place leading to the Ashes," said Balbirnie.

Ireland will be without Josh Little at Lord's after the young fast bowler, who starred for the Gujarat Titans side that reached the recent Indian Premier League final, was rested for next month's 50-over World Cup qualifying tournament in Zimbabwe.

Little also missed Tests against Bangladesh and Sri Lanka after his IPL exploits.

Ireland's high performance director, Richard Holdsworth, defended the 23-year-old's absence on the grounds a Test at Lord's, a major landmark for most players, was not a "pinnacle event" for his side this year.

"Of course, we would have loved him here but I understand completely that he's got to focus on resting up and getting ready for our World Cup qualifier," said Balbirnie.

"Josh played in an IPL final in his first IPL appearance, I'm not stupid, he's going to get picked up by other leagues and we are going to have this situation again, but he still wants to play for Ireland."

"I've spoken to him and he still loves playing for this team." — AFP

AL WAHAIBI WIN BILLIARDS CUP AND GOLD MEDAL AT ARAB UNION CHAMPIONSHIP

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

The Oman national team player, Mubarak al Wahaibi, won the cup and the two colour medal at the end of the Arab Union Cup for Billiards and Snooker, hosted by Saudi Arabia, with the participation of 12 Arab teams.

Al Wahaibi succeeded in making his way to the final match with high steadfastness, to be a champion in the billiards competition in the 10-ball category, despite the strength competition.

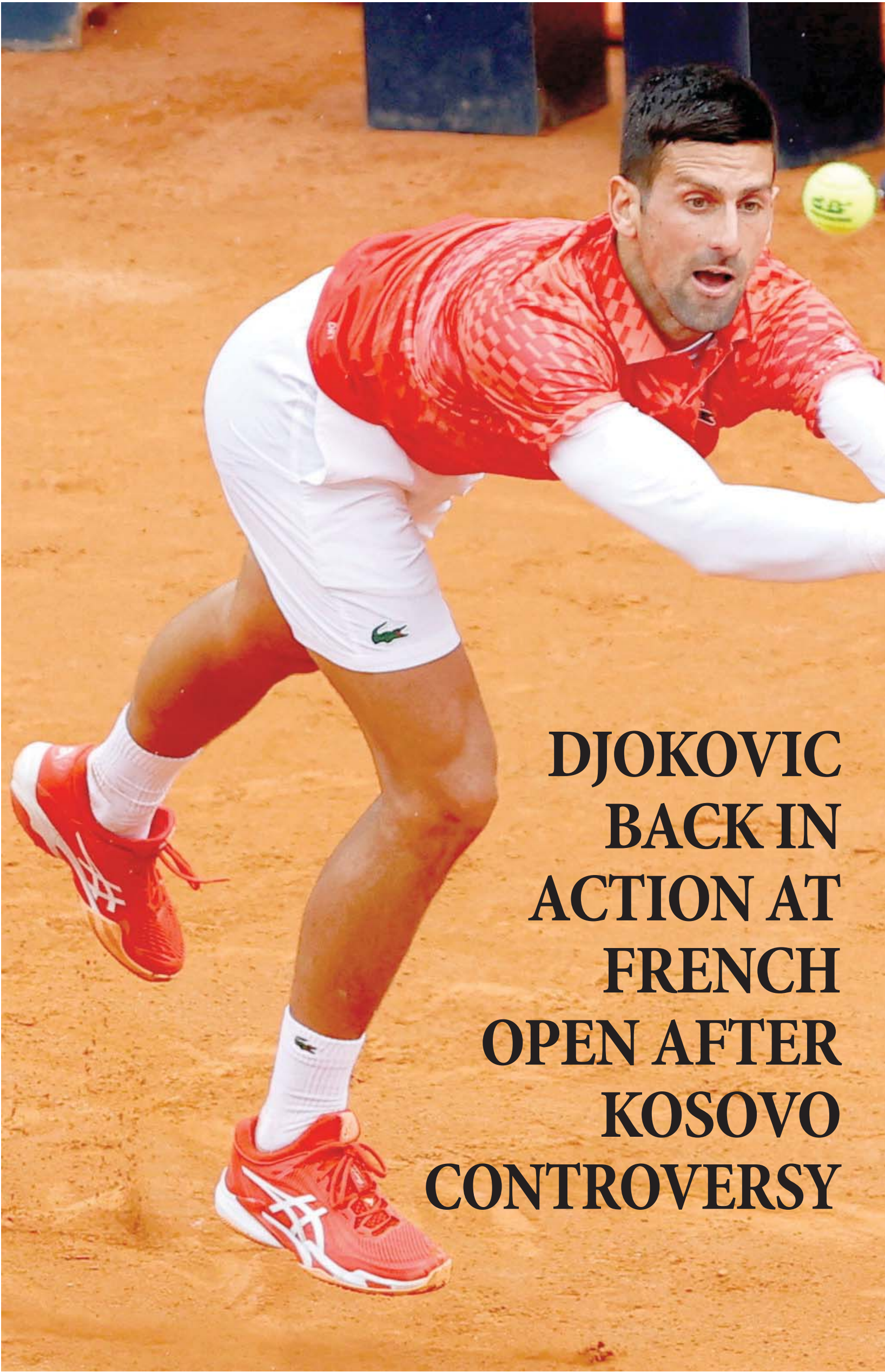
Mubarak initially succeeded in qualifying for the quarter-finals after defeating the Iraqi Karrar in the round of 16, and qualified for the quarter-finals after achieving a comfortable victory over the



Saudi Hamza al Awaidi. Then he qualified for the final match after his exciting victory over Saudi Khaled al Otaibi, in the Four League match.

While Mubarak deservedly crowned with the championship cup and the gold medal after valuable victory over the Lebanese Mazen al Barjawi, 9-5.

Mubarak al Wahaibi, expressed the winning happiness saying, "I claimed the title of the competition, the cup and gold medal, which is a long-awaited achievement at the Arab level, that because continuous training, and the motivation that was achieved after winning the bronze medal in the 8-ball pool competition, and this confirms the correct approach in climbing to the top".



DJOKOVIC BACK IN ACTION AT FRENCH OPEN AFTER KOSOVO CONTROVERSY

PARIS: Novak Djokovic will take to Court Philippe Chatrier in Wednesday's French Open night session under fire for his recent comments about clashes in Kosovo, after world number one Carlos Alcaraz also plays in the second round.

Djokovic, who is chasing a men's record 23rd Grand Slam singles title at Roland Garros, scrawled the message "Kosovo is the heart of Serbia. Stop the violence" on a camera following his first-round match.

The 36-year-old faces Hungarian Marton Fucsovics for a place in the last 32 but the focus has been on his political views, with the French sports minister on Wednesday condemning the two-time Roland Garros champion.

"It was a message that is very activist, that is very political," Amelie Oudea-Castera told broadcaster France 2.

"You shouldn't get involved, especially in the current circumstances, and it shouldn't happen again."

She added that tournament director Amelie Mauresmo had spoken to Djokovic and his entourage.

But the International Tennis Federation said there was "no provision" in Grand Slam rules "that prohibits political statements".

Thirty peacekeepers from a NATO-led force in Kosovo were injured in clashes with ethnic Serb demonstrators on Monday during protests about the installation of ethnic Albanian mayors in northern Kosovo.

"Kosovo is our cradle, our stronghold, centre of the most important things for our country... There are many reasons why I wrote that on the camera," Djokovic told Serb media after writing his message.

Ukrainian former women's world number three Elina Svitolina thinks Djokovic should be free to express his opinions.

"We are living in the free world, so why not say your opinion on something?," said Svitolina.

Djokovic will be hoping for less drama on the court against an opponent he has beaten four times in as many meetings.

He has not failed to reach the third round of a Grand Slam tournament since the 2017 Australian Open.

Tsitsipas eases through

In Wednesday's early action, Stefanos Tsitsipas cruised into the third round with a straight-sets win over Spaniard Roberto Carballes Baena.

The Greek fifth seed, the runner-up to Djokovic in 2021, claimed a 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 win on Court Suzanne Lenglen.

"I am very much in when it comes to breaking records," said Tsitsipas after notching his 20th win at

the French Open.

"I get excited when I see personal records being kind of set and broken."

Tsitsipas will next face either Argentinian Diego Schwartzman or Portugal's Nuno Borges for a place in the second week.

Svitolina battled back from a break and a set down to beat Storm Hunter, just 12 hours after her husband Gael Monfils' late-night escape act.

Svitolina, playing at a Grand Slam event for the first time since the 2022 Australian Open, downed qualifier Hunter 2-6, 6-3, 6-1.

Home favourite Monfils claimed his first win in nine months in a five-set first-round thriller against Sebastian Baez which finished after midnight in the early hours of Wednesday morning.

