

Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), said that the volume of investments in the 13 existing zones, supervised by OPAZ, reached RO 15.2 billion, constituting a growth rate of 6 per cent in 2021. He added that after transferring the affiliation of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) to OPAZ in June 2022, the authority supervises 13 existing zones. **DETAILS ON P13**



P10

AL NAHDA TO FACE AL AHLY TRIPOLI IN KING SALMAN CUP



P13

OMAN'S NEW CENTRAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES MARKET SET FOR Q1 2024 COMPLETION



P20

MUSCAT PHOTOGRAPHER WINS FOODELIA FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARD WITH BOLD USE OF COLOUR



MUSCAT

HM CONDOLENCES TO RWANDA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, on victims of the floods that swept through his country. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sympathies to President Paul Kagame, families of the victims and the people of Rwanda, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. — **ONA**

Omani exports to Iran in 2022 stand at RO 207 million

TEHRAN: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, took part in the opening ceremony of Iran Expo 2023 on Sunday.

The expo sees a turnout of more than 750 Iranian companies and other companies that showcase products from various sectors, including industry, medicine,

household appliances, foodstuffs and petrochemicals.

Total Omani imports from Iran during 2022 stood at RO 113 million, while the value of total exports to Iran amounted to RO 207 million.

The Omani delegation was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment

Promotion. Also present at the event were Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Mu'aini, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), and a number of Omani businessmen.

Iran Expo 2023 is an opportunity to learn about Iranian

industries, develop exports and open up new markets for Omani companies and investors. It offers further options to augment the volume of investment, diversify sources of import and export, forge strategic economic partnerships, and facilitate the smooth flow of goods and products between the two countries.

During its participation in

the expo, the Omani delegation visited a number of Iranian factories, learned about investment opportunities in various fields and organised meetings among Omani and Iranian businessmen.

A meeting was held with several Iranian companies that expressed keenness to enter into partnerships with Omani companies. — **ONA**

SEE ALSO P2

INCENTIVES FOR STAFF LINKED TO EJADA

The Ministry of Labour announced the approval of a system of incentives and gratuities for all departments linked to Ejada system, as well as rewards for outstanding performers (workers) who excelled during 2022. This was unveiled during a gathering organised by the Ministry of Labour with under-secretaries of other ministries. During the meeting, emphasis was laid on procedures undertaken by the ministry to upgrade performance in a manner that improves the labour market, addresses its challenges and provides opportunities for job-seekers. **DETAILS ON P3**



The Sultanate of Oman is characterised by a unique geological diversity that has made it a tourist destination for exploration and adventure enthusiasts, varying between mountains, caves, springs and beaches that were formed over different periods of time. The western Hajar includes a group of mountains, including Jabal Shams which are characterised by unique geological components, including wadis and stones of different shapes and types, and in addition to a number of caves. This was confirmed by a group of adventurers. In coordination with an adventure company, the team descended and explored the Birkat Al Sharaf Cave, which is approximately 25 km away from the Wilayat of Al Hamra. — **ONA**

Syria back in Arab League after 11-year absence

CAIRO: The Arab League on Sunday welcomed back Syria's government, ending a more than decade-long suspension and securing President Bashar al Assad's return to the Arab fold.

In November 2011, the body suspended Damascus over its crackdown on peaceful protests which began earlier that year and which spiralled into a conflict that has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry.

"Government delegations from the Syrian Arab Republic will resume their participation in Arab League meetings" starting from Sunday, said a unanimous decision by the group's foreign ministers.

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Mohammed Nasser al Wahaibi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

The ministers also approved the resumption of participation of Syria's delegation and all its affiliated organisations, as of today, and they underscored the need to implement the commitments and consensus reached at the Amman meeting.

The decision, issued at an

Government delegations from the Syrian Arab Republic will resume their participation in Arab League meetings" starting from Sunday

ARAB LEAGUE

emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers, reiterated the need to take practical steps to gradually resolve the Syrian crisis in line with Security Council Resolution No 2254. The first step in this direction begins with the endorsement of measures to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to needy segments in Syria.

The ministers in a statement emphasised their "keenness to launch a leading Arab role in efforts to resolve" the Syria crisis.

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, head of the 22-member Arab League, said the decision "brings the Arab side into communication with the Syrian government for the first time in years, in order to look into all aspects of the problem".

SEE ALSO P6

INSIDE



TOKYO AND SEOUL HAIL 'NEW FUTURE' FOR TIES **P7**



DECIPHERING THE LATEST IPCC REPORT **P9**

On a bicycle for the love of Arabia

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

A man from the war-hit Ukraine is on a mission to explore Arabia. The colourful stories he heard as a child made him fall in love with the region. Now he is on a mission to explore it on a bicycle.

During his long journey that took months, crossing several geographical borders encompassing thousands of

kilometres, Ruslan Verin, a top-notch YouTuber with hundreds of thousands of followers, sometimes led the life of a nomad. He slept in tents in the desert and mingled with shepherds he met en route to the country.

EXPLORING PLACES

He was spotted taking a short nap inside a mosque between the two checkpoints along the Oman-Saudi border in Rub Al Khali.

"I love travelling and exploring places since childhood, and the Arabian Gulf has always been in high regard in my heart as a must-visit place. This is my opportunity to explore the region and talk to people and understand the culture," he said. He rode his bicycle for several months, taking short breaks in between and enjoying every length of his journey by tasting the local flavours and interacting with the local populace.

TURN TO P2



■ OMAN AT OPENING OF 'IRAN EXPO 2023'



The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, took part in the opening ceremony of 'Iran Expo 2023' on Sunday. The Omani delegation was headed by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

On a bicycle for the love of Arabia

FROM PAGE 1

His long trail has not been without hiccups. Along with the joy of riding and exploring places, he had his share of unpleasant experiences too.

Just before entering the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, his cycle developed some glitches

at the border. He had to return to the nearest city, Ibri, to get it repaired.

He hitchhiked a local man's truck to carry his cycle back to the city for nearly 200 km before he could get a mechanic for the job. That night he slept inside a mosque before he could resume the journey.

"I'd love to perform umrah in Saudi Arabia during my time there as I'm expecting to be there on Monday.

That will be a dream come true for me and for my friends back home to come out of the scars created by the war and to submit ourselves to the Almighty," he added.

Oman at extraordinary Arab League sessions

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman took part in two extraordinary ministerial sessions of the Arab League (AL) Council, held at the AL Secretariat General in Cairo on Sunday.

Oman's delegation was headed by Mohammed bin Nasser al Wahaibi, Under-Secretary, Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

Arab foreign ministers, who convened to discuss developments in Syria, agreed to restore the seat of Syria in the Arab League after more than 10 years of suspension.

The ministers also approved the resumption of participation of Syria's delegation and all its affiliated organisations, as of today, and they underscored the need to implement the



commitments and consensus reached at the Amman meeting.

The decision, issued at an emergency meeting of Arab foreign ministers, reiterated the need to take practical steps to gradually resolve the Syrian crisis in line with Security Council

Resolution No 2254. The first step in this direction begins with the endorsement of measures to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid to needy segments in Syria.

The meeting also discussed developments in Sudan and the Palestinian cause. — ONA

■ BRITISH EMBASSY LIT UP



The British Embassy in Muscat was lit up in honour of His Majesty King Charles III's coronation. This follows many other locations around the world as well as other landmarks across the UK which were lit up.

Royal Hospital works to reduce surgery wait times

MUSCAT: The Royal Hospital is exerting extensive efforts to cut down waiting lists for patients who need surgeries and x-rays. The hospital is undertaking many initiatives and adding health staff to keep pace with the growth of professional operations at a time that health establishments in Oman, like other parts of the world, were impacted by circumstances of Covid-19 pandemic.

Dr Amid bin Khamis al Arai, Assistant Director General for Medical Affairs at the Royal Hospital, told ONA that the hospital operated a room for surgical operations during the evening period and 4 rooms



during the weekend.

In 2022, these efforts enabled the hospital to conduct about

850 surgeries, some which took place during the evening and weekends, said Dr Amid. He

added that the efforts contributed significantly to reducing the number of patients on waiting lists.

In addition, the Royal Hospital introduced a lot of organisational procedures to organise and improve the services rendered to patients, Dr Amid affirmed.

In addition, continuous coordination was made with private institutions to provide the Royal Hospital with various types of devices that serve patients in need. As part of such cooperation, 20 new apparatuses were installed at the obstetrics and gynaecology department in the hospital, Dr Amid added.

— ONA

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3

System of incentives, gratuities for Ejada-based depts approved

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour announced the approval of a system of incentives and gratuities for all departments linked to Ejada System, as well as rewards for outstanding performers (workers) who excelled during 2022.

This was unveiled during a gathering organised on Sunday by the Ministry of Labour with the under-secretaries of other ministries.

During the meeting, emphasis was laid on procedures undertaken by the ministry to upgrade performance in a manner that improves the labour market, addresses its challenges and provide opportunities for job-seekers.

The meeting also outlined electronic services endorsed by the ministry to facilitate direct communication among individuals and institutions.

Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development, gave a visual presentation on training programmes and the initiatives of the



ministry.

The presentation explains the challenges facing the ministry in its drive to achieve the goals and objectives set for national future action.

During the gathering, "Ejada Platform for Human Resources Development" was launched. The platform will serve as meeting place for national workforce operators. — ONA

Saudi begins preparations to host 2 million Haj pilgrims

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Saudi Arabia has begun the preparations to host nearly two million pilgrims during the forthcoming Haj season, according to the Saudi Ministry of Haj and Umrah, which will be providing services to pilgrims in coordination with all agencies worldwide.

As part of the elaborate arrangements for the congregation to happen in the last week of June, the Umrah services, which are currently on, will be halted by mid of May, according to the ministry.

Speaking to the media, Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan al Rabiah, Minister of Haj and Umrah, said that the country will be hosting two million pilgrims for the procedures of the annual holy ritual, whose preparations are fast progressing.

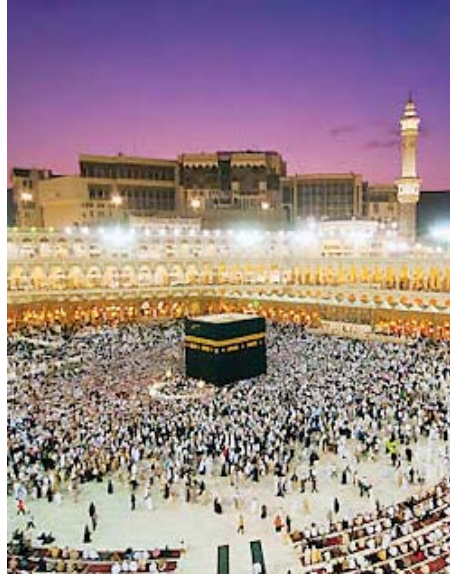
"We are progressing the works on facilitating procedures and on developing legislation that enables Muslims around the world to visit the holy sites and perform Haj to make the annual ritual a flawless one," he said.

He said various development projects and improvement of additional infrastructure worth SAR 200 bn were going on to provide quality services at the two holy mosques and holy sites. The works include the Haramain Express Train that connects Mecca and Madina in a two-hour journey.

Additionally, the kingdom has lifted the limitations on the number of pilgrims attending this year's Haj so that more pilgrims can use the facility. The ministry has earlier announced that the number of people who can participate in this year's Haj will return to pre-pandemic levels, and there will be no age limit for Haj pilgrims.

Multiple entry visa:

Multiple entry visa has been introduced, and a provision that those who opt for this type of visa can perform the Umrah rituals has helped hundreds of thousands of believers to visit the holy sites and the historical places. People visiting the kingdom with an Umrah visa can now visit any city in Saudi Arabia,



and any visitor to the country has been allowed to perform Umrah at any time since January 2023.

Nusuk platform:

This is an additional service to enrich the experience of people visiting Saudi, and it adds more value to the existing visa system after extending the Umrah visa period from 30 to 90 days, allowing Umrah to be performed for all types of visas and reducing the cost of comprehensive insurance.

Pilgrims from Oman:

As many as 14,000 people from Oman will be attending the Haj rituals this year through the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) as per the agreement with the General Authority for Awqaf (GAA) of Saudi Arabia, wherein the number of applications received stands at 33,536 including 29,930 applications from Omanis and 3,606 requests from residents.

The 14,000 pilgrims include 13,098 Omanis, 500 residents, and 402 members of the official missions, including the MoARA and the ROP.

Those selected electronically through the e-sorting and e-selection process have been contacted directly.

Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded the highest number of applications, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate and finally Muscat Governorate.

Oman to host Arab capital markets conference

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

The Sultanate of Oman is hosting the annual conference of the Arab Federation of Capital Markets (AFCM) on May 9. The two-day conference is the largest event for stock and financial markets in the Middle East and North Africa.

The AFCM will be held under the auspices of Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance. The event holds importance as it aims to create a favourable environment for Arab financial markets and enhance their integration and liquidity.

In addition, AFCM plays a significant role in creating a common ground for Arab financial market leaders and regional and international experts. It is expected to attract more than 200 participants from various stock exchanges. It will bring together financial

market regulatory bodies, brokerage firms, and investment fund managers.

The conference will feature local, regional, and international speakers who will shed light on important issues. It will have 11 panel discussions with more than 50 speakers. They will highlight various topics related to capital markets, discuss ways to exchange knowledge and expertise and enhance marketing opportunities for listed companies in the region to investors, especially foreign investors. The discussions are aimed at benefitting the Arab economies.

The first day of the conference will have five panel discussions. The first panel will be on 'The future of business: Shedding light on the Sultanate of Oman' moderated by Mahmoud al Awaini, Director of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development, with the participation of Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal bin Badr

al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit; Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Central Bank of Oman Executive President, CBO, and Haitham bin Salim al Salmi, CEO, Muscat Stock Exchange.

The second panel will discuss 'The race to net-zero emissions: Challenges and opportunities', highlighting some facts that companies and listed companies must know.

The third panel 'Carbon Markets: Working towards net-zero emissions,' will discuss the challenges and opportunities of carbon markets and how to evaluate their feasibility and attractiveness. The fourth panel will revolve around 'Carbon credits: Financing the transition to a low-carbon economy.'

The fifth panel of the day will deal with the issue of special-purpose acquisition companies and the main challenges they may face.

Oman Air sees increase in 2023 revenues

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Oman Air recently revealed some key highlights of its expected performance this year, including the total revenue forecast for 2023 is expected to be up 236 per cent in 2023, compared to 128 per cent in 2022 and -3 per cent in 2021.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, recently mentioned that there has been a Royal Order to assign a specialised consultant tasked to probe the state of Oman Air.

This came during the Majlis Ash'shura's hosting of the transport minister, where he said the consultant has already been appointed and a study made to set a strategy that would help improve the performance of Oman Air.

The number of passengers using the airline increased by 182 per cent with revenues going up by 88 per cent.

The net loss forecast for 2023 is -56 per cent compared to -35 in 2022 and -26 per cent in 2021.

The forecasted cargo capacity of the airline increased by 160 per cent in 2023 (bringing in an increase of 360 per cent in revenues), compared to 116 per cent growth in 2022 and 33 per cent in 2021.

The airline said that its Omanisation level is 75 per cent with 90 per cent of pilots now locals, followed by Omani male crew (100 per cent),



engineers (90 per cent and support employees (93 per cent).

A total of 155 new Omani employees joined the company in 2023, including seven pilots, 63 cabin crew, 40 engineers, and 45 support staff.

All flights reported an on-time performance of 96 per cent as the airline operated to 44 destinations.

The fleet strength of the airline as per the agreements signed between 2011 and 2015 will be limited to 45 (10, A330s, 13 737s (Max), 13 737NG, and 9 Dreamliners), compared to 54 in 2022.

The minister had said that the consultant is expected to work for three months initially to produce the first report that draws a roadmap for working with executive management.

He stressed that the ministry will be able to look into the necessary options in June, adding that the Oman Air's performance is not satisfactory, but there is a desire from the Board of Directors and the executive management as well as the Investment Authority to improve its performance.

17 people arrested for smuggling cattle in Musandam

MUSCAT: The Coast Guard Police at the police command of Musandam Governorate arrested 16 Asians at the sea while transporting cattle smuggled from an Asian country.

They were attempting to transfer 830 smuggled livestock from boats to two wooden ships with the aim of smuggling them to another country.

The defendants were handed over to the customs department in Musandam for the completion of legal procedures.

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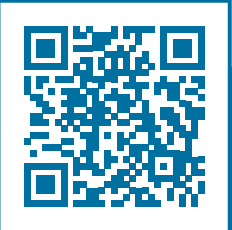
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A WATER RESOURCE THAT FLOATS

RESEARCHERS HAVE EXPLAINED THE POTENTIAL TO TAP THE FOG AS AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF WATER

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Submerged in fog, hardly anything could be seen, until the early morning sun rays lifted the fog.

In place were dew drops on leaves and underneath the bushes were wetness on the soil and that is when the scene became clearer — the Arabian oryx and ghazals gently sipped the dew drops. The birds chirped too indicating the importance of fog.

Fog is an important natural phenomenon.

This weekend when Ahmed drove to a mosque for prayer he had to take extra care.

“I was going for my Fajr prayer and it was very foggy. We are in Shinas and close to the sea. I think this has been the case with Suhar too,” he said.

Musandam has been looking foggy, said a photographer. “Cannot tell if it is dust or fog but it was difficult to take pictures or videos,” he pointed out.

The interesting factor is that for fog to form, according to experts, dust or any other air pollution is also required.

And another factor is the Oman Met Office has stated while it will be mainly clear skies over most of the governorates, there are chances of low level clouds or fog patches at late night or early morning over parts of the Arabian Sea and over parts of Al Wusta and the coastal areas of Dhofar and Musandam governorates.

To distinguish whether it is haze or fog the timing of the day provides a significant clue.

Fog formed at dawn on Sunday in parts of the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate (Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan and Jaalan Bani Bu Ali) and in the central part (Haima, Ja'louni and Zamayem) and near Bahja and Mukhaizna, “Where the relative humidity at the sixth and seventh hours reached 100 per cent, as the temperature equalled the dew point Haima 22°C and in other places 23°C.”

Of course one has to be cautious with fog formations as it can cause a decrease in the level of horizontal visibility at times during late night and early morning. And the alert is for over parts of the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta, Dhofar and parts of the coasts of the governorates of North Al Batinah, South Al Batinah and Muscat.

The weather expert at Oman Met Office said, “When the humidity is high it is natural to have fog formation.”

This also means that for the formation of fog there has to be lot of water vapour content in the air. In addition, invariably there would be dust needed for the fog formation.

The weather expert explained further, “The south west coast has more chance for fog. It is very difficult to distinguish between haze and fog. Sometimes it is like mist if the visibility is between 5,000m to 1,000m, if it is less than 1,000m then we call it fog.”

Fog has its potential.

The khareef season in Salalah brings a lot of fog over the mountains.

Researchers have explained the potential to tap the fog as an alternative source of water. The monsoon season is from the mid June to mid September and experts are in the opinion that they could be substantial volumes of water that could be saved and utilised for domestic use and small scale farming on the mountains. This fog catchments have been on discussions and trials.

Even otherwise fog water is precious in feeding the aquifer especially the coastal aquifers, combating the certification and for the sustainability of forests.



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5

Oman Botanic Garden to showcase Oman's habitat



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday issued Royal Decree No 25/2023, which stated that the Oman Botanic Garden shall be affiliated with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

The Minister of Heritage and Tourism shall exercise all powers stated in the Law on Nature Reserves and Wildlife Conservation, the decree said.

It may be noted that Salim bin Mohammad al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, on Monday reviewed the progress of the Oman Botanic

The Botanic Garden is slated for opening by the year-end or early next year

Garden, which is slated for opening by the year-end or early next year.

The Oman Botanic Garden project is expected to be ready in 2023. Its major attractions will include cable cars, said Salim al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, in a statement.

Earlier, speaking to the Observer, Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, said, "Oman Botanic

Garden project is nearly 75 per cent complete, and we hope to complete it by the end of this year.

The project will showcase the all-natural habitat of the Sultanate of Oman at one place in the heart of the city."

Situated in Al Khoudh, the garden that will be one of the largest botanic gardens in the world will consist of a nursery, visitor centre, research centre, field study centre, outdoor habitat gardens, northern mountain biome, southern mountain biome, and nature reserve area.

The project that includes the construction of giant glass domes will be multiple entries and exit points for easy accessibility and is situated close to the Muscat Expressway.

Developed on 423 hectares, the Botanic Garden will present an opportunity for visitors to experience the flora and vegetation of Oman while learning about the country's agricultural heritage, rich cultural traditions, and legendary hospitality. It is a world-class development of the Diwan of the Royal Court in Oman and will showcase the traditionally cultivated crops and the many ways that people use plants in Oman.

The garden will offer a variety of amenity areas, play, and family zones for fun and relaxation in a garden setting unique to Oman.



Investors from Oman invited for St Petersburg Economic Forum

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The participation of business houses from the Sultanate of Oman in the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) can open new business opportunities for them, according to Alexander Stuglev, CEO of Rosscongress, organiser of St Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The St Petersburg International Economic Forum takes place in Russia from June 14 to 17 and will focus on key issues of the global economic agenda.

Rosscongress a socially oriented non-financial development institution and a major organiser of nationwide and international conventions. SPIEF is an annual event held under the auspice of the president of the Russian Federation.

The team from Rosscongress visited Muscat recently to invite the business people to the event.

Speaking to the Observer at Sheraton Oman prior to meeting the business representatives, Alexander Stuglev said that the main goal of SPIEF 23 is to develop economic relations between Russia and many other countries.

"We have had more than 15,000 participants from over 130 countries. Aside from this, we also provide an opportunity for those participants to develop economic relations with each other. We have a platform called B2B Networking where we assign meetings beforehand with delegations and representatives between different business sectors where they can have a dialogue and reach an agreement," said Stuglev.

It is the 25th edition of St Petersburg

International Economic Forum and there have been shifts in the world economy.

Regarding benefits for business people from the Sultanate of Oman attending the economic forum, Stuglev said that they see a window of opportunity opening for many investors, including from Oman, because the economic trend has shifted in recent years.

"We are seeing Western and European businesses leaving the Russian market, and we are seeing many other businesses from countries like China, India and the Middle Eastern countries competing for the space left behind by the West and Europe," he said.

"On the other hand, the compass of Russian investment outside the country has changed. The investments that went to the west have shifted to South East Asia, Middle Eastern and some of the Arab countries," he pointed out.

"We are seeing this window of business opportunities where we can build and further develop our economic relations," he noted.

As Oman focuses on logistics as one of the main elements of the country's economic vision for 2040, trade could also be an area of development between the two nations keeping in mind the strategic location.

Stuglev said that when it comes to trade, Russia is looking for trustworthy partners in the region for many sectors, and logistics is one of them.

"Oman, without a doubt, can be a leader in the sector," he said.

According to him, there has been substantial growth between Oman and Russia in the areas of agriculture, heavy metals, wood export.

KnowledgeOman awards longtime member with community award

MUSCAT: KnowledgeOman (KO), the leading local initiative for promoting knowledge sharing and community development, has awarded and recognised Murali Kannan, a long-time member, for his outstanding creative support to the platform. The trophy was presented by the President of the platform, Balqees al Hassani, in the presence of the Chairwoman Dr Yasmeen al Balushi.

"My family and I have been living in Oman for the past 30 years now. When the opportunity to serve the community came 15 years ago from its founder Tariq al Barwani, I grabbed and offered my support on the creative and branding part of the platform. Today, I am happy to see Knowledge Oman's positive impact to the society and my contribution to a platform that support youth development in the country" said Murali upon receiving the award.

A well-known award-winning creative director with strong conceptualisation and branding solutions strengths, Murali has extensive exposure to the management of effective brand activation campaigns across digital, print, and out-of-home platforms.



He is also a mentor to young Omani nationals and has participated in government digital transmission projects. As the business owner of Brand & Communication company called Digital Intelligence LLC (72dpi), Murali's expertise has helped many organisations in Oman to effectively communicate their brand message.

"We are pleased to recognise the exceptional contributions of Murali. His dedication and commitment to volunteer work and community service are truly inspiring and we hope their stories will encourage others to get involved in making a positive impact in their communities" said Balqees al Hassani, President of KnowledgeOman.

Lecture on moral intelligence organised

MUSCAT: The Department of Libraries at the Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science organised a lecture entitled 'Citizenship and Moral Intelligence in Omani Society' at the General Knowledge Library in Qurum, targeting school students in Muscat Governorate.

Trainer Buthaina bint Mohammed al Qasimiyah in her talk consolidated the concept of moral intelligence, its manifestations and consequences, and focused on clarifying the role of moral intelligence in the individual's self-respect and respect for others.

It is worth noting that the importance of the lecture lies in the fact that the participant understands the importance of independence of opinion, controls the influences that he may be exposed to in the school environment, and finds appropriate solutions to them. — ONA

Tune in to So!Radio, Oman's newest classic rock station, starting on May 9

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will have the region's only classic rock radio station on 91.4 FM, from Tuesday, May 9 at 12 pm.

Rock legend Alice Cooper will be on So! Radio every weeknight at 6, sharing crazy stories and playing some of his favourite classic rock tracks.

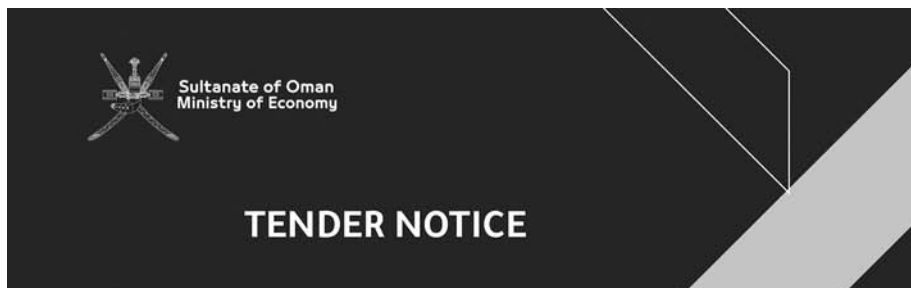
Alice is excited to be on for the very first time in the Middle East. Ian Camfield, a renowned UK and US radio personality with a passion for rock music, will be hosting the weekday morning show, from 7 to 10 everyday.

The station will also feature a special



Live in Concert show every weekend, featuring live recordings of classic rock concerts from some of the biggest names in the industry, Friday at 10 am and Saturday at 4 pm.

"Our mission is to bring the best classic rock music to the Middle East," said Eihab al Saleh, CEO of Entertainment Network — SAOC. "We believe that there is a huge appetite for rock music in Oman, and we are committed to providing the best listening experience for our audience and giving our advertisers the widest choice with So! Radio, Oman adding to Hala FM and of course Hi FM."



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2023/2	Projects evaluation and prioritizing electronic system	25 Omani Rials	18/6 / 2023

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HE Chairman of the Tender Committee of the Ministry of Economy.

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Arab League re-admits Syria after 11-year absence

CAIRO: The Arab League on Sunday welcomed back Syria's government, ending a more than decade-long suspension and securing President Bashar al-Assad's return to the Arab fold after years of isolation.

The ministers in a statement emphasised their "keenness to launch a leading Arab role in efforts to resolve" the Syria crisis and its "humanitarian, security and political consequences", noting that humanitarian aid must reach "all those in need".

They also agreed to form a ministerial committee to continue "direct dialogue with the Syrian government in order to reach a comprehensive solution".