"Yes, I watched him, but not live. I was screaming in my room so if someone heard me, it was me cheering for Gael," said Svitolina, who was being supported on Court Simonne Mathieu by Monfils.

Svitolina will next play Russian Anna Blinkova in a politically-charged rematch of last weekend's Strasbourg final, won by the Ukrainian who then did not shake her opponent's hand.

Blinkova needed nine match points to beat French fifth seed Caroline Garcia 4-6, 6-3, 7-5 in a dramatic encounter.

American third seed Jessica Pegula booked her spot in the last 32 when opponent Camila Giorgi retired injured after losing the first set 6-2. — AFP

Nuggets stand between Heat, history in NBA Finals

MIAMI: The Heat have the chance to make history when the NBA Finals kick off on Thursday, facing a well-rested Denver Nuggets squad that is uninterested in letting the Heat's Cinderella story go any further.

Miami would be the first eighth seed to lift the Larry O'Brien Trophy after opening their improbable playoff run with a compelling 4-1 win over the Milwaukee Bucks, who had boasted the best record in the league.

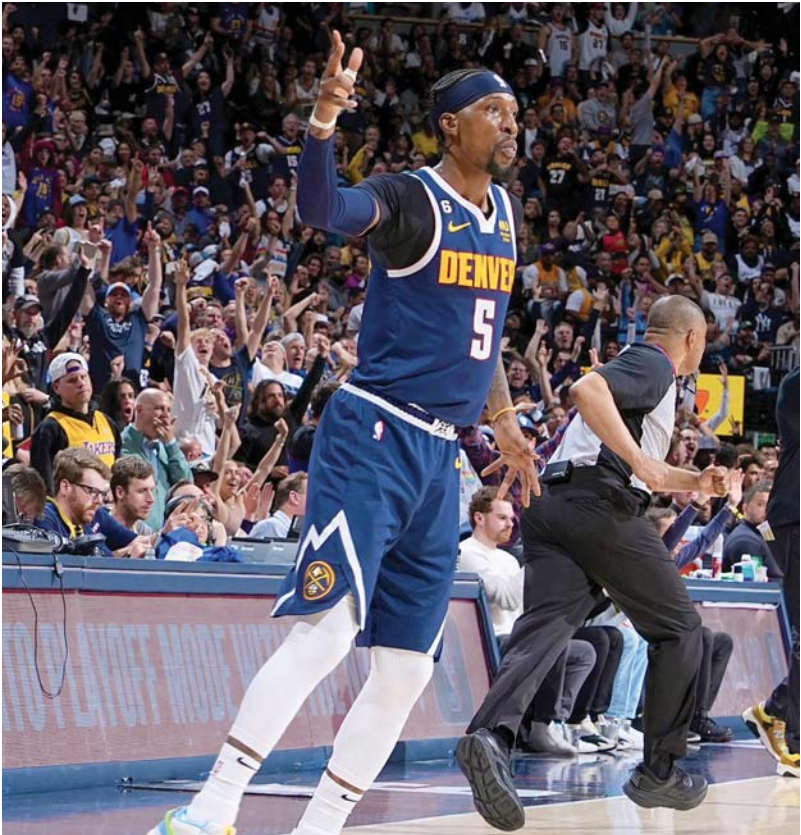
Only the second eighth seed to reach the championship series after the New York Knicks 24 years ago, they almost squandered their 3-0 head start over the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference Finals before clinching Game 7 on the road on Monday.

"I know the work that we all put into it so I know what we're capable of - but nobody's satisfied, we haven't done anything," Eastern Conference Finals MVP Jimmy Butler told reporters.

"We don't play just to win the Eastern Conference, we play to win the whole thing."

The six-time All-Star, who produced a game-high 28 points on Monday, has been a key figure in an injury-battered Heat rotation, with star guard Tyler Herro reportedly eying a return after fracturing his hand in the first round.

"Not surprising that they would win a playoff series and compete moving forward, but no matter what their team looked like, losing key players, I wouldn't pick that team to wind up as one of the last two standing," ABC



NBA Finals analyst Mark Jackson told reporters.

"It says a lot about their competitive spirit, their culture."

They face the ultimate test against twice MVP Nikola Jokic's Nuggets, who cruised through the opening two rounds before embarrassing the Los Angeles Lakers in a four-game sweep to win the West more than a week ago.

But while oddsmakers put the Nuggets at a mile-high advantage to collect the franchise's first title, coach Michael Malone told reporters he expects the series to be "the biggest challenge of our lives."

"Forget the eighth seed stuff - they beat Milwaukee four to one," said Malone.

"You get to the NBA Finals, it's not about seeding anymore. And

LAST 10 WINNERS OF THE NBA FINALS AHEAD OF THE 2023 FINALS SERIES BETWEEN DENVER AND MIAMI STARTING HERE ON THURSDAY:

- 2022: Golden State Warriors
- 2021: Milwaukee Bucks
- 2020: Los Angeles Lakers
- 2019: Toronto Raptors
- 2018: Golden State Warriors
- 2017: Golden State Warriors
- 2016: Cleveland Cavaliers
- 2015: Golden State Warriors
- 2014: San Antonio Spurs
- 2013: Miami Heat. — AFP

for those that are thinking that this is going to be an easy series - I don't even know what to say to you."

The NBA Finals kick off on Thursday at 8:30 p.m. ET (0030 GMT on Friday) at Ball Arena.

— Reuters



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Investments in Raysut Industrial City reach RO 500 million



SALALAH: Land occupancy in Raysut Industrial City reached 97 per cent by the end of Q1 2023, as the number of localised projects reached 221 projects, with a cumulative investment volume of approximately RO 500 million.

Salah bin Nasser al Alawi (**pictured**), Director General of Raysut Industrial City, said in a statement that the projects in the industrial city vary in terms of activities between industrial, service, commercial and support. The industrial projects account for the largest proportion with 192 projects. The total number of workers in the industrial city reaches 4,156 in which 1,563 are citizens with 38 per cent Omanisation rate.

Al Alawi explained the city is witnessing an active investment movement during the current period, as the RO 12 million investment project, Salalah Steel Industries Company, started its experimental production and the official opening of the factory will take place during the coming period.

The opening of the medical solutions project for the RO 7 million Dhofar Pharmaceutical Industries Company will also happen during the quarter.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Oman explores enhanced cooperation with China in energy and mineral sectors

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

A high-level Omani delegation, led by Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, has embarked on a visit to the People's Republic of China. The delegation included representatives from the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Public Authority for Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

The China visit represents the next leg of a wider multinational tour that included a working visit to the Republic of Korea, with trips planned to Saudi Arabia and Malaysia as well.

The objective is to strengthen cooperation in the renewable energy, green hydrogen, oil, gas, and minerals sector.

The Omani delegation will engage in meetings and discussions with Chinese government officials and senior representatives of companies to explore available opportunities and foster partnerships and cooperation.

During the China tour, Al Hadhrami met with the Reform and Development Committee of the People's Republic of China, which is responsible for foreign government investments. The meeting discussed opportunities to enhance cooperation and establish economic partnerships in the energy and mineral sectors.

The objective is to attract Chinese companies with expertise and technology in these



THE CHINA VISIT REPRESENTS THE NEXT LEG OF A WIDER MULTINATION TOUR THAT INCLUDED A WORKING VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA, WITH TRIPS PLANNED TO SAUDI ARABIA AND MALAYSIA AS WELL. THE OBJECTIVE IS TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY, GREEN HYDROGEN, OIL, GAS, AND MINERALS SECTOR.

industries to invest in Oman.

The committee expressed support for this initiative and encouraged increased involvement of Chinese companies in Omani oil production. Discussions also encompassed the upcoming tenth Arab and Chinese businessmen

conference, scheduled to be held in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia next month.

Al Hadhrami also held bilateral meetings with prominent sector companies, including CNBC and CNOOC, to explore their potential participation in exploration, production, and refinery operations in offshore and onshore concession areas within the oil and gas sectors.

Furthermore, the delegation engaged in talks with Chinese companies regarding the localisation of industries related to renewable energy and green hydrogen, such as the manufacturing of wind turbines and energy storage batteries.

They also discussed the utilisation of local mineral

resources, including silica, copper, and lithium, which would contribute to the development of the energy and mineral industries and maximise local value-added.

Dr Salah bin Hafeez al Dahab, Director General of Investment at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, stated, "Through our visit to the People's Republic of China, we aim to explore agreements for the development of open oil concession areas and the introduction of technology related to enhanced recovery and heavy oil development through discussions with Chinese companies.

We also emphasise the significance of focusing on the ongoing transformation of investment in renewable energy

and hydrogen projects.

The Chinese National Oil Company has expressed a keen interest in the hydrogen areas offered in upcoming rounds, and a Chinese company has expressed its intention to establish a strategic partnership with Oman, encompassing all aspects of the oil and gas sector.