Several Arab countries cut ties with Damascus early in the conflict.

The last Arab League summit Assad attended was in 2010.

The United Arab Emirates, which re-established ties in late 2018, has been leading the recent charge to reintegrate Damascus into the Arab fold.

A February 6 earthquake that wreaked devastation in Turkiye and Syria sparked Arab outreach to Assad's government, while intensified diplomatic activity has been under way in the region since a March decision by rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran to resume ties.



Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry speaks during an emergency meeting of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo. – AFP

In March, Saudi state media said Riyadh and Damascus were in talks on resuming consular services, and in April, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan made the first visit to Damascus by a official from the kingdom since the start of the war.

That meeting came less than a week after Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad visited Saudi Arabia, also on the first such

visit since the conflict began.

Mekdad has visited a string of Arab countries including in recent weeks in a diplomatic push,

The ministers in a statement emphasised their "keenness to launch a leading Arab role in efforts to resolve" the Syria crisis and its "humanitarian, security."

including to Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt. He attended talks in Amman with foreign ministers from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Egypt to discuss the long-running conflict.

In April, nine Arab countries including Gulf states meet in Saudi Arabia to discuss ending Syria's long spell in the diplomatic wilderness and its possible return to the Arab League.

Recently, Iran and Syria agreed to boost ties and develop economic relations, with a focus on reconstruction, as the Islamic republic's President Ebrahim Raisi on Friday concluded a landmark visit to Damascus.

Tehran has been a key ally to Damascus offering vital economic and military assistance that has helped the Syrian government claw back most of the territory it lost at the start of the conflict.

— AFP

UN top aid chief in Saudi for Sudan talks as fighting flares

KHARTOUM: The UN's top humanitarian official arrived in Saudi Arabia on Sunday for ceasefire talks between Sudan's warring generals, as gun battles and air strikes flared in the Sudanese capital at the start of a fourth week of fighting.

Multiple truce deals have been declared and quickly violated since battles erupted between army and paramilitary forces on April 15 in the poverty-stricken country with a history of political instability.

Fierce combat since then has killed hundreds of people, most of them civilians, wounded thousands and sparked multiple warnings of a potential "catastrophic" humanitarian crisis.

More than 100,000 people have already fled the country.

Across the Red Sea in the Saudi city of Jeddah, talks were under way aiming for a ceasefire



Sudanese Army soldiers walk near tanks stationed on a street in southern Khartoum. – AFP

that could push efforts to bring humanitarian aid to the besieged population.

The generals leading the warring parties have said little about the talks being held in Jeddah since Saturday.

Army spokesman Brigadier

General Nabil Abdalla said the talks were on how a truce "can be correctly implemented to serve the humanitarian side", while Mohammed Hamdan Daglo, who heads the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), only said on Twitter that he welcomed the

technical discussions. The UN's top humanitarian official, Martin Griffiths, was in Jeddah on Sunday "and the purpose of his visit is to engage in humanitarian issues related to Sudan," spokesperson Eri Kaneko said.

Griffiths was last week in Port Sudan, where he said he had been informed by the UN's World Food Programme that six trucks bringing aid to the Darfur region had been "looted en route" on Wednesday, "despite assurances of safety and security".

He called for security guarantees "clearly given by militaries, to protect humanitarian systems to deliver".

There was no indication that Griffiths would play a direct role in the Saudi discussions about a possible ceasefire.

Riyadh and Washington have supported the "pre-negotiation talks" and urged the belligerents to "get actively involved". — AFP



A Palestinian boy picks up papers and books from the site of a school that was demolished by the Israeli authorities near Bethlehem. – AFP

Israeli authorities demolish school near Bethlehem

TEL AVIV : Israeli troops used bulldozers on Sunday to demolish a Palestinian school near Bethlehem funded with European Union aid, the Wafa Palestinian news agency reported.

The troops had entered the village in the early hours of Sunday, using tear gas to disperse residents before demolishing the Al-Tahadi school.

An Israeli Army spokesman said the report was being investigated.

The Al-Tahadi school was demolished in 2017 and then rebuilt. In March, an Israeli court granted an application from a right-wing Israeli organisation and ordered its demolition again.

Bassam Jabr, the director of education in the Bethlehem Governorate, said that the school was used by around 60 pupils from the first to the fourth grade. EU representatives in the West Bank said they were "appalled by reports that the EU-funded school in Jubbet Ad Dhib is being demolished by Israeli authorities."

The EU added that demolitions were illegal under international law and called for children's right to education to be respected. — dpa

SHORT TAKES

ISTANBUL

Construction truck accident leaves 12 dead

At least 12 people have died and 31 people were injured, three of them seriously, in an accident with a construction truck in the Turkish earthquake region of Hatay, Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced on Twitter.

The DHA news agency reported on Sunday that a construction truck had collided with a lorry the previous night.

The lorry lost control and collided with nine cars and two minibuses in the oncoming lane. Vehicles caught fire after the crash.



Three months ago, severe earthquakes shook the south-eastern Turkish province of Hatay and other regions.

More than 50,000 people were killed. — dpa

BANGKOK

Queues at schools as early voting begins

Thais queued under the blistering sun outside temples, shopping centres and schools to cast their early ballots on Sunday ahead of a much-anticipated election next week.

More than two million Thais nationwide are registered to vote early ahead of the kingdom's May 14 election.

Authorities had anticipated large numbers of early voters.

Police told local media there would be around 3,000 security officers on duty across the capital,



and warned of heavier traffic congestion around poll sites.

An additional 100,000 Thais living overseas will also vote early, with some having already done so. — AFP

BAGHDAD

Court sentences police officer to death

An Iraqi court sentenced to death a police officer blamed for leading a group that gunned down well-known analyst and government adviser Hisham al Hashemi three years ago in Baghdad.

Al Hashemi was shot dead outside his Baghdad family home in July 2020 by men on a motorbike. A Baghdad court issued a death sentence on Sunday against Ahmed Hamdawi under Iraqi counter-terrorism laws, a judicial authority statement said.



Media were not allowed access, but a lawyer who attended the court session said Hamdawi did not say anything in the court in response to the judge's ruling.

— Reuters



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In brief

■ MOSCOW



RUSSIA'S WAGNER GROUP APPEARS TO DO U-TURN ON BAKHMUT

Russia's Wagner mercenary group appeared on Sunday to ditch plans to withdraw from Bakhmut in eastern Ukraine, saying they had been promised more arms by Moscow and suggesting they may keep up their assault on what Russia sees as a stepping stone to other cities in the Donbas region.

Elsewhere, Ukrainian and Russian media reported explosions across Russian-occupied Crimea, and Russia's defence ministry said its air defences had detected and destroyed 22 Ukrainian drones over the Black Sea overnight. Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin had said that his fighters would pull out after being starved of ammunition and suffering "useless and unjustified" losses as a result. — AFP

■ LIMA



AT LEAST 27 DEAD IN PERU GOLD MINE FIRE

At least 27 workers have died in a fire at a gold mine in a remote area of southern Peru, authorities said on Sunday.

A short circuit caused the fire, which broke out in a tunnel inside the La Esperanza mine in the Arequipa region, police and the public prosecutor's office said. Public prosecutor Giovanni Matos told channel N television that there were "27 dead inside the mine."

Local media said the blaze started after an explosion at the mine in the remote Condesuyos province. News of the fire was only published once police had gathered details of those who died. — AFP

■ ARICA



PLANE CARRYING VENEZUELAN MIGRANTS DEPARTS CHILE

A plane carrying more than a hundred Venezuelan migrants left Chile on Sunday, in a repatriation flight for people who have been stranded for weeks.

Hundreds of mostly Venezuelan and Haitian migrants have been stuck in the border area for over two weeks after leaving Arica in northern Chile.

Many of the migrants say they are trying to go home, or seeking to continue northwards in a bid to reach the United States. The plane had arrived from Caracas on Friday and is financed by the Venezuelan government of President Nicolas Maduro. — AFP

Britain celebrates with 'deeply touched' King Charles after coronation



Britain's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaks with guests during a Coronation Big Lunch organised in Downing Street, in London. — AFP

LONDON: King Charles on Sunday said he was "deeply touched" by the celebration of his coronation, which continued with street parties ahead of a concert featuring singers Lionel Richie, Katy Perry and Andrea Bocelli at Windsor Castle.

Amid pomp and pageantry, Charles and his wife Camilla were crowned at London's Westminster Abbey on Saturday in Britain's biggest ceremonial event for 70 years.

A Buckingham Palace spokesperson said Charles and Camilla were "deeply touched by the events of yesterday".

The king and queen were "profoundly grateful both to all those who helped to make it such

a glorious occasion — and to the very many who turned out to show their support in such numbers in London and further afield," the spokesperson added.

Senior members of the family were out in force on Sunday. Charles' heir Prince William and his wife Kate met with crowds in Windsor, ahead of the concert in the evening.

The king's younger brother Prince Edward, his sister Princess Anne, and his nieces Princess Beatrice and Princess Eugenie also attended "Big Lunch" events, joining some of the estimated 50,000 street parties being held around the country.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was among those hosting a coronation

lunch, with the guests including Ukrainian families, youth groups and US first lady Jill Biden.

"Come rain or shine, thousands of friends and neighbours are coming together this weekend to put up the bunting, pour the tea and cut the cake at street parties and community events across the UK," Sunak said in a statement.

Later, Charles and Camilla and other senior royals will join an audience of 20,000 members of the public and invited guests for the "Coronation Concert" at Windsor, the king's palace to the west of London.

Among those performing will be Take That, Nigerian singer-songwriter Tiwa Savage and pianist Lang Lang, while Hollywood actor

Tom Cruise, British actor Joan Collins and Winnie the Pooh will also feature.

The festivities will include a "Lighting up the Nation" event, with projections and laser displays illuminating landmarks and areas of natural beauty across the country.

Not everyone has celebrated the coronation, with anti-monarchists angered after being detained for hours on Saturday for planning to protest. Police said they believed the protesters intended to disrupt the royal procession.

Responding to questions raised over whether the police response had been disproportionate and curtailed the right to free speech, Culture Minister Lucy Frazer said she believed the police had overall

"managed to get that balance right".

Police arrested Graham Smith, leader of the Republic group, and 51 others in central London as thousands of royal fans gathered in the capital for the event on Saturday, saying their duty to prevent disruption outweighed the right to protest.

Republic said that members began to be released late on Saturday evening after nearly 16 hours in custody.

"This was a heavy-handed action which had the appearance of a pre-determined arrest that would have occurred regardless of the evidence or our actions. The right to protest peacefully in the UK no longer exists," Smith said in a statement.

— Agencies

Tokyo and Seoul are hailing 'new future' for ties



South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol shakes hands with Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida during their meeting in Seoul. — Reuters

SEOUL: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Sunday his "heart aches" for Koreans who suffered under colonialism, as Seoul and Tokyo seek a rapid reset of long-strained ties in the face of North Korean threats.

Kishida was in Seoul on the first official bilateral visit by a Japanese leader to South Korea in over a decade. He met President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has made improving testy relations with Japan a top priority for his administration.

"My heart aches as many people went through a very difficult and sad experience in the harsh environment at that time," Kishida said, speaking after the summit with Yoon.

Yoon said Kishida's visit showed "shuttle diplomacy" was back on track, after a lengthy pause during a bitter trade spat linked to the forced labour issue.

"Based on the friendship and trust I have with Prime Minister

Kishida, I will promote deeper bilateral cooperation toward a new future," said Yoon, who was in Tokyo in March for a fence-mending visit.

Bilateral ties were torpedoed in 2018, when South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms to compensate the wartime victims of forced labour, enraging Tokyo and triggering an escalating series of tit-for-tat economic measures.

But Yoon, who took office last year, has sought to bury the historical hatchet, earlier announcing a plan to compensate victims without direct involvement from Tokyo — a move that was unpopular domestically, but helped improve ties with Japan.

"As the South Korean government moves forward... I am touched to see how so many people are opening their hearts to the future while not forgetting the hardships of the past," Kishida said.

— AFP

After latest shooting, Biden urges Congress to ban assault weapons

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden renewed his call on Sunday for Congress to ban semi-automatic rifles like the one used in a weekend shooting that left eight victims including children dead in Texas, as he called out Republican inaction.

The president ordered US flags lowered to half staff one day after a heavily-armed gunman opened fire without warning at an outlet mall north of Dallas, in the latest spasm of gun violence to shake the nation.

"Once again I ask Congress to send me a bill banning assault weapons and high-capacity magazines. Enacting universal background checks. Requiring safe storage. Ending immunity for gun manufacturers," Biden, for years a proponent of tougher gun laws, said in a statement.

"I will sign it immediately. We need nothing less to keep our streets safe."

Witnesses and police described scenes of panic and horror at the Allen Premium Outlets, where video footage circulating online showed the shooter getting out of a sedan and opening fire on people walking nearby.

The president said he and First



US President Joe Biden leaves Holy Trinity Catholic Church after attending afternoon Mass in Washington, US, on Saturday. — Reuters

Lady Jill Biden were praying for the victims and their families and were "grateful to the first responders who acted quickly and courageously to save lives."

But an exasperated Biden also pointed to the staggering number of mass shootings this year, already nearly 200, and the more than 14,000 firearm deaths, noting that the leading cause of death for American children is gun violence.

"Too many families have empty chairs at their dinner tables," he went on. "Republican members of Congress cannot continue to meet this epidemic with a shrug. Tweeted thoughts and prayers are not enough."

Americans on Sunday were

grappling with yet another mass shooting after a heavily-armed man stormed a shopping mall in Texas, murdering eight people and wounding several others before he was killed by police.

Responders, distressed witnesses and police described scenes of panic and horror north of Dallas, where video footage circulating online showed the shooter getting out of a sedan in the outlet mall's parking lot on Saturday and opening fire on people walking nearby.