This partnership would involve joint projects with Omani institutions, ranging from upstream to downstream operations. Additionally, an energy finance company has shown interest in investing in green minerals in the Sultanate of Oman."

China currently imports over 80 per cent of Oman's total crude oil production.

44.01 signs pact for first-of-its-kind carbon removal project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 31

Award-winning Omani carbon mineralisation start-up 44.01 and Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) have agreed a concession for the world's first commercial-scale peridotite mineralisation project.

The project, which will begin in 2024 in the Al Hajar Mountains, will be the largest peridotite mineralisation activity in the world, and the first commercial demonstration to mineralise multiple tonnes of CO2 per day.

The project will take place at a site in Al Qabil, where 44.01 has already completed a successful pilot project to prove that their process is effective, safe and permanent.



44.01 will take CO2 captured from the atmosphere or from industrial processes, dissolve it in water and then inject it into peridotite formations deep

underground, where it will mineralise, or turn into rock, meaning it can never escape back into the atmosphere.

Peridotite, an ultramafic rock

found in abundance across Oman, mineralises CO2 naturally, but this usually takes decades. 44.01's technology accelerates the process, offering a safe, permanent, scalable

way of eliminating CO2 in less than a year.

Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, said: "44.01's mineralisation technology, developed here in Oman, has the potential to help our country meet its net-zero targets and decarbonise vital Omani industries in line with His Majesty's Vision 2040. We are pleased to support 44.01 in its largest project so far and we look forward to seeing what this technology can achieve in the future."

Talal Hasan, Founder and CEO of 44.01, said: "We are delighted to have agreed this concession with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. We hope this project paves the way for the Sultanate of Oman to become a world leader in

permanent CO2 removal."

44.01 eliminates CO2 by turning it into rock, removing it from the atmosphere safely, efficiently, and permanently. 44.01, whose name refers to the molecular mass of carbon dioxide, mineralises CO2 in peridotite, a rock found in abundance in Oman, as well as in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australasia.

Peridotite mineralisation is a natural process, which 44.01 accelerates by injecting carbonated fluid into peridotite formations deep underground. 44.01 won the Earthshot Prize and an XPrize Milestone Award in 2022.

The company's technology has also been recognised by Stripe, Shopify and Watershed, among others.

OCEC inaugurates 3rd Oman Perfume Show



MUSCAT: The Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) welcomes you to the largest edition of the Oman Perfume Show, taking place from May 31 to June 4, 2023.

With the participation of over 100 exhibitors, both established brands and emerging SMEs, visitors will embark on a sensory journey with unique scents and aromas from Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Thailand, Vietnam, Japan and more. Under the sponsorship of prestigious brands such as Abdul Samad Al Qurashi Arabian Oud, Andy Oud, D D Oud Oil, Raydan Perfumes, and Aramex Oman, this event serves as an unparalleled platform to discover the latest trends in the perfume industry, featuring exclusive offers and unique products available only at the

Oman Perfume Show.

Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, inaugurated the Oman Perfume Show, with the presence of key government officials, industry experts and distinguished guests. The event will continue for five days, from 2 PM to 10 PM daily, at Exhibition Hall 1 in the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Eng Said al Shanfari, Chief Executive Officer of OCEC, expressed: "As we inaugurate the 3rd edition of the Oman Perfume Show, we are delighted with the overwhelming response this event has received. This highlight of OCEC's event calendar brings together international, local, and SME brands, showcasing the latest trends in the perfume industry under one roof."

OQ launches 'Masar' programme to develop strategic leadership skills

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, signed a three-year agreement with Competence HR Company to enhance the skills of 800 of its leaders through the 'Masar' Programme.

This initiative is part of OQ's ongoing commitment to empower its national employees to keep pace with supervisory developments following the Group's future vision. In addition, the agreement will play a significant role in realising OQ's energy transition strategy in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Following the agreement signing by Talal bin Hamed al Aufi, Group CEO of OQ, and Amer Fadhel, CEO of Competence HR Company, the first cohort of the "Masar" programme, comprising 265 employees, has embarked on their training and development journey in the areas of leadership and supervision.

The programme was designed according to international standards of the Chartered Management Institute, UK



to refine leadership skills and empower OQ personnel in middle and senior roles.

This is achieved through the implementation of customised programmes developed in collaboration with Competence HR, a trusted partner with extensive connections to international and local centres renowned for expertise in leadership skills training.

By partnering with a local company with established connections to international counterparts, OQ acts a catalyst for fostering valuable

collaborations between local and international entities specialised in training and extending support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the Sultanate of Oman.

This collaboration empowers SMEs by providing access to essential experience, facilitating knowledge exchange, and enabling participation in continuous qualification programmes that adhere to international standards. This comprehensive support system ensures that SMEs in the Sultanate of Oman receive the necessary resources to thrive and excel in their respective fields.



learn how to elevate the impact of internal audit report.

Good audit reports should be meaningful and insightful by

Ominvest hosts 3rd annual internal audit forum

MUSCAT: Ominvest, one of the leading investment companies in the region, recently concluded its third annual Internal audit forum as part of its participation in the 'Internal Audit Awareness Month'.

This year, the forum also included an enriching two-day training session aimed at enhancing the skills of internal audit report writing for group companies. The training took place on May 30-31 at Hormuz Grand Muscat.

The forum, held during the Internal Audit Awareness Month, was attended by chief

audit executives, head of internal audit and audit team members at Ominvest and its Group companies, including Ubhar Capital, National Life & General Insurance Company, National Finance Company, Alizz Bank and Takaful.

Muneer al Mughairy (pictured), Chief Audit Officer at Ominvest, expressed his appreciation for the significance of the two-day training session, saying, "The two-day training session conducted by PEF Associates, Inc. was an exceptional opportunity for our auditors to

OAB launches new internship programme Ruwad Al Arabi



MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) is set to contribute to the Sultanate of Oman's workforce by introducing a new internship programme Ruwad Al Arabi (Leaders of Tomorrow).

In line with the aims outlined in Oman Vision 2040, the programme aims to foster economic competitiveness and stimulate growth.

The one-year internship targets university and college graduates and is designed to provide its participants with meaningful work experience and the skills required to bolster employment prospects within, or outside, the sector.

Applicants who display enthusiasm, a strong work ethic and a willingness to learn will be considered for the programme. The ultimate goal is to improve the employability of young Omani nationals while growing the Omani workforce.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of OAB, said: "With the announcement of Ruwad Al Arabi, we are sending a strong message to the Omani workforce

of tomorrow that we support their ambitions and want to continue giving back to our community, while matching the Sultanate of Oman's economic objectives."

He added, "The youth of the nation, who are our leaders of tomorrow, have an excellent opportunity to kick-start their careers and upskill themselves thanks to the initiative, which will not only strengthen the banking sector, but also the workforce as

a whole, as we move toward fulfilling the goals set by Vision 2040."

Participants will be introduced to staff, systems and values of OAB and will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in various banking departments, such as customer experience and customer service, digital banking, fintech, marketing and finance. They will also receive training and

Sohar International receives two awards at Oman Banking and Finance Awards 2023

MUSCAT: In a resounding endorsement of its growth ambitions and unwavering commitment to digital transformation, Sohar International has triumphed at the Oman Banking and Finance Awards, cementing its position as the 'Best Bank in Growth' and the undisputed 'Industry Leader in Digital Banking.'

The Oman Banking and Finance Awards was held under the auspices of Tahir al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, in conjunction with the eighth edition of the New Age Banking Summit 2023.

Representing Sohar International, Ahmed al Musalmi, CEO of Sohar International, attended the event and received the awards on behalf of the bank. The highly anticipated event was held on May 31, 2023, at the Sheraton Oman Hotel.

Elaborating on the bank's renewed strategy that has been



instrumental in cementing its winning position at the Awards and otherwise, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer of Sohar International, mentioned: "We are honoured to receive this prestigious accolade, recognising our outstanding growth across various sectors.

Since 2018, our bank has embarked on a new journey with a refreshed vision, expanding significantly and contributing to the national economy. The financial results achieved

in recent years reflect our remarkable growth, underscoring our commitment to delivering value and prosperity.

As the second-largest local bank in terms of total assets, Sohar International is unwavering in its commitment to consolidating its position in the market. Through our persistent efforts to create value for Oman, we aspire to be a trusted institution that contributes to the overall development and success of our nation."



Omani tech startup unveils solar PV self-cleaning robot

CONRAD PRABHU

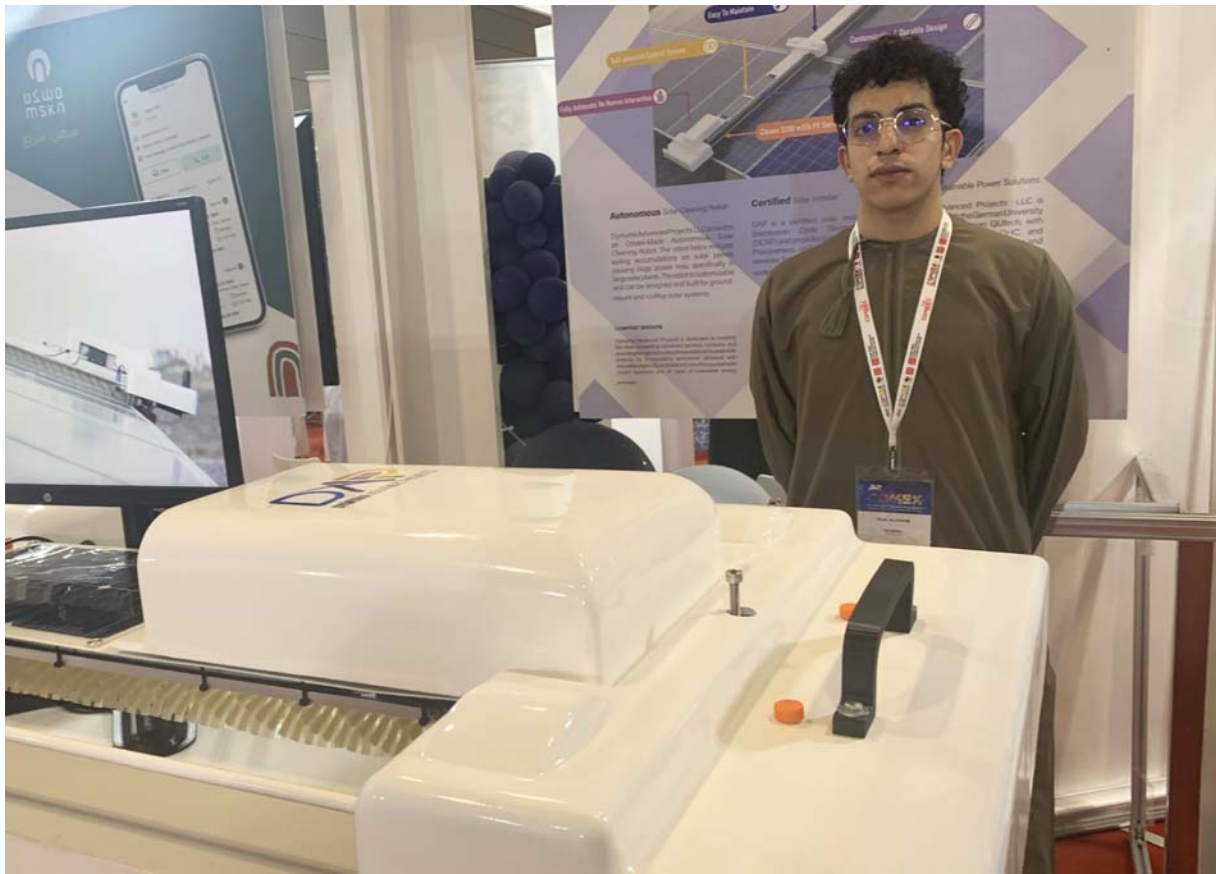
MUSCAT, MAY 31

An Omani tech startup has piloted a wholly customised solar PV self-cleaning robot that it hopes to eventually commercialise in-country to service the mega solar farms due to be rolled out in support of Oman's green energy transition.

Dymuma Advanced Projects (DAP), co-founded by Hilal al Hashmi and Ibrahim al Jassasi, specialises in the installation, operation and maintenance of solar PV systems, but its expertise lies in the development of self-clearing solar PV robots customized for Oman's harsh environment.

"Our solar PV self-cleaning robot has been designed and built to mitigate soiling and dust accumulation on PV systems," said Hilal al Hashmi. "Dymuma's longer-term goal is to target large-scale solar plants that are being developed in line with Oman Vision. 2040"

A prototype of the all-Omani self-cleaning robot was displayed at COMEX 2023



Hilal al Hashmi, co-founder of Dymuma Advanced Projects, with a prototype of his solar PV self-cleaning robot at COMEX 2023.

expo held in Muscat last week. Set up two years ago with its headquarters at the German University of Technology (GUtech) at Halban, Dymuma

has benefited from active tech support not only from GUtech, but also from BP Oman which provided initial funding support, among other reputable Omani

organisations.

The start-up has also received a license from the Distribution Code Review Panel (DCRP), an official entity with the authority

to test the skills and capabilities of service providers operating in the electricity sector.

Significantly, the Dymuma robot has a number of technological and cost-competitive advantages over imported versions, says Hilal.

"Although the underlying technology has been adopted universally, we have suitably tweaked it to optimise its performance in the Omani environment.

As a dry cleaning system, it can clean PV panels of soil and accumulated dust, thus making for an efficient solution for deployment in large-scale solar farms.

Further, as a local Omani company, we have the advantage of providing after-sales maintenance and support to local clients, as opposed to overseas service providers who often do not have a local support base after the installation is done."

Dymuma's pilot has been tested at multiple locations and environments around the country, with data gleaned from these tests then used to upgrade and optimise its installation at a given location,

says Hilal.

The company has also installed its own solar PV system – a 12 kW capacity unit – atop the world's first, fastest built 3D house at GUtech.

It is now working to deploy its own self-cleaning PV robot to maintain this system.

Hilal says his project is inspired by the lucrative solar PV cleaning market that is expected to rapidly materialize in the country over the next couple of decades.

The switch to renewables for power generation is necessitating the installation of millions of solar PV panels across the country – rising to hundreds of millions of PV panels when Oman embarks on the development of a new industry centring on the production of green hydrogen.

With support from various government ministries, all of which are all committed to unlocking in-country value (ICV) opportunities linked to the energy transition, Dymuma hopes to receive support for its vision to set up a manufacturing facility for self-cleaning PV robots here in the Sultanate of Oman, he added.

Nominations open for 6th CCED Oman Student Awards



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 31

The 6th CCED Oman Student Awards for the Advancement of Postgraduate Education, which has seen previous winners go onto secure senior positions in many of Oman's leading industrial companies and policy roles in the public sector, were launched on Wednesday, May 31, by CC Energy Development, one of the country's biggest independent oil producers, to receive 2023 submissions.

The Oman Student Awards were established in 2016 to celebrate the role that Post-Graduate Education plays in creating an innovation ecosystem that can invent the future in part through research, in part through education, and in part through active efforts to move university-derived ideas into industry.

The most important product of Post-Graduate Studies is educated students, capable researchers and innovative thinkers, who will have the opportunity to win a paid internship at CCED as part of the accolade.

"These students include not just the founders of new industries and technologies

but also the future leaders of companies, academia, and government organizations.

A post-graduate community of Masters and PhD students in Oman supports and contributes to a country's transition into a diversified and knowledge-based economy," said Walter Simpson, Managing Director, CCED.

"Investing in the future of local and national talent is part of CCED's core strategy in adding business value and achieving growth along with the communities we work with," added Simpson.

A new era of sustainability calls for innovative ideas, which means a "massive" investment in upskilling and reskilling Omanis and foreign workers, delegates said. But this relies on dramatically elevating two-way communication between educators, industry stakeholders, government bodies, and society – an oft-discussed call to action that now needs to truly be realised.

Time is short to create and inspire creative, pragmatic, and digitally-enabled talent to underpin the sultanate's journey to Net-Zero by 2050 – its greatest national challenge yet.

Investments in Raysut Industrial City reach RO 500m

FROM PAGE 13

"The active movement comes as a result of the completion of infrastructure services, administrative and technical services, the strategic location of the industrial city and its proximity to Salalah Port, which enhances import and export opportunities," the Director General said.

"The proximity of the industrial city to Salalah Airport with the availability of flexible logistical services contribute to enhancing the attraction of investment opportunities, in addition to the proximity of the industrial city



to the Yemeni market (about 300 km)," he added.

He pointed out that the service centre, Masar, in Raysut Industrial

City is one of the investor services centres available in the industrial cities of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

Since its inauguration in November 1992, Raysut Industrial City has contributed to the development of the industrial sector in the Dhofar Governorate, encouraging Omani industries and urging the private sector to invest in the industrial field and exploit local resources by attracting industrial investments from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman to become a leading regional center in the field of manufacturing. — ONA

FDO's RO 16 million aquaculture project announces first harvest

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 31

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) has announced the first harvest of Oriental Shrimp Aquaculture LLC, a subsidiary of the FDO group, from the 200-hectare Shrimp Aquaculture Project at Khuweimah, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

With an investment value of around RO 16 million (over \$41 million), the project represents FDO Group's ongoing promotion of aquaculture as a key pillar to diversifying the national economy beyond the hydrocarbon sector.

It also reflects the Fisheries Development Oman progress in terms of leveraging Oman's favourable economical, geographical, and logistical conditions to become a regional leader in the aquaculture and fisheries sector.