An officer inside on an unrelated call quickly responded to the gunfire and "neutralised" the shooter at the sprawling facility in Allen, police said.

— Agencies

Valuing champions at back stage

Making a living is not an easy thing in life; it is a very irritating headache. One has to strive hard, sacrifice time, money as well as personal and social life for the sake of getting a proper job. Maintaining a decent living for oneself and family is a very challenging mission indeed. However, as the saying goes, ‘No pain, no gain’; the harder people strive, the bigger the reward comes.

In fact, having a profession marks one of the major blessings that one has got. Without a job, life would be a struggle and a burden to some people! Sometimes, it is one’s fate and luck that play a role in the way you live your life, yet it is also your hard work that you do to get things done.

Thus, it is your call to chase every possible opportunity, which might bring you a good fortune and make a living out of it. All you need to do is to make the most of every opportunity that emerges.

Though, it is not always one has the choice on what he/she has in life or does for a living, rather this is only granted by the Almighty Allah, who bestow human beings with their different fortunes and fates.

This is given to them with no distinction to certain origins, religions, languages or cultures. In fact, it is just a matter of giving humans what is good to serve them better during their lifetime. Blessings are fairly given to people, but sometimes it is just their own interest to get more and more. However, everything comes at the right time; one just needs to be patient.

In this regard, human beings are blessed with different types and ranks of jobs, but this doesn’t mean that the ones with highly paid or positioned jobs should undervalue those with low wages or low-profile professions like the blue-collar jobs.

The Almighty Allah says in the Holy Quran: “We raise some of them above others in ranks, so that some may command work from others.”

Whatever one does, he/she shall work on it with all heart as working



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

HAVING A SATISFIED EMPLOYEE WOULD DEFINITELY REFLECT ON THE OVERALL PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION

is for the Lord, not for men. As stated in the Holy Quran, “And say, do as you will, for Allah will see your deeds, and so will His Messenger and the believers.”

Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), was asked what type of earning was best, and he replied, “A man’s work with his hands and every lawful business transaction.”

Hence, nobody has the right to underestimate others no matter who they are or what they do! All humans are valuable, but each is managing stuff with own limits, capabilities and concerns.

However, all are complementing each other with what they do in life. Accordingly, the ones working on handicrafts or less-privileged professions are even more honoured and should be highly appreciated than others.

This leads to the fact that employees are equal and shall be fairly treated, regardless of their designations or professions.

They all deserve the same level of respect, appreciation and consideration. To them, this marks an essential part for self-motivation and encouragement, so they could feel a person of value. One would always need to be admired and motivated to keep up hard work, good spirit and positive attitude.

Having a satisfied employee would definitely reflect on the overall performance and production. Eventually, it ensures getting outstanding outcomes.

That is way the world is observing various occasions for labours and others of specific professions too. This signifies the importance of the different professions and efforts of diverse professionals.

The Labour Day stands among the key occasions that shall be celebrated to acknowledge the excellence of employees and reward their commendable performance and deliverables.

To all bosses, salute the hard work and dedication of the strong-willed souls around you!

TIME FOR A SELFIE!



Members of the public have their photographs taken at a Coronation Selfie booth at a street party in Chiswick, west London, as part of the Coronation Big Lunch, on Sunday. Thousands of local street parties were planned on the second day of events to mark the coronation of King Charles III, ending with a concert in front of 20,000 people at Windsor Castle. – AFP

Deciphering the latest IPCC report

In March, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its so-called “synthesis report,” the final section of its sixth assessment report (AR6). Based on thousands of peer-reviewed articles by hundreds of scientists from around the world, the report provides a comprehensive review of the impact of climate change and what the world must do to limit global warming to 1.5° Celsius.

The good news is that, according to the IPCC, “feasible, effective, and low-cost options for mitigation and adaptation are already available.” But ensuring a “livable and sustainable future for all” also requires a far-reaching transformation and the political will to take bold action.

IPCC reports are invaluable. By bringing science to climate negotiations that are otherwise dominated by political and economic considerations, the reports both inform and promote accountability. Often totalling over 1,000 pages, each report includes a shorter summary for policymakers that member states must officially approve.

This process enables government representatives and observers to comment on incoming drafts while still allowing scientists to refuse suggestions that challenge the integrity of their research. During the approval process, however,



Lindsey Fielder Cook

The writer is Representative for the Human Impacts of Climate Change at the Quaker

THE IPCC’S LATEST SO-CALLED “SYNTHESIS REPORT” WARNS THAT THE WORLD MUST ACT IMMEDIATELY TO REDUCE GREENHOUSE-GAS EMISSIONS OR RISK CATASTROPHIC GLOBAL WARMING

sentences may be strengthened, softened, or even removed from the final draft. The latest report warns that extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense than previously predicted, while global action has been far slower than expected. Every fraction of a degree matters, and, at the current rate of greenhouse-gas emissions, the world is barreling towards a 3.5°C increase by 2100 — with devastating consequences for humanity and the planet.

Barring urgent action to halve current greenhouse-gas emissions by 2030, global warming is “more likely than not” to reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels within the next decade, the report warns. But if policymakers act immediately, they could still prevent ice sheets from melting, permafrost from thawing, and ecosystems from collapsing, thereby saving countless lives.

To change course, we must address the root cause of climate change: “unsustainable energy use, land use and land-use change, lifestyles and patterns of consumption and production across regions, between and within countries, and among individuals.”

Governments could choose



Global warming is ‘more likely than not’ to reach 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels within the next decade.

many feasible and cost-effective steps to reduce emissions. The most promising are those that integrate rights-based approaches that embody meaningful public participation in decision-making, gender equity, biodiversity protection, human rights, and the rights of indigenous peoples. The IPCC report finds that policies that promote equity, fairness, and climate justice “lead to more sustainable outcomes” and “reduce trade-offs, support transformative change, and advance climate-resilient development.” Simply put, fairer climate policies receive greater support and are therefore more effective. The most effective

way to reduce emissions is to phase out fossil fuels and rapidly shift to renewable energies, particularly solar and wind energy. But the report also identifies important economy-wide and demand-side measures, such as “sufficiency” approaches, circular material flows, energy efficiency, sustainable consumption and production, widespread public transportation, and agricultural practices grounded in “sustainable land-management approaches.” Behavioural changes, such as adopting a “sustainable healthy diet,” reducing the use of appliances, and forgoing private cars in favour of walking and

cycling, could also help reduce emissions. As the IPCC report notes, the top 10 per cent of households with the highest per capita emissions account for 34-45 per cent of consumption-based global household emissions, whereas the bottom 50 per cent contribute just 13-15 per cent.

Curiously, despite the documented environmental benefits of reducing meat consumption in favour of healthier diets, both the summary and the full report include no mention of meat or dairy and relegate the phrase “plant-based” to a footnote.

Likewise, the report dropped a hopeful and high-confidence sentence relating to urgent, rapid, feasible, and equitable near-term policies to address climate change and improve human well-being that are already available to scale. This caused an outcry among many observers and a range of states seeking to retain the scientific finding. However, after hours of discussion, the sentence remained out; the words “urgent,” “rapid,” and “available to scale” appeared too sensitive for universal approval, highlighting the tension between science and political will.

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Salalah clinch OAA Shield Championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

Salalah club wrapped up the 2022-23 season with two titles as they claimed the top place in senior and youth categories of Oman Athletics Association (OAA) Shield Championship which concluded on Saturday at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The twin triumph meant Salalah-based team topped the domestic clubs order while Al Salam club from Al Batinah North came in second and Masirah club finished third.

As many as 16 clubs took part in this

edition of the OAA Shield Championship which featured different competitions including races of 100 metres, 200 metres, 400 metres, 800 metres, 1,500 metres, 400 metres hurdles, high jump, 3,000 metres, javelin and 4x400 metres relay. The competition began on Friday and ran for two days. The objective of the event was to open the doors for all the talented athletes to join the national teams.

Salim al Amri, Chairman of OAA, said the championship registered a good success in its renewed edition. “We are very glad with the number of participated clubs in the men’s OAA Shield



Championship besides other 18 clubs who took part in the ladies competition. The main target was to attract the top candidates to represent the national athletics teams in the near future,” he said.

The chief of OAA affirmed that all the coaching staff from different teams were available to closely watch the athletes’ performance and monitor the top performers,” he added.

In the senior level, Salalah club took the first-place award while Masirah club were positioned as runners-up and Saham club finished third. In the youth category, Salalah club bagged the gold

medals while Al Salam club claimed the silver medals and Masirah club athletes claimed bronze medals.

In the junior level, the Northern Batinah team, Al Salam, clinched the gold while Salalah came in second and Masirah team finished third.

At the end, chief guest Sayyid Idrees bin Mansoor al Busaidy, General Manager of Administrative and Financial Directorate at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, delivered the awards and medals to the top winners in different categories in presence of Salim al Amri, Chairman of OAA, and other officials.



Oman U12 girls claim second in West Asia tennis qualifiers

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

Oman under-12 girls tennis team claimed second place in the Continental Qualifiers for West Asia U12, which concluded on Friday in Iranian capital of Tehran.

The Oman girls team qualified along with the first-placed Iranian team to the finals of the West Asian Championship, which is scheduled to be held in Uzbekistan.

The Oman boys team finished fourth among wider participants from West Asia countries.

The Oman boys team started the competitions with a 2-1 victory over Bahrain team. In the second match, Oman lost to Iran 3-1.

Iran boys blanked Syria 2-0 to emerge champions in the qualifiers.

The Oman girls team lost the final match in the tournament

against hosts Iran 3-0. The Oman girls team was represented by Talia al Busaidy, Arin al Azkoya and Salma al Riyami.

The Oman boys team was represented by Abdulrahman al Rahbi, Azzan al Busaidy and Moataz al Mazrouei.

The players of the girls and boys team presented a good level in the competitions in this tournament and reflected the extent of the teams development as Oman Tennis Association (OTA) expects to provide the best levels in the upcoming participation.

Talia al Busaidy, Oman girls team player, said: “We are happy with what we achieved in this participation, as it came after some time. We achieved a good result by obtaining second place and presented a good level, and we worked hard to reach the podium and to come out of this participation with honourable results, and we thank the OTA

for the great support.”

Abdulrahman al Rahbi, Oman boys national team player, said: “The tournament was good and we strived to achieve an advanced position, but we did not succeed in that. The most important thing is that we came out with a good technical benefit from this participation, which we seek to be repeated during the coming period. Such tournaments and external participation develop the level of players and polish their skills.”

Sergei, Oman team coach, expressed his happiness with the results achieved. He indicated that the tournament has a good technical level and the Omani players put up a good performance, especially in the girls’ category. The players need similar tournaments in order to develop technical levels, and this participation comes within the OTA’s plan to improve the players capability.”

Al Nahda to face Al Ahly Tripoli in King Salman Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

Oman’s Al Nahda club team is set to meet Libya’s Al Ahly Tripoli team on Tuesday, in the first leg of the third preliminary round of the King Salman Cup for Arab Football Clubs. The match will take place in the Benina Martyrs Stadium in the city of Benghazi.

The return match is scheduled for May 29 at Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

Al Nahda secured their spot in this stage after defeating the Palestine Club Shabab Al Khalil with two clean goals in the Al Buraimi match. The Palestinian team did not attend the Amman

International Stadium in the second leg. Meanwhile, Al Ahly advanced after eliminating Egypt’s El Gaish Team, winning the first in Cairo and drawing in the second in Benghazi.

The winner of this match will qualify for the second group, to play alongside Saudi Arabia’s Al Hilal, Morocco’s Wydad and Qatar’s Al Sadd teams. The presence of these top clubs makes the group the strongest among the championship groups.

Al Nahda are currently in a stage of technical stability, as they lead the Omantel League and are close to winning the League Shield. They are seeking to achieve the double after winning the His

Majesty’s Cup. Al Nahda have all the ingredients that qualify it to return with a positive result before going and qualifying for the group stage that will be held in Saudi Arabia.

Al Nahda Club team departed on Saturday to the Republic of Libya. After arriving, the Al Nahda team conducted a training session in Benghazi in preparation for the match.

The Benina Martyrs Stadium, the match venue is in the Benina region, a suburb of Benghazi in Libya. The stadium can accommodate 11,000 spectators and has modern facilities for the teams, officials, guests, media and the spectators.



Gill, Saha help Gujarat win IPL battle of brothers to remain top



Gujarat Titans' Shubman Gill watches the ball after playing a shot during the Indian Premier League Twenty20 match between Gujarat Titans and Lucknow Super Giants at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. — AFP

AHMEDABAD, India: Hardik Pandya got the better of his big brother Krunal on Sunday as holders Gujarat Titans thrashed Lucknow Super Giants by 56 runs in the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

In the first ever IPL match with two teams captained by brothers, Lucknow's Krunal won the toss and elected to field at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad.

The brothers joked and hugged at the start but things turned serious when a destructive opening stand of 142 between Wriddhiman Saha (81) and Shubman Gill (94 not out) powered Gujarat to their highest ever IPL total of 227-2.

Lucknow put up a spirited reply with Kyle Mayers (48) and Quinton de Kock (70) leading the charge but they ended on 171-7 to allow Gujarat to consolidate their top spot in the 10-team table.

Saha, a diminutive wicketkeeper-batsman, set up Gujarat's domination with sixes and fours to reach his fifty in just 20 balls before he fell to Avesh Khan.

Hardik, 29, and Gill extended the batting onslaught but the younger Pandya departed after Krunal, 32, took his catch. He made 25 off 15 balls.

The in-form Gill, who struck his fourth fifty of the season, put on another fiery stand with South Africa's David Miller, who smashed 21, as Gujarat finished on this year's fourth highest team total.

The left-handed Mayers began the chase strongly as he hit Hardik for a hat-trick of boundaries and then took on Mohammed Shami in a 19-run over.