The farm is growing Pacific White Shrimp, (*Litopenaeus vannamei*), using specific pathogen free brood stocks imported from the United States.



WITH AN INVESTMENT VALUE OF AROUND RO 16 MILLION (OVER \$41 MILLION), THE PROJECT REPRESENTS FDO GROUP'S ONGOING PROMOTION OF AQUACULTURE AS A KEY PILLAR TO DIVERSIFYING THE NATIONAL ECONOMY BEYOND THE HYDROCARBON SECTOR.

The entire production operation is carried in a highly bio-secure and hygienic

environment without the use of drugs, antibiotics, or any chemicals of public health concern.

Key components of the project include 126 grow out ponds for Pacific White Shrimp, a nursery unit with 48 ponds, post larval unit, pre-processing unit, and support infrastructure.

With an operation capacity 4000 tonnes annually, the Khuweimah farm supports the FDO Group's mission to lead

the development of a sustainable and competitive aquaculture sector in Oman that promotes a meaningful contribution to wealth creation, food security needs, and employment generation in Oman, through the diversification of production systems that produce safe, nutritious and affordable aquaculture produce, while ensuring the environmental continuity required for securing its future growth.

Asian recovery linked to China



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

Developments in China's manufacturing and service sectors are having a direct impact on economic exchanges with several Asian countries, whether in the field of trade, manufacturing, tourism or others.

Disruptions in supply chains during the pandemic had opened up alternative routes for trade in the Asian region and the world at large to the detriment of export-oriented emerging markets.

Three years on from the Covid-19 related shutdowns that the world experienced amid the global turmoil of the pandemic, China in particular is recording accelerated growth in GDP, reaching 4.5 per cent in the first quarter of this year, despite the

presence of some conflicting signals for other emerging markets, according to the Oxford Business Group report.

This strong performance of the Chinese economy in Q1 exceeded the expectations of many analysts, as a result of the growth of the services sector by 5.4 per cent and the retail sector by 10.6 per cent.

These developments enhance global economic growth in Asian countries as well, at a time when China has been working for decades to import raw materials from emerging markets due to the country's transition from a manufacturing economy to a service-oriented economy, which enhances forms of trade.

However, the data indicates a slowdown in Chinese exports to developed markets such as the European Union,

Japan and America amid the recent geopolitical and trade competition, which reinforced China's transformation in Southeast Asian markets that are part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

During the first quarter, Chinese shipments to Asian markets increased by 35.4 per cent, raising the value of total exports by 14.8 per cent.

Also the share of ASEAN countries in China's foreign direct investment tripled, from approximately 5 per cent in 2016 to more than 15 per cent in 2021, according to the report. China's export growth is likely to affect emerging markets in different ways, outperforming certain countries.

The movement of the stock markets also supports these trends,

with the expectation of China's reopening of those markets that attract billions of dollars, and the acquisition of foreign funds in huge sums of a number of those securities that are performing well with new capital inflows.

Today, a number of emerging export-oriented markets benefit from these developments, especially those that enjoy close trade relations with China, such as Vietnam, Malaysia and other Asian countries, which helps to address the trade deficit of those countries, and to develop the value of trade exchanges among them in various commodities.

All of these countries are flourishing in tandem with China's recovery, at a time when China's demand for hydrocarbons, minerals, oil and gas is increasing, whether from Arab, Gulf or Asian

countries.

Economic development in our region is also linked to the recovery of Chinese industries, as China is one of the largest importers of Gulf oil, and thus the rates of foreign trade between the GCC countries and China increase, besides boosting in the value of exports and imports to and from China every year.

These developments effect directly the political and economic relations between the two sides, while China succeeded recently to mediate between Saudi Arabia and Iran regarding the political relations between them.

This step will spur the growth of Arab-Chinese relations in the coming years, not only on the economic level, but also on political, commercial and cultural relations between the two sides.

ECB's crisis tool works best if it's never used

REBECCA CHRISTIE

In the eurozone bond market, unlimited backstops are the cheapest. The European Central Bank has been trumpeting its ability to buy member states' debt if it comes under attack from investors.

That confident tone has kept traders calm, and that's exactly what Frankfurt needs. Talk without action is the best way to avoid sovereign-bond meltdowns while giving countries a push to clean up their balance sheets.

When the borrowing costs of heavily indebted countries like Italy, Spain and Greece started rising last year just before the ECB began hiking interest rates, ECB President Christine Lagarde said central bankers would help countries facing "unwarranted, disorderly" debt dynamics with a new Transmission Protection Instrument (TPI), a tool for buying under-fire government bonds if conditions warrant.

The instrument – immediately dubbed "To Protect Italy" by financial wits who remembered the country's bond turmoil in 2011 – has worked a treat without deployment.

The most used gauge of eurozone market fears – the spread between yields on 10-year Italian government bonds and their German equivalent – has gone from around 250 basis points to 184 basis points since the TPI was launched, aided by falling energy prices and a resilient eurozone economy.

But the hard work for the ECB's bond police starts now. Lagarde has brought eurozone interest rates to the highest level since 2001 and seems certain to hike again to slay stubborn inflation.

That, in turn, is putting pressure on debt. The yield on Italy's 10-year government bonds hit 4.2% this week, compared to 3.5% when the ECB started raising rates.

The trick for Frankfurt's policymakers will be to keep doubters at bay without interfering with markets unnecessarily.

If the ECB fails to quell

investor anxiety, the eurozone could face a repeat of the sovereign debt crisis of 2010-2015 – a traumatic event that called into question the future of the single currency.

But if reasonable rates lull governments into a false sense of security, the ECB won't be doing enough to discourage reckless fiscal behaviour.

The eurozone's unique construct – a currency union with a single monetary policy for 20 countries – means that spreads are necessary for market participants to evaluate and price the differences.

Germany's 2.8% unemployment, flat growth and 7.8% inflation is a far cry from the situation in Lithuania, where GDP shrank by 3% in the first quarter, March unemployment touched 6.4% and inflation hit 13.3% in April.

As ECB Governing Council member Fabio Panetta said last month, the flip side to economic interdependence is vulnerability. The danger here is that too much divergence would lead the eurozone to fracture, creating a powder keg for crisis.

That is where the TPI comes in. It is a paradox of modern central banking that the very promise of unlimited aid carries the smallest price tag.

If financial markets believe the ECB is willing to go to the mat to protect the euro, they are far less likely to try to break up the monetary union than if they were up against a finite backstop with a preset budget.

To succeed in this high-stakes game of chicken, central banks need to be credible.

The US Federal Reserve, with its deep pockets and the backing of the world's superpower, was able to stop contagion after the runs on Silicon Valley Bank and Signature Bank by covering uninsured deposits at those failed institutions. True, markets have interpreted this as a guarantee for every other bank, but, so far, the Fed hasn't had to pay out.

A decade ago, the ECB accomplished the same feat with its never used Outright Monetary Transactions programme, its first foray into a bond-buying crisis instrument.

— Reuters

Why the Fed is hard to predict



MOHAMED A EL-ERIAN

The author, President of Queens' College at the University of Cambridge, is a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and the author of "The Only Game in Town: Central Banks, Instability, and Avoiding the Next Collapse (Random House, 2016)

One might think that predicting the U.S. Federal Reserve's next policy moves would become easier now that it has already hiked interest rates ten consecutive times, for a total of five percentage points.

Not so fast: I suspect that few, if any know for sure what the Fed will do at its June 13-14 meeting – not even the Fed itself.

Over the past two weeks, officials at the world's most powerful and influential central bank have signaled a range of possible actions, from hiking rates again to "pausing" or "skipping" this round and resuming the tightening process in July. One Fed official has even hinted that it would have been better for the institution not to hike at its last meeting, in May.

We do not know where the Fed will land for two main reasons. Firstly, as a central bank, it heavily relies on data in an unpredictable economy. Secondly, it lacks a solid strategic foundation.

For this Fed, much will depend on the employment and inflation data that will be released in the days before the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meets. As matters stand (in late May), the data will probably lead them to hike rates again.

That is not what I would do, given what I believe should be a more secular and strategic approach to monetary policy.

It is tempting to attribute the wide range of views among Fed officials to the fluidity of economic and financial



Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell leaves a news conference at the Federal Reserve Board Building, in Washington. – AFP

THE US FEDERAL RESERVE IS ADRIFT, AND IT HAS ONLY ITSELF TO BLAME. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER ITS POLICY-SETTING COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES ANOTHER INTEREST-RATE HIKE IN JUNE, ITS TOP PRIORITY NOW SHOULD BE TO ADDRESS THE STRUCTURAL WEAKNESSES THAT LED IT ASTRAY IN THE FIRST PLACE.

conditions. After all, America's debt-ceiling saga and banking-system tremors have further complicated an already uncertain outlook for growth and inflation worldwide.

But that explanation is too narrow, and it is unlikely to stand the test of time. The real reason that we have so much policy confusion is that the Fed is relying on an inappropriate policy framework and an outdated inflation target.

Both of these problems have been compounded by a raft of errors (in analysis, forecasting, communication, policy measures, regulation, and supervision) over the past two years.

It is now widely agreed that the Fed dug itself a hole when it mishandled the critical initial responses to the return of inflation. Policymakers have been struggling to climb out ever since.

Not only did the Fed mischaracterise inflation as "transitory" for most of 2021, despite mounting evidence to the contrary and warnings from

prominent economists.

It then responded too timidly after Fed Chair Jerome Powell acknowledged, in late November 2021, that "it's probably a good time to retire that word ['transitory'] and try to explain more clearly what we mean."

These two missteps meant that the Fed would have to play massive catch-up, which it did by implementing the most concentrated set of rate hikes in decades.

Such a big, sudden tightening generates greater risks to both growth and financial stability. Yet the catch-up process came too late to prevent inflationary pressures from migrating from the goods sector to services and wages.

That crucial development has made core inflation (which excludes volatile food and energy prices) more stubborn and less sensitive to rate hikes, further increasing the risk of compounding policy errors.

This sequence also explains why Fed officials seem to be all over the map when it comes to forthcoming policy moves.

Having missed a wide-open window for implementing the best possible response, they now find themselves in a quagmire of second-best policymaking, where every option implies a high risk of collateral damage and unintended consequences.

Hike again in June, and you increase the risk of tipping the economy into recession and reigniting financial instability.

Refrain from hiking, and you risk losing even more credibility (a problem compounded by the Fed's excessive dependence on backward-looking data for policy moves that act with a lag).

I suspect that if the next round of labour-market and consumer-price data continues to surprise on the strong side, the Fed will announce another rate hike in June.

But regardless of what it decides, its top priority now should be to use the next few months to address the structural weaknesses that led to this mess in the first place.

That means not only overhauling its monetary-policy framework and internally assessing the suitability of its inflation target, but also addressing its institutional insularity, lack of cognitive diversity, and poor accountability

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ENTERTAINMENT

US singer songwriter Lana Del Rey performs during the Mita Festival at the Jockey Club of Rio de Janeiro, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP

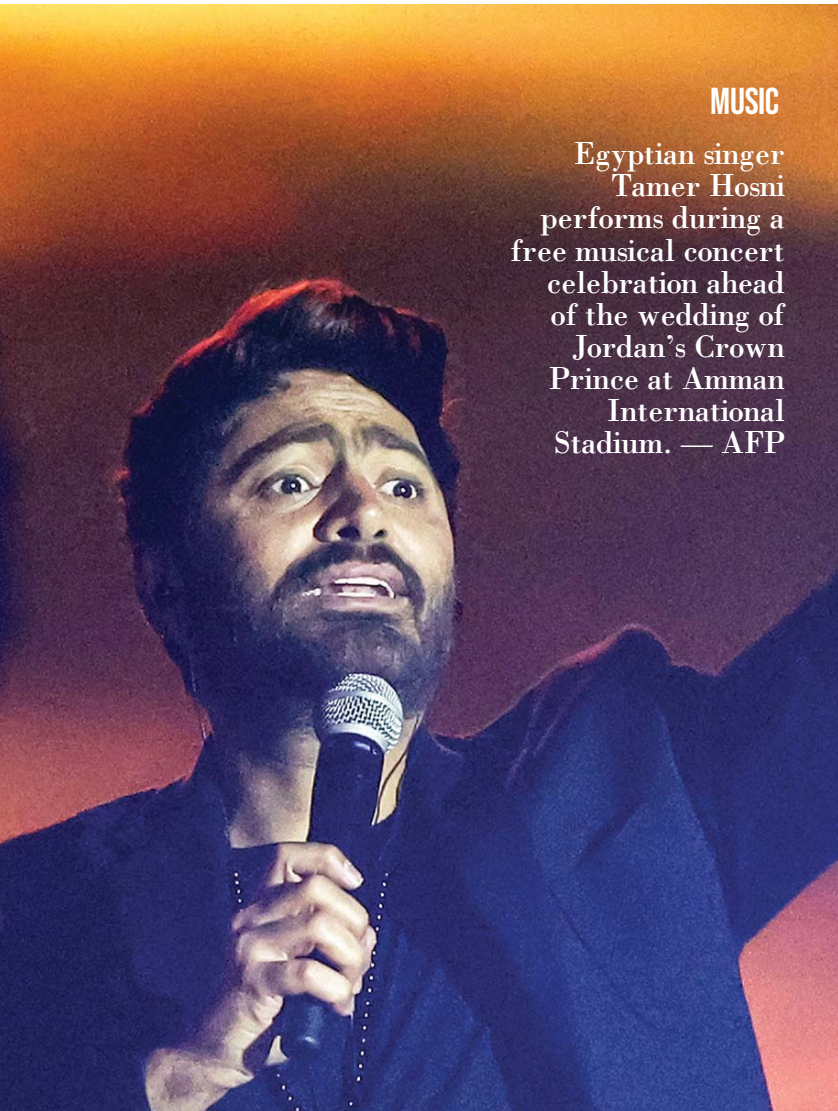


CULINARY EXPERIENCE

A farmer empties a bucket of water buffalo milk into a metal bowl in the town of al-Qahtaniya in Syria's Kurdish-controlled northeastern Hasakah province. — AFP

MUSIC

Egyptian singer Tamer Hosni performs during a free musical concert celebration ahead of the wedding of Jordan's Crown Prince at Amman International Stadium. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Zelalem Mola, 42, an Ethiopian Orthodox priest and a member of Hamere Berhan initiative writes scriptures in Ge'ez language on parchment made of goat skin in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. — AFP



HERITAGE

The Valpara'o Court of Justice holds a mock trial against science fiction character Darth Vader in Valparaiso, Chile. The trial takes place as part of Chile's Heritage Day celebrations. — AFP



art & life

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Matryoshka: A student artist delved deep into the layers of her process and her self

Shahad al Hamdi, a 25 year old Omani artist, was inspired by Matryoshka dolls that her recent exhibition, a part of her graduation project, held at the Scientific College of Design centred around the theme describing the process as very personal and profound

CHANGING WORLD

On a culinary homecoming, influencer chefs look to perpetuate Palestinian dishes

FOR CANADIAN CELEBRITY chef Suzanne Hussein, a first culinary tour of the Palestinian territories was a chance to preserve and promote the dishes and folk-remedies of her ancestry. During a farm-to-table tour of the occupied West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, Hussein and four other high-profile chefs encountered a Palestinian cuisine often unfamiliar to foreigners more accustomed to news of conflict with Israel. "I'm back home, in Palestine, to follow, to see, to explore and

document and research and reconnect with my people, with the land, with the farms, with the food - because food is my language," said Hussein, whose family comes from a town near the West Bank city of Nablus. The tour was sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with a view to expanding the international appeal of Palestinian cuisine despite the relative scarcity and expense of some of its ingredients. The chefs, with Palestinian roots, focused on traditional techniques such as how to turn the



poisonous dark purple Palestine lily, which blooms in the spring, into an ingredient for soups and a traditional medicine. They also learned about the nutritional benefits of "freekeh", wheat picked while still green, smoked to retain its natural proteins and served like rice. Mirna Bamieh, a chef and founder of the Palestine Hosting Society, which curates and seeks to revive traditional Palestinian recipes, discovered a local variant of the "kubeh" meat dumpling frequently associated with Kurdish kitchens. "It was super fascinating

because you know, we always think that we don't have a kubeh culture in Palestine," Bamieh said. Ismail Abu Arafah, head of Solutions Mapping at the UNDP, said the tour gave the chefs a window into the wider culture of Palestinians amid their decades-old struggle for statehood. "They want to see the history, the cultural significance, but also, most importantly, the nutritional value of what these old dishes bring," he added, suggesting the process could "position Palestine as a niche market that serves really the old traditional ways of production". — Reuters



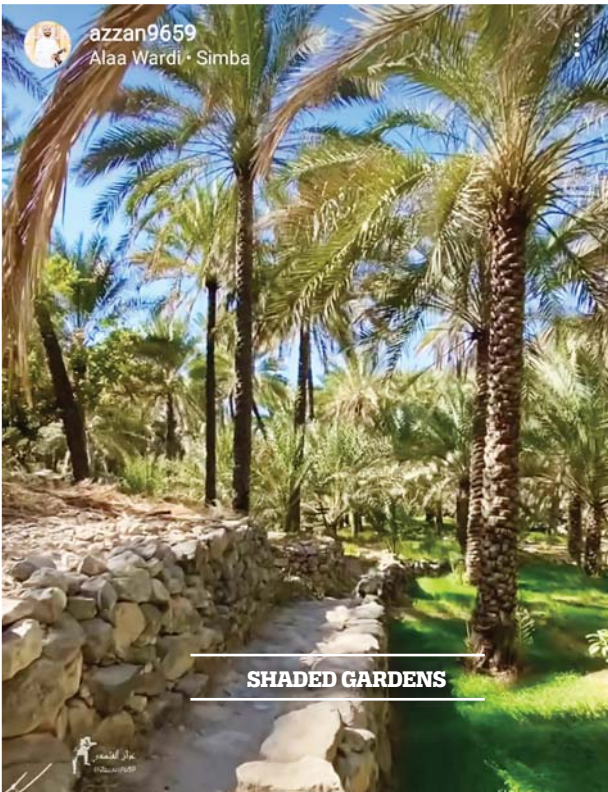
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By Bayan Al Hadrami

Matryoshka dolls are intricately crafted wooden figures originating from Russia and have captivated the imagination of collectors and art enthusiasts for generations. While their delightful appearances may initially seem like a whimsical plaything, a deeper exploration reveals a profound symbolism concealed within each delicately nested layer.