India fast bowler Mohit Sharma sent back Mayers to break an 88-run opening stand and later took down dangerous Australian batsman Marcus Stoinis to dent the chase.

De Kock, a left-hand wicketkeeper-batsman, reached his fifty in his first IPL appearance this season but was bowled by Afghanistan spin wizard Rashid Khan as the Lucknow chase fell off track.

Krunal was out for a first-ball duck off Mohit, who returned figures of 4-29. — AFP

Salt hits 87 as Delhi rout Bangalore



Delhi Capitals' Phil Salt plays a shot against Royal Challengers Bangalore at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in New Delhi. — AFP

NEW DELHI: England's Phil Salt hit a blazing 87 to power Delhi Capitals to a thumping seven-wicket victory over Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Indian Premier League on Saturday and ruin superstar Virat Kohli's return to his home city.

Salt struck his second half-century in his debut IPL season to steer Delhi's chase of 182 as the home team won with 20 balls to spare at the Feroz Shah Kotla ground.

Salt, a wicketkeeper-batsman, began with a 60-run stand with skipper David Warner, who hit 22, and then put together 59 runs with Mitchell Marsh, who smashed 26.

"It's the first time a lot of people would have seen me bat. Lot of Indian fans probably watching me for the first time if they don't watch other competitions," Salt, who has represented England in 30 white-ball matches since 2021, told reporters after his man of the match performance. "I feel like my goal ever since the auction was come here and win games, challenge myself among the best in the world, because realistically we know this is the best domestic league in the world."

The batting effort trumped Virat Kohli's 55 and an unbeaten 54 by Mahipal Lomror which helped Bangalore to 181-4 after electing to bat first.

Salt got into a mid-pitch exchange with opposition pace bowler Mohammed Siraj and the verbal duel only spurred him to finish with six sixes in his 45-ball knock.

"Satisfied with the knock. Obviously there was a little bit of needle," Salt said on his exchange with Siraj.

"Their boys were up when we were in Bangalore for the last game, so a lot of the pre-match chat was getting our chests out and crossing the line and ready to take it to them."

Leg-spinner Karn Sharma bowled Salt before Rilee Rossouw hit an unbeaten 35 off 22 balls and sealed the match with a six.

Delhi, who started the season with five losses, moved up from the bottom to ninth in the 10-team table with slim chances of making the top four for a place in the play-offs.

Delhi's South African import Anrich Nortje missed the match after he flew back home late on Friday due to a "personal emergency".

The spotlight remained on the Delhi-born Kohli as the former captain set foot on the ground in front of a capacity crowd, mostly wearing the star's Bangalore jersey. His every run was cheered and the superstar obliged the fans with his fifth half-century of the season. — AFP

Clash of the batting power houses



The IPL is moving towards its business end and all the teams are trying to put their best foot forward and give everything that they have left in their tank. The most interesting part is that, most of the lower half teams have found their momentum and they are pulling the top teams back by beating them. Teams like Lucknow and Rajasthan have fallen into trouble, despite being in the top half, while teams like Delhi are trying to make a case for themselves.

With just 18 games to go in the league stage, it looks like Gujarat and Chennai should be able to qualify, the question is, who are going to be the other two? Hasn't this been the best IPL of all times? **KKR VS PBKS AT KOLKATA PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER** – In a rain affected match, a free-flowing Punjab Kings, batting first, pilled on a massive 191/5 in 20 overs.

While chasing, Kolkata kept losing wickets at regular intervals and still kept attacking.

Ultimately, rain played the party-pooper in the 16th over, when KKR were at 146/7. D/L showcased that Punjab Kings were 7 runs ahead.

TEAM INFO – Kolkata has been a batting paradise, where most games have been around 200 runs. When these two all-out attacking sides walk to the middle, the entertainment quotient will be at the maximum. Both these sides would also feel that they have some unfinished business, with rain shortening their previous encounter.

Head-to-Head - Played — 31; Won by KKR- 20; Won by PBKS – 11

KKR possible 12 – R Gurbaz, J Roy, V Iyer, N Rana, A Russell, R Singh, S Narine, S Thakur, V Arora, H Rana, V Chakaravathy, S Sharma

PBKS possible 12 – P Singh, S Dhawan, M Short, L Livingstone, J Sharma, S Curran, S Khan, H Brar, R Dhawan, R Chahar, A Singh, N Ellis

Pitch & Weather Report – The



Kolkata Knight Riders' Rahmanullah Gurbaz (R) celebrates after taking a catch to dismiss Sunrisers Hyderabad's Marco Jansen in Hyderabad. — AFP

Eden Gardens surface is well-known for its batting-friendly wickets. Because of the stadium's small size, it is a high-scoring venue in the shortest format of the game. Notably, the team which prefers to bowl first has a better chance of winning at this venue. Its going to be a slightly warm evening with the temperature between 29 to 38 degrees Celsius. **Match Prediction** – It goes without saying that the team bowling first stands a 80 per cent chance of winning the game,

which makes the toss a very important factor. KKR has some real quality in their spin attack, but the size of the ground can neutralise them. The only concern with Kolkata is that, they haven't batted well together and their bits and pieces contribution haven't let them get across the line. I really believe that Punjab has a higher chance of winning this one. So, it's going to be 'Bhangra' at Kolkata. **FAN COMMENTS (Coaches Special)** Sports play a very important

part in the growth and development of a child's mind and body. With the development and growth of E-sports, kids have opted to stay indoors. In my opinion, irrespective of what outdoor sports they play, they should be playing for 1.5 to 2 hours, which is extremely essential. Just like in school they are taught an array of subjects, parents should make sure that as kids, they participate in multiple activities and sports. – **Sandesh Dhuri, BSC/Level 3 Cricket Coach (from Sir Gary Kirsten), Indian.**

I have played an integral part in the development of cricket in Oman and many youngsters are my contribution to Oman. Oman needs to place their high emphasis on development of grass root cricket and for that its important that parents support and guide their children to their nearest academies. Parents need to also be very aware on what their kids eat. – **Muhammed Asim, Level 3 Cricket Coach/PCB – Regional Performance Analyst (Karachi)**

Cricket is quickly transforming and the cricket coaches play

an extremely important role in the development of this game. That's why we have a number of quality coaches, who allow the kids to grow their natural talent with minor changes to help them enhance their skills to the maximum. A lot of our academy kids have gone to play nationals, for which I would like to thank their family for their persistent trust and support. Our's is the only academy in Oman to win Junior League championship in all categories. – **Bhavesh Mehta, 45, Level 2 Cricket Coach & MCCC Academy Owner, Indian**

The prime objective of a coach is to only guide and support the young kid. It is extremely important for the coach to make sure that the kid falls in love with this game, or else the learning would be very slow. Cricket now days have changed a lot, if you don't make training and coaching sessions fun and entertaining, then it's extremely difficult to catch the interest of the kid. I obviously vary the intensity from kid-to-kid, based on their capacity. – **Pradeep Kumar, 43, Senior Cricket Coach/ MCCC, Indian**



Sri Lankan embassy organises I-Day cricket

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Sri Lanka together with the Sri Lankan expatriate community in the Sultanate of Oman organised the 75th Independence Day Cricket Trophy-2023, as a part of the yearlong special commemorative events of celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Independence of Sri Lanka.

The cricket tournament was held at the Oman Cricket (OC) grounds - Al Amerat on April 28 from 7 am to 11.30 pm. The team representing St Anthony's College, Wattala won the 75th Independence Day Cricket Trophy-2023 while Richmond College-Mahinda College, Galle combined team won the runners-up trophy.

The cricket tournament was organised with the aim of revamping the splendorous memories of Sri Lankan expatriates' school life in Sri Lanka. The event commenced with the playing of the National Anthems by the students from Sri Lankan School, Muscat School and unveiling of the 75th Independence Day Trophy by Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Oman AL Sabarullah Khan.

Twelve teams participated in the tournament representing 16 schools in Sri Lanka. Past students representing Richmond College- Mahinda College,

Galle, DS Senanayake College, Colombo, Al Hasniya Maha Vidyalaya- Al Manar National School, Dharmapala College, Pannipitiya, St Anthony's College, Wattala, Zahira College, Matale, Maliyadeva College, Kurunagala, Rahula College, Matara, Joe-Pete, Colombo, St Thomas College, Ananda College, Colombo, Central College Akkaraipaththu- Zahira Kalmunai had participated. Twelve teams were divided into 4 groups and the first round was a league within the groups.

Top teams from each group qualified for the semifinals. The first semifinal was between Al Hasniya Maha Vidyalaya- Al Manar National School and Richmond College- Mahinda College. Maliyadeva College, Kurunagala vs St Anthony's College, Wattala was the second semifinal.

A fun cricket match was also organised for the female Sri Lankan cricket players in Oman. Sri Lankan cultural show by the Sri Lankan School Muscat students unfolded at the OC Stadium alongside the matches. Fun games for kids, spot quizzes for audiences and a lucky draw was held for all Sri Lankans visited, a special live band performance, and stalls with Sri Lankan food were also arranged.

Shito-Ryu emerge champions in shotokan championship

HILAL AL ABDALI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

The competitions of Shotokan Karate Centre National Championship concluded on Friday at the Sports Hall of Ahli Sidab Club in Muscat Governorate under the auspices of the Oman Karate Committee (OKC) led by Shaikh Salim bin Hamed al Mahrooqi, OKC Chairman, member of Majlis Ash'shura as representative of the Wilayat of Adam.

Shito-Ryu Oman Karate Do Kai emerged champions, Shotokan Karate Centre came second, Muscat International Karate Do Academy claimed third place and AIKI School of Martial Arts finished fourth. Chief guest Shaikh Salim handed cups to the first four centres.

Also present during the concluding ceremony were, Eng Hilal bin Sabeel al Balushi, Vice-President of Ahli Sidab Club and Suleiman al Jabri, Headmaster of Imam Jabir bin Zaid School, Mohammed Othman al Haj Yousuf, President of Sudanese Community Social Club, Hassan bin Hashim bin Khalifah al Balushi, representative of Enhance Group Company and Jamaal bin Habib al Balushi, member of the board of directors and head of the sport committee of Ahli Sidab.

About 200 male and female players from different age groups and weights who represented 16 clubs, academies and private centres took part in the championship. These are: Shotokan Karate Centre, Muscat International Karate Do Academy, Buraimi Karate Academy, Shito-Ryu Oman Karate Do Kai, Eagles Samail Karate Club, Karate Champions Club, Professional Karate Club, AIKI School of Martial Arts Club, Beats Club,



Shotokan Karate Centre came second, Muscat International Karate Do Academy claimed third place and AIKI School of Martial Arts finished fourth in the championship

Boshi Do Kai Karate Ghala, Freedom Karate Team, International Academy for Individual Games, International Shotokan Karate Federation Oman, JKA Oman Academy, Karate Stars Club and Emperor Academy.

The championship competitions were conducted by a group of international, continental and national referees for kata and kumite.

The competitions were divided in both kata and kumite contests to the following age groups: 6 years - 7 years - 8 years - 9 years - 10 years - 11 years - 12 years - 13 years - 14, 15, 16 years - 18 years and above according to specific

weights decided by the organising committee.

Sensei Navas Mokeri, Chairman of Shotokan Karate Centre, Sensei Yusuf al Siyabi, head of coaches, and Sensei Hilal al Abdali, member of the centre, honoured the members of the organising committees and the medical team represented by Najeeb Masoud and Zahra al Harrasi who were given memorial medals and appreciation certificates.

At the closing ceremony, the Oman National Anthem was played and a group of male and female players from the participating club's, academies and private centres performed some reviews

of kata performance.

After that, the OKC chief honoured the referees team who supervised the competitions of the championship by handing them memorial medals and appreciation certificates. Then, Khalid bin Abdullah al Battashi from the Ministry of Health was honoured. The chief guest then presented medals to top-three placed karatekas in some age groups.

Memorial shields were presented to sponsors including Enhance Group of Companies, Al Wafi Water Company and Al Reef Rest House. Ahli Sidab Sports Club, Imam Jabir bin Zaid School and the Sudanese Community Social Club were also honoured.

Sensei Navas Mokeri and some members of the centre presented a memorial shield to OKC Chairman Shaikh Salim al Mahrooqi.



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Eight new industrial, economic zones on anvil in Oman

STRONG GROWTH: Total investments across OPAZ supervised zones rise to RO 15.2 billion

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

As many as eight new economic zones are currently under development or study at key locations around the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), announced here on Sunday.

Presiding over the Annual Media Briefing 2023, he said the new zones will build on a portfolio of 31 affiliated zones supervised by OPAZ. Covering an area of 2,200 sq kilometres, these zones have so far attracted investments totalling about RO 15.2 billion (\$39.5 billion) as of 2022-end, and provide employment to over



74,000 staff.

“As well, there are eight various new zones under development and study,” Dr Al Sunaidy said. “The Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate, which is under planning and development, will be among the promising upcoming zones, as it is expected to be jointly managed by Oman and Saudi Arabia.

Further, there is a study to complete the planning aspects of Al Rawdah Zone in Al Buraimi

Governorate and other zones too,” he stated.

Also present at the media briefing were Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman - OPAZ, the Chief Executive Officers of the special economic zones and free zones, and other dignitaries.

Dr Al Sunaidy also listed a number of important initiatives undertaken during 2022 to support the development of its growing network of economic zones.

It includes the completion of the infrastructure facilities and the installation of gantry cranes in the Port of Duqm.

Also in Duqm, the new multi-purpose fishing port has been completed and handed over to the operating company.

In addition, a pipeline bringing gas from central Oman to Duqm has been brought into Oman, while an oil pipeline from Ras Markaz to Duqm Refinery has been completed as well.



Meanwhile, work on an internal network supplying gas to the industrial blocks in Duqm is underway, while the electricity network connection is close to completion, he said.

In 2022, OPAZ made tremendous efforts to unify the legislative system, complete the law on special economic zones and free zones, restructuring the procedures of the one-stop shop in Duqm, and to implement the one-stop experience in the zones supervised by OPAZ to issue all approvals, licenses and certificates, in addition to OPAZ efforts in the digital transformation through a number of applications with the aim of facilitating and accelerating investors’ services and activating an access system for documents control.

Thus, OPAZ has decided to stop receiving paper transactions by the end of next June, except for some government correspondences.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Riyada opens registration for Entrepreneur Readiness programme



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 7

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) launched the second edition of the Entrepreneur Readiness programme. Existing small and medium business owners and those who wish to start their own enterprises, can now register for the foundation or the existing projects tracks.

Badriya al Foori, Director of the Authority’s Development and Empowerment Department, stated that the programme aims to provide existing and aspiring business owners with the necessary skills to manage their institutions in accordance with modern business management standards.

According to Al Foori, more than one thousand beneficiaries signed up for the first edition of the programme in 2022. “More than 1,000 beneficiaries graduated from last year’s edition of the programme within three tracks: the foundation track, the

enhancement track and the advanced track.”

“There are entrepreneurs whose leadership capabilities have been strengthened in terms of modifying and developing their institutions and they have been able to manage them better. There are also entrepreneurs who have applied for financing to strengthen and develop their institutions and thus improved their ability to manage the resources available in their institutions.”

She added: “With regard to the foundation track, there is a large group of young people who established their own enterprises. This, of course, led to attracting manpower and employment in the market, and it certainly has a wide economic return for small and medium enterprises.”

The programme will target 900 beneficiaries, and is a prerequisite for applying for financing from the Authority’s lending portfolio.

Prospective applicants can learn more about the programme and submit their applications through the Authority’s official website.

Oman’s new Central Fruits and Vegetables Market set for Q1 2024 completion

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 7

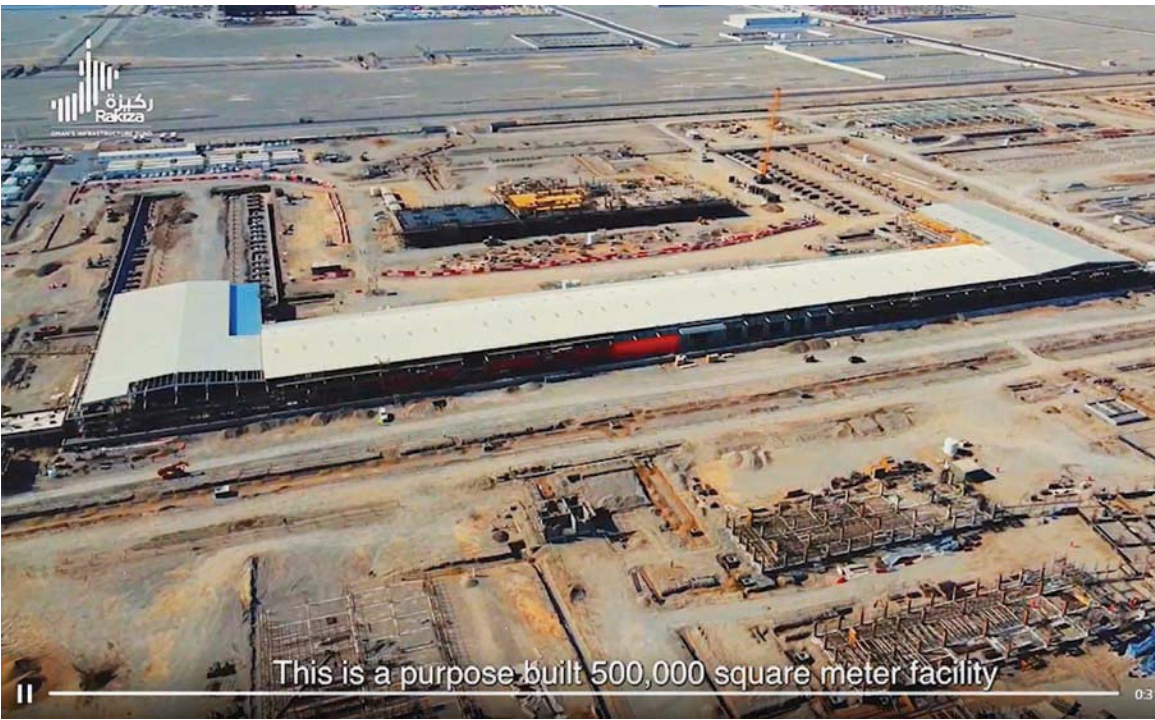
Oman’s new Central Fruits and Vegetables Market is on track for completion in the first quarter of 2024, according to a key investor in the landmark project.

Khalid al Khatib, Investment Director at Oman Infrastructure Fund (Rakiza) — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said the sprawling facility currently under development at Khazaen Economic City in Barka, is a “nationally important project” that will serve the market needs of more than half of the national population.

“Rakiza’s 500,000 square metre fruit and vegetables market is coming to life. Take a look at the recent progress of our fully air-conditioned, state-of-the-art facility, set to complete in Q1 2024,” the official stated in a post accompanying a video clip on the strategic venture.

Early last year, a consortium of investors led by Rakiza set up Khazaen Fruit and Vegetable Central Market SAOC, a special purpose vehicle to finance and establish a new wholesale fruit and vegetables hub at Khazaen.

It follows a decision by authorities to relocate the hub from its existing location at Al Mawaleh to greenfield, custom-designed settings in Khazaen suitably integrated with support infrastructure while also leveraging the Economic



City’s multimodal connectivity with seaports, airports and neighbouring markets.

Khazaen Fruit and Vegetable Central Market SAOC groups public and private sector shareholders, comprising Oman Infrastructure Fund (Rakiza), Salim & Partners LLC, Al Kalbani Group and Khazaen Development and Investment Company.

According to Al Khatib of Rakiza, the new Khazaen Fruit and Vegetable Central Market will also feature a large trucking car park, cold storage, warehousing, customs and agriculture lab testing facilities alongside a purpose-built 500,000 square metre complex.

When operational, it will have a large footprint, covering more than half the population, he noted in the post.

Significantly, the Fruit and Vegetable Central Market anchors a full-fledged Food City under development at Khazaen.

Covering an area of over 1 million square metres, the Food City will also host a food industries zone earmarked for food packaging and distribution related activities, and a food processing cluster for value-adding investments.

Total investments in the Food City, billed as potentially the biggest integrated food hub of its kind in Oman, are projected at over RO 40 million.

As an anchor tenant of the Food City, the Khazaen Fruit and Vegetables Central Market will also support the government’s food security strategy.

It will provide integrated logistical solutions for cold and dry storage of various vegetables and fruit products, and modern advanced facilities that serve the associated logistical activities, including storage, packaging, handling, and transportation.

It will improve cold chains and supply and greatly help in attracting local and international investors in the vegetable, fruit, and food sector, and also serve as an international centre for the export and import of other foodstuff.

Enjoy a unique travel experience with Bank Muscat’s Asalah and Al Jawhar cards

MUSCAT: In line with its pioneering role in providing special and exceptional offers to customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is providing its customers a chance to enjoy an exceptional banking experience and benefits from exclusive travel offers.

Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking cardholders can enjoy more privileges as well as safe and secure payment options to enjoy travel plans with family and friends in and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Customers can enjoy a number of exclusive and special services like travel insurance, access to airport lounges and a global concierge service, which will give customers peace of mind while travelling.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir N al Raisi, General Manager — Personal Banking, Bank



Muscat, said “Bank Muscat is keen to provide the best services to its valued customers while moving ahead in developing and promoting its offers in the Sultanate of Oman.

Through the travel package, holders of Asalah Priority Banking and Al Jawhar Privilege Banking cards can enjoy a lot of exclusive banking facilities. The bank provides several unique benefits and privileges, which reflects its customer-centricity.

I would like to extend our thanks

to all our customers for their continuing trust and confidence in the bank and call upon them to benefit from the wide spectrum of travel features which have been carefully tailored to meet their aspirations and needs.”

Asalah customers can benefit from complimentary visits to the Primeclass lounge and unlimited free visits to the Majan lounge at Muscat International Airport, in addition to the Khareef lounge at Salalah Airport.

Customers can also enjoy Visa

Luxury Hotel Collection Program at more than 900 hotels around the world, the best prices for available rooms and free dining vouchers.

At the same time, Al Jawhar Privilege Banking provides its customers with an exceptional banking experience and opens a world of opportunities for them. Customers are eligible for a higher ATM withdrawal limit of RO 800 and exclusive offers on dinning, entertainment and shopping available through the “xperience with the Entertainer” app for

smartphones.

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

Al Jawhar Visa Platinum Credit Cards offer access to 25 premium lounges around the world in addition to lounges at Muscat and Salalah airports.

Cardholders are eligible for a complimentary Dragon Pass and a ‘Meet and Greet’ service with 15% discount at over 450 global destinations. They can also enjoy 1% cash back on all local and international spends and access to premium benefits at over 900 prestigious luxury hotels around the world.

MB Foundation intensifies support for people with disabilities



MUSCAT: MB Foundation, the CSR and Charity arm of the Mohammed Al Barwani Group of Companies is intensifying its support for people with disabilities by sponsoring a number of initiatives to enable and empower people with disabilities in Oman. MB Foundation’s supported initiatives include a collaboration with the Human Development Centre for the Disabled (HDCD) to train and recruit people with disabilities in the private sector.

Most recently, in collaboration with Signbook, an Omani company providing American Sign Language (ASL) services, MB Foundation supported a project to produce a digital sign language book targeting deaf children, who will be able to access the digital book online for free and from anywhere.

Recently, the MB Foundation sponsored along with HDCD the first forum for people with disabilities, which took place on May 1-3, 2023. Iman al Barwani, Vice Chairperson of MB Foundation, said: “Our goal is to maximise our impact in our focus areas, and we noticed that there is a need for companies to support people with disabilities.

This focus was crystallised when we partnered last November with the Human Development Centre for The Disabled on the Campaign ‘Be With Us For Them’, and we are continuing our efforts with these new initiatives.”

Alizz Islamic Bank offers flexible financing options for La Vie project

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank, Oman Arab Bank, and Oman Real Estate Investments and Services Company (ORIS) have signed a joint agreement to offer financing facilities for customers interested in purchasing residential units at the La Vie project, which is currently being developed in Muscat Hills.

This partnership enables potential homeowners to access flexible financing options and enjoy reduced profit rates when purchasing property in LA VIE’s luxurious complex.

The agreement was signed by Ali bin Saif al Mani, General Manager of Alizz Islamic Bank, Sulaiman bin Hamad al Harthi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Arab Bank, and Engineer Nasser bin Rashid al Shibli, Chief Real Estate Officer at Ominvest group.

Covering an area of approximately 640,000 sqm, the



La Vie project will feature the re-opening of one of the region’s largest natural golf courses spanning 600,000 sqm, complete with 18 holes and a private club for golf enthusiasts.

The course and clubhouse will be managed by the renowned golf management company — ‘Troon’, which operates over 750 golf clubs across 30 countries worldwide. With a built-up area of 64,000 square metres, the La Vie project will comprise of residential, commercial, and tourism

buildings.

The centrepiece of the development is an 80-room boutique hotel managed by global hospitality giant — Tivoli, a part of Minor Hotels Group brand, which is making its debut in the local market.

The hotel boasts a rooftop swimming pool that is 70 metres long, providing stunning views of the golf course and will also feature a private health club and spa operated by the world-leading brand ‘Anantara’.

OAB digital online loan now available with limit of RO 25,000

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) customers can now apply for an instant loan through the OAB Online app, with an increased limit of RO 25,000, available either on new loans or when topping up an existing loan.

Around the clock, customers can apply from the comfort of their own homes or on-the-go and it takes only a few minutes to complete, with fast automated approval. Once approved, the funds are deposited into the customer’s bank account within minutes.

Rashad al Sheikh, Head of Retail Banking at OAB, said: “This fast, secure, reliable and user-friendly solution is the latest step in our commitment to providing advanced digital



services to our customers.

Our OAB Online app is spearheading the charge for innovative solutions, and this new offering is the latest testament to our commitment to providing exceptional digital services.”

As for repayment, customers can choose up to 120 months repayment plan depending on their age. They have the flexibility to choose Eid waivers and/or a one month grace periods, when necessary.

Al Jenaibi wins two awards at BMW Group Middle East Conference 2022

MUSCAT: Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman, has been honoured with two coveted awards at the BMW Group Middle East Marketing & Sales Conference 2022 — the 2022 GKL World Share Award and 2022 Key Opinion Leader Sales Champion Award.

Commenting on the awards, Rachid Zamani, Managing Director of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, said: “We are delighted to win the two of the most sought-after awards this year, reflecting the hard work of the entire team at Al Jenaibi International Automobiles. I’m proud of our achievements and the continued dedication from our whole team — from marketing, to sales, to service. Our continued aim is to



provide exceptional services to our customers across the country and these accolades are a reflection of that.”

The Key Opinion Leader Sales Champion Award is honoured to the market that sold the most cars to influential and key opinion leaders in the GCC. This reward resembles the vision and mission of Al Jenaibi to be one of the best in

the market and showcases the valued relationships that the importer holds.

Meanwhile, the GKL (Grand Klasse) World Share Market recognises the importer for being the best performing market in sales for Grand Klasse models in the world, which includes the BMW 7 Series, BMW 8 Series and BMW X7.

Own a Toyota passenger car with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Now is the best time to own a Toyota passenger car and benefit with service from 2 years/20,000 kms up to 5 years / 50,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and insurance 1 year or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 125 to RO 300 and 8 Toyota Raize SUV Raffles. The campaign is valid until May 10, 2023. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.)

Customers can choose from a wide range of passenger cars including the Yaris, Corolla and Camry.