Shahad al Hamdi, a 25-year-old Omani artist, was inspired by these dolls that her recent exhibition, a part of her graduation project, held at the Scientific College of Design, centred around the theme 'Matryoshka' which she described as very personal and profound.

Al Hamdi said that the exhibition revolved around the Russian dolls because it represented her creative process where she has to delve into her inner self, breaking down layer after layer in order to reach her inner child.

Al Hamdi loves the symbolism of the dolls. Beyond their outward charm, Matryoshka dolls carry a profound symbolism that reflects both individual and collective identities, familial bonds, and the essence of motherhood. These nesting dolls, traditionally carved from a single piece of wood, embody the concept of "matriosha" or "little mother" in Russian.

As one delves deeper into the layers, the subsequent dolls become progressively smaller, representing the subsequent generations within a family. Each doll is unique yet interconnected, depicting daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters. Through their varying sizes and distinct designs, Matryoshka dolls symbolise the infinite

lineage of family, spanning across time and generations.

Yet, the true magic of these dolls lies in their ability to encompass the paradoxical nature of human existence. Just as we unravel the layers of a Matryoshka, we uncover the inherent complexity of our own identities. The dolls remind us that within every individual lies a multitude of personalities, experiences and emotions waiting to be discovered.

The exhibition consists of four images where Al Hamdi poses in front of a mirror demonstrating four stages of self-reflection, utilising her love for fashion, make-up and contemporary dance as forms of self-expression.

In the first image we see Al Hamdi dressed in black, wearing dark make-up and her posture enclosed displaying her outer layer; the adult who strives to maintain a conventional image and meet expectations.

Al Hamdi describes adulthood as a difficult stage in life as we tend to criticise and compare ourselves to others.

In the second image we find Al Hamdi

in

brighter colours, nevertheless, the blue colour's duality symbolises calmness and melancholy simultaneously.

Al Hamdi shared that the second image represents the teenage phase where mistakes are made and feelings of regret linger, however, it is also a stage of growth and learning.

In the third image Al Hamdi is dressed in pink and turquoise, a lively combination of colours representing the joyful phase of childhood. In this image we also find Al Hamdi wrapping her arms around herself, embracing her inner-child, demonstrating her desire to express love and compassion for the child within her.

In the final image, Al Hamdi is dressed in bright yellow and her arms spread wide like wings indicating freedom. This is the stage where she is able to express her true self without fear of judgment. At the end of the display, Al Hamdi places a

mirror for her audience to immerse themselves in a similar process of self-reflection and discovery. Through this artwork she shares with us the growth she went through to reach the stage of confidence she is in today. Al Hamdi wishes that her artwork would inspire others to express themselves and wishes to challenge people's perspective on art as a form of expression.

Shahad al Hamdi sends her gratitude to the make-up artist Saba al Maamari, the choreographer Carol Maria, the photographer Tariq al Hajri and musician Lazer Bazer who all helped her in the creation of this project. Al Hamdi extends her gratitude to her husband and the people around her who have supported her throughout her journey. She is now set on a new journey after her graduation in hopes of creating new projects and participating in more exhibitions.

ART

Beyond the Sistine Chapel, Vatican Museums says 'we are much more'

BARBARA JATTA, THE FIRST WOMAN to head the Vatican Museums, wants visitors to avoid being suffocated by the crowds and take in the lesser-known, but spectacular, attractions she helps to oversee.

The Vatican Museums, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that closed or limited openings during the Covid-19 pandemic, have almost returned to their pre-pandemic level of about six million visitors a year.

Many, particularly day trippers on fast-paced package tours of Rome, head straight for the Sistine Chapel, bypassing the museums' other wonders.

"Not everyone in the Sistine Chapel. Please! We are much more," she said



at the opening of an exhibition of ceramics within metres of Michelangelo's frescoed masterpiece.

"We have so many things that speak of history, it is important to get to know them too," added Jatta, 60.

They include a 17th-century pharmacy and apothecary that was run by Benedictine nuns in the Monastery of St. Cecilia in Rome's Trastevere district. Open to the public since May 25, the pharmacy that served the public until 1936 has been reassembled with contents dating from the 17th and 18th

centuries.

Cabinet shelves are filled with dozens of finely decorated blue-and-white ceramic jars that once held medicinal plants and herbs used to treat anything from insect bites to urinary infections.

The exhibition also includes tools for cutting and pressing the plants and extracting their essential essences. The nuns fashioned a large stone mortar from the capital of an ancient Roman column.

"This is an incredible patrimony of history, art and medicine," said Luca Pesante, one of the curators of the exhibit, which also includes mediaeval floor tiles and decorative plates, some made from designs by Raphael.

Jatta, appointed by Pope Francis in 2016, said she and her staff has set as a priority to give visitors "the most marvellous visit possible" and that they should not be suffocated by too many people. She added that the museums, which close at 6 pm on most days, may extend opening hours. Already, they stay open later on Fridays and Saturdays.

Nearly all tickets are booked online and are often sold out weeks in advance. The need for extended opening hours may increase during the 2025 Holy Year, when millions more people than usual are expected to travel to Rome to participate in religious pilgrimages, she said. — Reuters

TRAVEL TALES

Sierra Leone's symbolic 'Cotton Tree' destroyed in rain storm

A CENTURIES-OLD, towering tree that served as a historic symbol in Sierra Leone has been felled during a wind and rain storm in the capital Freetown, the government said on Thursday.

The 70-metre (230-foot) Ceiba pentandra — lovingly known by Sierra Leoneans as "Cotton Tree" — lost all of its branches late on Wednesday, with only the base of its enormous trunk still standing, a government statement said, citing "torrential rains and high winds".

It estimated the tree to be around 400 years old.

"All Sierra Leoneans will pause for thought at the loss of such a prestigious national symbol as Cotton Tree," President Julius Maada Bio said.

"For centuries it has been a proud



emblem of our nation, a symbol of a nation that has grown to provide shelter for many."

According to legend, slaves who won their freedom fighting on the British side of the American War of Independence prayed under the tree when they arrived in West Africa.

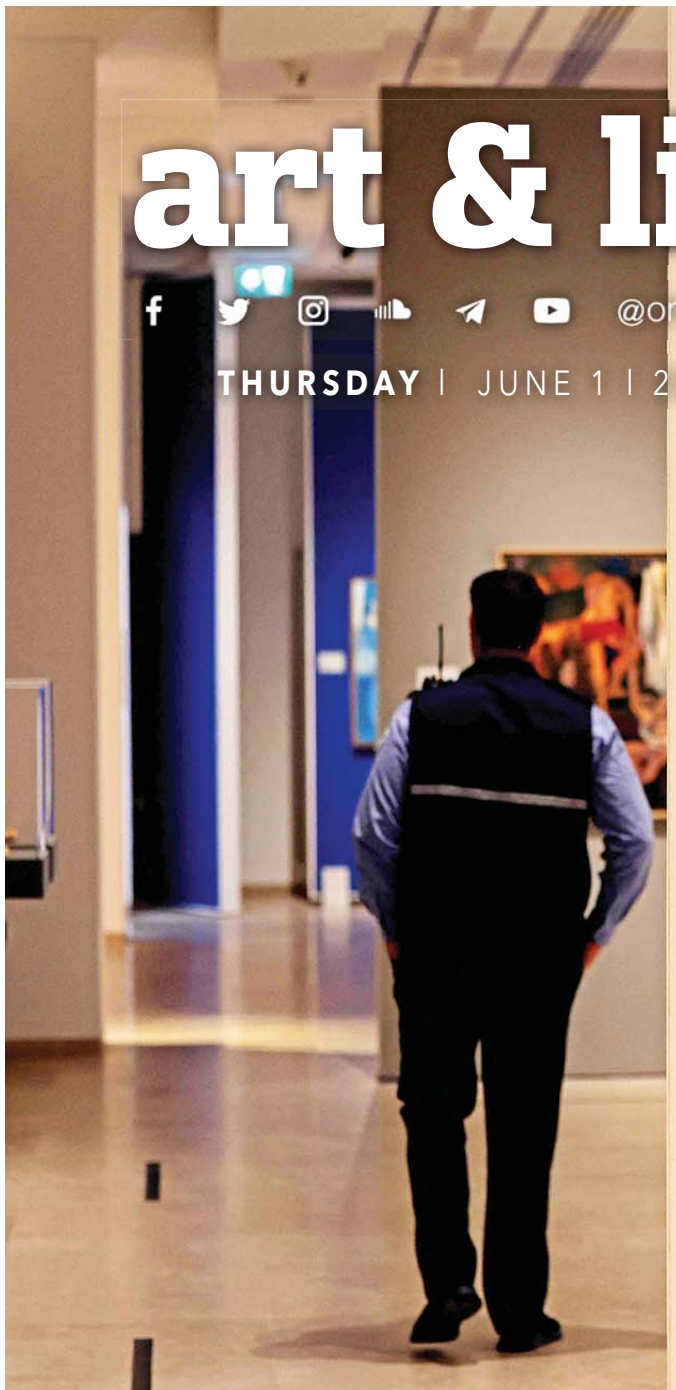
It adorned bank notes and stamps, was visited by Queen Elizabeth II in 1961, and had remained a landmark ever since.