The stylish and exciting Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience due to its four-cylinder engine that is equipped with 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I. The Yaris



is available with 1.5-litre capacity engine, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

The popular Corolla is one of the most loved sedans and it is available in three powertrain options. It includes a 2.0-litre four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine which produces 168 HP and 20.39 Kg-m of torque which is paired to a new

Direct Shift CVT transmission and a 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine that produces 121 hp and 15.7 kg-m of torque, which is paired with a CVT transmission.

The powerful and attractive Camry is available in two engine options. The 2.5 Litre engine delivers 204 HP & 24.8 Kg.m torque & 3.5L engine delivers 298 HP & 36.3 Kg.m torque.

Planning for success: A guide to business planning



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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant.



Business planning is a critical component for the success of any entrepreneurship or small business.

Whether you are just starting out or are already well-established, taking the time to create a comprehensive business plan can make all the difference in achieving your goals and realising your potential as a business owner.

In this article, we'll take a closer look at what business planning is and why it's so important, as well as provide some tips and best practices to help you create a winning plan.

Business planning is essentially

the process of outlining your goals, strategies, and the steps you will take to achieve them. This can include details such as your target market, sales and marketing tactics, budget and financial projections, and more.

When done effectively, a business plan can provide a road map for your business, helping you stay focused and on track as you work to grow and succeed.

There are several reasons why business planning is so critical,

especially for small businesses and entrepreneurs.

First, it can help you identify areas of weakness in your business, allowing you to make adjustments and improvements that can lead to greater success. It can also help you allocate resources more effectively, prioritise your initiatives, and stay focused on what is truly important to your business.

In addition, a well-crafted business plan can be an important tool for securing funding and

attracting investors. Investors and lenders want to see that you have a clear and well-thought-out plan for how you will grow and succeed, and a solid business plan can demonstrate your commitment and credibility.

When it comes to creating a successful business plan, there are a few key components that you should include.

First, you should start by outlining your goals and objectives. This will help you

focus your efforts and keep your business on track.

Next, you should include a detailed description of your target market and your target audience, including information on demographics, purchasing habits, and more.

You should also include a comprehensive marketing and sales plan, including details on how you plan to reach your target market, what products or services you will offer, and how you will generate revenue. This should also include information on pricing, promotions, and other sales tactics.

Another important component of a business plan is financial projections. This should include a detailed budget, including estimated costs for staffing, supplies, marketing, and other expenses.

It should also include projections for revenue and growth, as well as a plan for securing funding and financing.

Finally, it's important to have a solid strategy for managing your operations and resources. This should include details on how you will manage your employees, what systems and processes you will

use to manage your finances and other operations, and how you will measure and track your success.

Overall, a comprehensive business plan is a critical tool for any small business or entrepreneur, helping you stay focused and on track as you work to grow and succeed. By taking the time to create a well-crafted plan, you can set yourself up for success and ensure that your business has the resources and support it needs to thrive.

In conclusion, business planning is a vital aspect of business success for small business owners and entrepreneurs. A well-crafted business plan can help you stay focused, prioritise your initiatives, and secure funding and investments. If you're just starting out or are already established, taking the time to create a comprehensive business plan is one of the best investments you can make in the future of your business.

So, what's next for you on your entrepreneurial journey? Are you ready to take the next step and explore the exciting world of article 13-20 Intellectual Property? If so, grab your notebook and get ready to dive in!

Eight new industrial, economic zones on anvil in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

In the field of financial sustainability, OPAZ was able to reprogramme the financing agreements and provide financing coverage for a number of infrastructure projects with a total of RO 46 million without the need to refer to the government's treasury.

It is also working to benefit from the savings of financing agreements after completing some infrastructure projects with a maximum of up to RO 50 million by using old loans instead of getting new loans at the meantime.

This will assist in financing urgent projects, which include those enabling the provision infrastructure services for renewable energy projects. In the field of green hydrogen, OPAZ signed agreements with Hyport Duqm and Acme Group, he said.

OPAZ is also studying other requests for renewable energy projects in coordination with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, with the goal of enhancing Duqm's appeal to industries and mining projects that use renewable energy.

Moreover, OPAZ is currently coordinating with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) and Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) to develop a mechanism for approving certificates for the use of renewable energy for factories operating in Salalah Free Zone to enable them to export green products using part of the wind energy that is generated from Harweel field and transferred to Salalah, he said.

OPAZ also signed three memorandums of understanding to establish metals based projects in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm with Jindal Shadeed, Mitsui and Kobe Steel of Japan. These companies use natural gas in manufacturing operations at the beginning, and will use green hydrogen in the future to produce green steel. Soon, a major mining project will be announced soon, he said.

On the pharma front, Felix Pharmaceutical Industries was inaugurated in Salalah Free Zone in January 2023. Likewise, Salalah Free Zone, Sohar Free Zone and Raysut Industrial Zone are well-positioned to cater to pharmaceutical and medical materials industries.

OPAZ's mandate covers the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, three free zones (Sohar, Salalah, and Al Mazunah), and nine industrial cities administered by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn).

Additionally, eight other zones are currently under development, two of which are economic zones, and one is a free zone, while there are five industrial cities located in various parts of Oman.

As many as 130 new usufruct agreements were signed last year, adding to the 3,246 projects currently housed across the diverse zones.

Oman's economic diversification endeavours amid its fossil fuel dependence



MARYAM AL NOFLI

The author is a lecturer at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences - Shinas. She can be contacted at alnoflimaryam@gmail.com

Even though countries around the world have big plans to switch to renewable energy sources, fossil fuels are still the main source of energy in most of them. The Gulf countries are some of the major oil and natural gas suppliers and exporters in the world.

Their economies are highly dependent on the revenues generated by these exports, and their energy systems are centred on the extraction and refining of fossil fuels.

Like the other GCC countries, the Sultanate of Oman is mostly based on its oil and gas reserves, which have been the backbone of its economy for many years.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) says that the country had proven oil stocks of about 5.2 billion barrels as of June 2022. MEM also says that new oil finds will add 50,000 to 100,000 barrels to Oman's output over the next two to three years.

As of 2017, Oman had 23 trillion cubic feet (Tcf) of proved gas reserves, which made up about 0 per cent of the world's total natural gas stocks of 6,923 Tcf. This put Oman at number 28 in the world. Oman has proven stocks that are 29.7 times more than what it needs every year.

This means it has about 30 years of gas left (at the present rate of use

TO DIVERSIFY ITS ENERGY BALANCE, OMAN IS ALSO INVESTING IN RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES SUCH AS SOLAR AND WIND POWER. THE COUNTRY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO INCREASE ITS RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY TO 10 PER CENT BY 2025, AND IT IS ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN RENEWABLE PROJECTS.

and without counting any unproven reserves). The oil and gas business makes up more than 70 per cent of the country's export earnings and 50 per cent of its gross domestic product.

According to the Statistical Analysis of the World Energy Outlook in 2022, Gulf countries like the Sultanate of Oman will continue to rely heavily on fossil fuels for decades to come.

But in the past few years, many Gulf countries have come to realise that they need to diversify their businesses and rely less on fossil fuels.

To diversify its energy balance, Oman is also investing in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power. The country's objective is to increase its renewable energy capacity to 10 per cent by 2025, and it is actively encouraging private investment in renewable projects.

This shift is primarily motivated by concerns about the environmental consequences of burning fossil fuels, the volatility of global oil and gas markets, and the long-term viability of their economies.

Each energy crisis strains energy markets, evoking parallels with the most significant energy disruptions.

Nevertheless, the world is currently experiencing the first genuine global energy crisis with long-term repercussions.

The unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 had far-reaching effects on the global energy system, altering supply and demand patterns and severing long-standing trade ties. Significant geopolitical factors drove price increases both

then and now, resulting in severe inflation and economic devastation.

The crises in both instances revealed the energy system's fundamental fragility and interdependence. The combination of high prices and economic and energy security concerns strengthened the economic incentives to act.

Rising tensions have led to an increase in energy prices, which could cause inflation and economic damage in a number of nations.

In spite of these risks, industry reports predict that the global oil and gas market will expand consistently between 2023 and 2028.

The market is anticipated to expand due to the growing demand for energy in emergent economies and the rebound in demand following the pandemic.

The market is also expected to benefit from the expansion of natural gas infrastructure and the eventual recovery of crude prices.

However, geopolitical threats, concerns about climate change, and the expansion of renewable energy sources will continue to pose challenges for the industry. In addition, due to the industry's modest development, businesses must develop long-term strategies to manage risks and capitalise on market opportunities.

The Sultanate of Oman's oil and gas sector is likely to grow at a rate of more than 5 per cent each year between 2023 and 2028, according to a recent analysis by the Indian research firm Mordor Intelligence.

The country's massive oil and gas reserves, as well as ongoing exploration and development

activity in new areas, will be key contributors to this expansion during the next five years.

Furthermore, the analysis stated that a large number of discoveries in recent years, as well as current exploration operations, are projected to present huge potential for market participants in the country's oil and gas business.

However, Oman confronts increasing competition from other oil and gas producers in the region as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates increase their production capacities.

The increasing shift towards renewable energy sources poses a long-term threat to the oil and gas industry in Oman.

Oman has been investing in other areas in an effort to diversify its economy away from oil and gas. The nation has been enacting economic reforms and promoting industries including manufacturing, logistics, tourism, and agriculture.

To lessen its dependency on fossil fuels, Oman has also been investing in renewable energy sources including solar and wind power. The long-term plan of Oman to maintain sustainable economic growth and lessen its sensitivity to changes in oil prices includes attempts to diversify the economy.

Even though the nation still depends on its oil and gas reserves, it is aggressively working to shift to a more diversified economy that depends less on these limited resources.

Overall, Oman's oil and gas industry is expected to have a bright future in the coming years as it continues to increase output, hunt for new reserves, and invest in renewable energy sources to diversify its energy supply.

However, increasing competition and a global trend towards renewable energy sources may pose long-term challenges for the nation's energy sector.

Classifieds



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An advertisement for property rental services. It features a 3D orange figure holding a blue and white megaphone. The text "HAVE A PROPERTY" is in a grey box, "FOR RENT?" is in a red banner, and "Advertise with us." is in black text. At the bottom, it says "Contact us on: 99639264" in yellow text on a red background.

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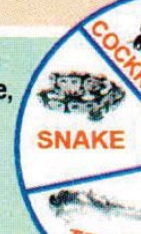
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A graphic of a smartphone screen with a light yellow background featuring faint social media icons. At the top, the text "Now get news on the go" is displayed in blue. Below this is the WhatsApp logo. The text "To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER," is centered. Below that, "WhatsApp" is written in blue, followed by "<your name> to" in blue. The large blue number "96473232" is prominently displayed. At the bottom of the screen, a dark blue bar contains the website "www.omanobserver.om", social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram, and the handle "@omanobserver".

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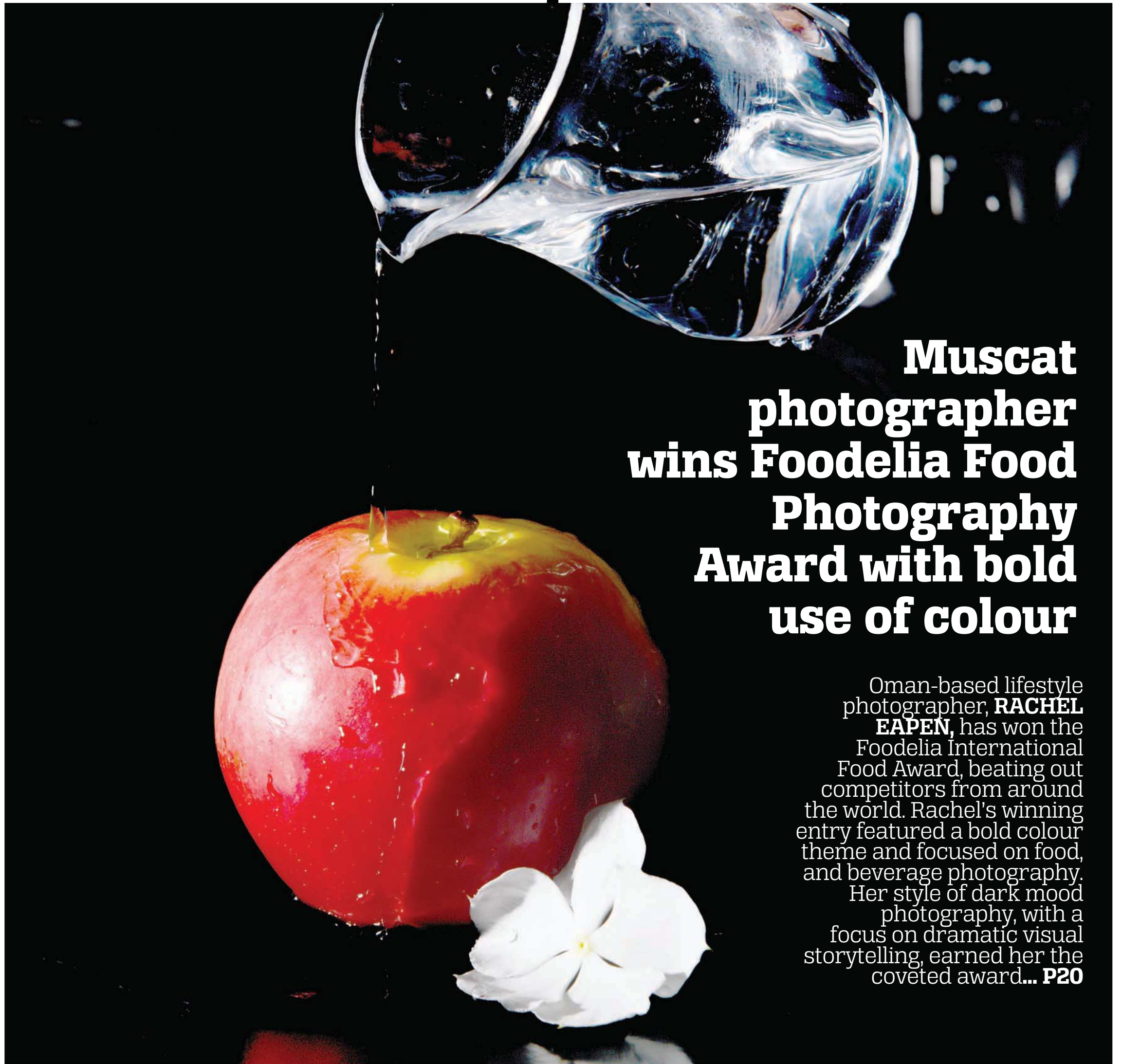
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Muscat photographer wins Foodelia Food Photography Award with bold use of colour

Oman-based lifestyle photographer, **RACHEL EAPEN**, has won the Foodelia International Food Award, beating out competitors from around the world. Rachel's winning entry featured a bold colour theme and focused on food, and beverage photography. Her style of dark mood photography, with a focus on dramatic visual storytelling, earned her the coveted award... **P20**

UK to mark coronation with street parties and a concert

BRITAIN ON SUNDAY celebrates the coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla with street parties around the country and a concert at Windsor Castle. Following Saturday's glittering ceremony at London's Westminster Abbey featuring royalty and leaders from around the world, the emphasis shifted to a chance for the public to mark the "Carolean" age after Queen Elizabeth II's 70-year reign. The medieval majesty of the coronation ceremony has its roots in the England of 1066 but the "Big Lunch" parties look to bring 21st-century Britain's diverse communities closer

together.