Freetown residents continued to pray beneath the tree, which in recent

decades towered over a busy roundabout near the national museum, the central post office and the country's highest court.

- Shock and heartbreak - Hundreds of people, including President Bio, visited the site in mourning throughout the day on Thursday.

"I'm shocked and heartbroken to see our beloved Freetown Cotton Tree destroyed this morning on my way to work," Gibrilla Sesay, a 34-year-old finance worker, said. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Beirut's restored Sursock Museum set to reopen after port blast

LEBANON'S GRACIOUS

Sursock Museum is set to reopen on Friday, more than two years after a catastrophic explosion at Beirut port devastated the architectural gem and its modern and contemporary art collection.

One of history's biggest non-nuclear explosions, the blast on August 4, 2020 destroyed much of Beirut port and surrounding areas, killing more than 215 people and injuring over 6,500.

The explosion wreaked havoc on the Sursock Museum, located less than one kilometre (0.6 miles) from the port, shattering its delicate arched windows and damaging its walls, wooden panelling and 50 of its artworks.

"Seventy percent of the Sursock Museum was wrecked," museum director Karina El Helou said.

"It's the first time we have seen such damage to artworks" at the museum, she added.

Authorities said the huge blast was caused by a fire in a portside warehouse where a large stockpile of ammonium nitrate fertiliser had been haphazardly stored for years.

Workers were putting the finishing touches to installations when AFP toured the rehabilitated museum, a cultural beacon in a country whose treasures are often poorly protected and showcased.

Friday's reopening is "a symbol of hope, of a return to cultural life in Lebanon", Helou said.

She expressed hope that "this opening will be a

gift for the whole city".

"As a museum, we missed the visitors," she added.

STILL 'IN SHOCK'

Built as a mansion in 1912, the building opened its doors as a museum nearly 50 years later, as instructed in the will of its owner, Nicolas Sursock, who wanted his grand home converted after his death.

The building's majestic white facade has now been returned to its pre-blast glory, coloured light spilling inside once again through its tall stained-glass windows.

One of the collection's gems, a 1939 portrait of Nicolas Sursock by renowned Dutch-French artist Kees van Dongen, was among the works damaged in the blast.

The portrait was carefully restored by Paris's Pompidou Centre, and is back in pride of place for the reopening.

The history of Lebanon and its art scene – including during the 1975-1990 civil war – is in the spotlight in the retrospective organised for the reopening.

"The artists are citizens who went through all the difficult times of the war... and nonetheless produced high quality work," Helou said.

Just one painting on show – by artist Paul Guiragossian – was only partially restored and bears testament to the disaster, Helou said.

On the first floor, the museum's library and archive officer, Rowina



Bou-Harb, said she was still "in shock" more than two years after the explosion.

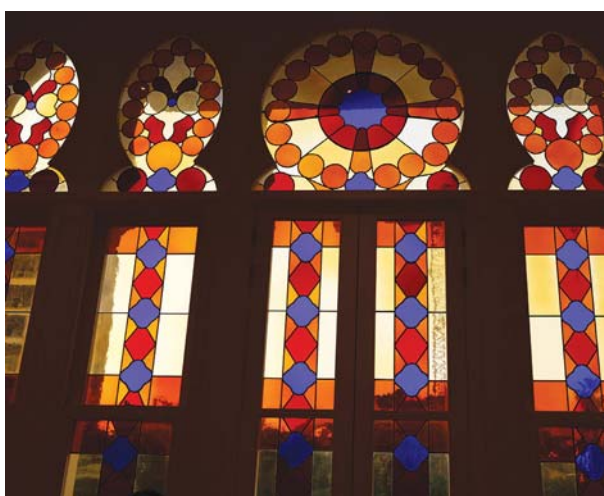
The day after the disaster, "our only concern was to save the artworks", she recalled.

The restoration of the private institution cost almost \$2.5 million.

It was largely funded by Italy through LiBeirut, an initiative of the United Nations' cultural body Unesco, as well as by France and ALIPH, the International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas.

"The Sursock Museum is a gem of Lebanese architecture and cultural life," Unesco director general Audrey Azoulay said in a statement announcing the completion of the rehabilitation work.

It is "a powerful symbol of pride and resilience for the Beirut community", she added. — AFP



THE CHANGING WORLD OF MEN



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

What is mine is mine but what is yours is ours

'MINE IS HERS'

So this grand event happened in one of the most profound hotels in the country. The invitation was to bring a "plus one". They nailed it because, truthfully speaking, I could search the entire world when asked who my best friend is, but my response will always come out to be 'my wife'.

Take it or leave it but that's it. It's her I share details of my life with, even my bank card passwords. Period.

Anyways back to my narration, so towards the end of the perfect event with first-class organisation, as a media personality, I was gifted a fine-wrapped medium box with red ribbons. Thankful, I was, and off we left.

I always have a problem remembering where I parked my car but most of the time I am with her, she spots it earlier than I do.

We got into the car and started the engine. No sooner had I started driving, than she reached out for the 'my given gift' that I had placed on the back seat.

She unwrapped it without my consent but with a big excited smile.

It was one of the latest mobile phones since the event was hosted by a telecommunications company. I loved the colour. It's what I noticed first. An army green sparkling colour. It was my lucky day because I needed to change my phone.

Hardly had I completed my thoughts, when I suddenly saw her grabbing her old phone, removing her sim card, and placing it in the new phone with a very big laughter.

She told me that the phone suits her more than I do. She added that it was a gift from me to her for always helping me spot my car in the parking lot.

I know I wanted it badly too, but if the lady herself needed it, then altruism is my resort. I sacrificed it for her.

Since then, she brags about it, and more so always telling me I needed to buy myself a new phone.

This is the case with the majority of the gifts I get. If they are strictly masculine, then I am on the safe side, but if they happen to be unisex, then they will never be mine. What is mine is hers but is hers will never be mine.

'YOURS IS OURS'

Approximately a year ago, after my brother-in-law bought himself a red Mercedes Benz, it gradually turned into his wife's car.

The good thing is that she did not 'grab' it immediately. This process at many times happens gradually except for my phone case.

Theirs, was like, when he bought it, it was sparkling red with some minor black stripes. He used it for quite some time but when snow fell down from the sky, it was his wife's lucky day.

Her own car needed to visit the garage and she did not have a car to use. The husband wholeheartedly offered his car to her saying he "would be grabbing a cab for the few four days the garage had promised."

So, once her car was out of the garage in its best condition, she said she had two issues here. Firstly, she said the red colour suits ladies more, and the second invalid reason was that she is seemingly used to the Benz now and she feels from her heart that it is more of hers than his.

Gradually, then suddenly it became fully hers but the husband did not even know how, although any fines, and repairs were straight from his pocket.

When you hear about the power of women, then this is it and the phrase 'what's yours is ours' applies only to good things. I found it weird and funny but as a man, I could not comment on the subject.

Till next time, I surrender here ...

Shaddad al Musalmay is a seasoned Omani journalist who worked for top newspapers in the country. He's currently one of Oman Observer's senior editors and contributes across different beats. His commentaries about life in general paints a vivid picture of the changing landscape in Oman.

FOR FEEDBACK, EMAIL THE AUTHOR AT SHADADM75@GMAIL.COM