Monday has been declared a public holiday — meaning people can let loose on Sunday without having to worry about a hangover.

Charles and Camilla hope the long weekend "will provide an opportunity to spend time and celebrate with friends, families and communities", Buckingham Palace said.

After the post-World War II hardships, street parties were a major feature of Elizabeth's coronation in 1953 — and a memorable part of celebrations for her long reign in 1977 and last year.

The Big Lunch is an

attempt to keep alive that more neighbourly spirit.

Celebration and friendship'

"From a cup of tea with a neighbour to a street party, a Coronation Big Lunch brings the celebrations to your neighbourhood and is a great way to get to know your community a little better," Buckingham Palace said.

It is likely to see multiple hit-and-miss attempts at making Coronation Quiche — the specially created baked savoury tart featuring spinach, broad beans and tarragon.

The king's sister, Princess Anne, was due to attend a community street

party in Windsor, west of London, while his nieces Princesses Beatrice and Eugenie — Prince Andrew's daughters — will attend a big lunch in the same royal town.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak will host a lunch at his 10 Downing Street office and residence, inviting in community volunteers and Ukrainian refugees.

"People are marking this momentous occasion in the spirit of unity and hope for the future," he said.

Stars and lights

Take That, Lionel Richie and Katy Perry are among the stars performing on the East Lawn at Windsor Castle, with 20,000 people set to attend.

The show will hark back to the June 2022 Platinum Jubilee celebrations to mark Elizabeth's record 70 years on the throne, just three months before her death at the age of 96.

Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel — who sang during the coronation service — will also be performing, along with Chinese pianist Lang Lang, Andrea Bocelli, Paloma Faith and Nicole Scherzinger. — **AFP**



READ

IN FIVE YEARS

BY REBECCA SERLE

The story opens on the day she interviews for her dream job, nails it, and gets engaged to her longtime boyfriend—all according to her five-year plan.



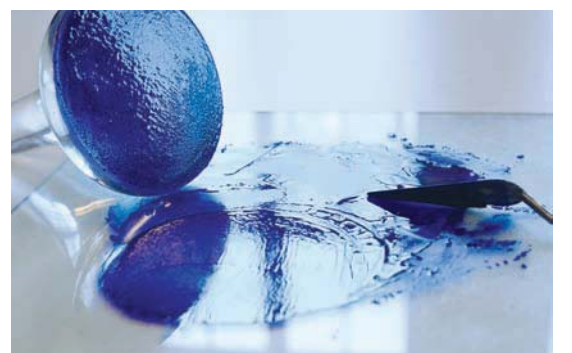
CELEBRITIES

Zonfrillo, a Scottish-Australian father of four who was a judge on the popular TV cooking competition, was found dead by police in Melbourne in the early hours of Monday. — **AFP**



ART

A photograph shows smashed Lapis Lazuli blue pigment at the Rijksmuseum's drawing school in Amsterdam on April 6, 2023. — **AFP**





Harnessing Earth and Fire to Create Natural Vessels

MITCH IBURG, who lives in St. Paul, Minnesota, makes ancient-looking tableware, vessels and sculptures primarily out of clay that he digs from the earth with his own hands (and some tools). Driving his truck two and half hours to an open valley near the Minnesota River, he comes away with 1,000 or so pounds — a quantity that will last him roughly a year. (He has permission from the mining company that owns the property.)

Clay was not where his journey began. Born in Wisconsin across the river from Minnesota and raised partly in Iowa City, Iowa, Iburg, 33, studied painting at Coe College in Iowa. But he was required to take a 3D fundamentals class and it was there that he developed an appreciation for clay and its roots in nature and antiquity.

In 2015, he applied for a residency at the Cobb Mountain Art and Ecology Project in California partly because the studio sat on top of a clay bed. And when he settled on a place to open a workshop, Studio Alluvium, with a fellow Cobb resident, Zoë Powell, who is now his fiancée, he chose Minnesota to no small extent because he was familiar with the clay.

On top of the matter of earth was the question of fire. Throughout his residency-hopping, Iburg was drawn to specialised wood-fired kilns, which he continues to use. “My work has changed in each setting in response to the clays that are available and in response to the community of other wood-fire artists in that area,” he said.

Wood firing produces different results depending on the type of timber used, how dry it is and how much oxygen is let into the kiln. The clay is typically fired without any glaze, and the texture, colour and markings change over the course of several days.

For his wood-fired pieces, Iburg mostly burns dead trees that have to be cut down for reasons of safety or the health of the forest. Or wood that has fallen in storms. Or the leftovers of traditional sawmills.

“At least we’re putting it to work,” he said.

Today he wood-fires about 40 per cent of his pieces, using a kiln at the College of Saint Benedict in Saint Joseph, Minnesota.

About 20 per cent of his ceramic objects use no thermal energy at all but are left raw. These artworks are made with clay in the natural state in which he finds it, containing stones, bits of wood, pieces of brick, fossils and organic matter.



“If you were to put them in water, they would slake back into workable clay,” he said. “Because of this, there’s this extra element of fragility.”

For more utilitarian pieces, such as teapots, he removes the bits that aren’t clay. “If you were to just fire the clay on its own, with all those stones, there is a good chance that there might be a catastrophic melt,” he said.

Iburg also works with an electric kiln in his studio, but he does not follow the common technique of firing clay twice — before and after glaze is put on. He has formulated glazes that can be applied to raw clay and thus require only a single firing. “That was largely a decision to cut down on the electrical usage,” he said.

Iburg’s works can be found in several galleries and retail sites. Tommy Zung, who owns a design store in Manhattan called Shop Zung, said he discovered Iburg on Instagram while looking for artisans “with a mindful approach to craftsmanship.” He described Iburg’s methods as “intimate and purposeful, from how his clay was sourced to the meditated imperfections he left to be embraced by its viewers.”

For the time being, Iburg said, his unfired work is “a step that feels positive and not forced or forceful.” The moment he started producing those pieces, “it just made a lot of sense because it took some of the pressure off, took some of the guilt off.” —NYT



ART German gallery launches exhibition of self-portraits of women artists



A woman looks at the work ‘Alterity’ by artist Geta Bratescu at the Kunsthalle Emden.

LENNART STOCK

UNDER THE SELF-CONFIDENT TITLE ‘Here I Am!’ an art gallery in north-western Germany is showing self-portraits by 30 female artists from the 20th and 21st centuries from May 6 until the beginning of September.

Works by Katharina Sieverding, Maria Lassnig, Käthe Kollwitz, Hanna Nagel and Marina Abramovic, among others, are on display at the Kunsthalle in the port city of Emden in Lower Saxony.

These are expressive self-portraits by female artists that also provide a glimpse into the history of female emancipation.

The personal pictures show how the artists themselves want to be seen, said Lisa Felicitas Mattheis, academic director and chairwoman of the Kunsthalle. The portraits also provide information about the role of women in their respective times, she added.

The show offers a look at the strategies women artists used to claim their place in art - for example, in the mirror of male representations.

Among the more than 80 works on display is a further development of the motif “Art is a Criminal Action” by Ulrike Rosenbach, with which she takes up Andy Warhol’s well-known motif “Double Elvis.” While in Warhol’s original two Elvis Presleys face the viewer with a revolver, Rosenbach has mounted herself in the same pose next to Elvis in her adaptation from the 1970s.



Lisa Felicitas Mattheis

“We see many portraits that are delicate and restrained. But we also see many in which there is incredible chutzpah,” Mattheis said. The self-portraits are about status, roles, self-assertion and wishful thinking.

The show takes up different perspectives of female self-portrayal. Among other things, it is about masquerades, motherhood, questions of identity and growing older.

The idea for the exhibition arose from the motivation to work with and from the collection of the Kunsthalle donors Henri and Eske Nannen as well as the Otto van de Loos donation, said Mattheis.

In past exhibitions, for example for “Mythos Wald” and “Nolde/Rohlf,” the curators were able to draw on numerous works from the collection, but with “Here I Am!” it is different: Part of working with the collection is to show what is not there, said the director - and there is a clear imbalance in the gender ratio as only about 10 per cent of the works in the collection were created by women artists. That is why the show now features many loans.

Although self-portraits have a long history and women have always shaped art history as muses and models, they were denied the role of artists themselves for a long time. It was not until the 20th century that women artists were admitted to art academies, said Mattheis. Until then, artistic training was usually reserved for the daughters of wealthy families.

Nowadays, there are more and more exhibitions that focus on the work of women artists, said Mattheis. The Kunsthalle is also planning further shows with female dimensions. “Here I Am!” can be seen in the Lower Saxon port city until September 3. — dpa



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AROUND THE WORLD

CLIMATE CHANGE

April heat in western Med 'almost impossible without climate change'



THE EXTREME HEAT that engulfed the Iberian peninsula and parts of North Africa last week would have been "almost impossible without climate change", an international scientific study found on Friday.

The "exceptional early heatwave" involved "local temperatures up to 20 degrees hotter than normal and April records being broken by up to 6 degrees", said the report by the World Weather Attribution (WWA), whose scientists study the link between extreme weather events and climate change.

A mass of hot, dry air from North Africa reached the Iberian peninsula early last week, driving temperatures to record highs for April, with the mercury hitting 38.8 degrees Celsius (101.8 degrees Fahrenheit) in southern Spain and 36.9C in central Portugal.

Such temperatures only tend to occur in July. In Morocco, local records were broken with temperatures soaring above 41C in some places, while in Algeria, they exceeded 40C.

Spain this year recorded its driest and hottest April since at least 1961, when such records began, national weather agency AEMET said.

"Human-caused climate change made the record-breaking heatwave in Spain, Portugal, Morocco and Algeria at least 100 times more likely and the heat would have been almost impossible without climate change," the WWA report found.

It caused "temperatures up to 3.5 degrees C hotter than they would have been without climate change", proving an event they described as "rare".

MORE FREQUENT, MORE INTENSE

"We will see more frequent and more intense heatwaves in the future as global warming continues," Sjoukje Philip, a researcher at the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute, said at the report's launch.

Such abnormally high temperatures followed "a historical multi-year drought in those regions, exacerbating the impacts of the heat on agriculture which is already threatened by an increasing water scarcity," the WWA said.

In Spain, which is known as Europe's vegetable garden, the main farmers' union, COAG, has warned that 60 per cent of agricultural land is currently "suffocating" from the lack of rainfall.

With water reservoirs at half their capacity, Spain has asked Brussels to help by activating the European Union's agriculture crisis reserve funds.

Experts say parts of Spain are the driest in a thousand years, with the ongoing drought prompting some farmers to choose not to sow crops this year.

"The Mediterranean is one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change in Europe," said Friederike Otto, a senior climate science expert at the Grantham Institute for Climate Change and the Environment at London's Imperial College.

"The region is already experiencing a very intense and long-lasting drought and these high temperatures at a time of the year when it should be raining is worsening the situation." — **AFP**

DESIGN

Turning 'Ashes and Sand' Into Art



THE FAIRY TALE castle that Alice Stori Liechtenstein and her family inhabit in the hilly countryside of southern Austria is far from the hotbeds of contemporary design — distant both geographically (it's a six-hour drive from Milan, for example) and stylistically (built in medieval times, with later Baroque and Rococo additions).

But every May, Schloss Hollenegg, as the castle is called, draws design aficionados when the doors are thrown open for a group show of new work revolving around a theme of Liechtenstein's choosing. This year's exhibition, called "Ashes and Sand," is devoted to glass and named for the two materials needed to make it.

The exploration of glass began last summer, with a three-week residency for a handful of current and recent design students. The lucky young creators, who lived on the premises for the duration, were encouraged to wander the castle's halls, poke through its 52 rooms and take inspiration wherever they found it.

"It's a bit like summer camp," said Liechtenstein, 44, a curator who has run the design residency pro-

gramme for seven years.

But the participants worked hard, too. By the time the residency concluded, they had in hand precise sketches for designs, and — thanks to Liechtenstein's connections — contacts for production partners to help them realise their plans. While the wares were being made, Liechtenstein commissioned pieces from other designers to round out the show, which she co-curated with Rainald Franz, glass and ceramic expert at Vienna's Museum of Applied Arts.

Some works in the show incorporate recycled glass, reflecting current concerns about sustainability.

Some grew out of research into historical glass techniques: Lenn Gerlach, a German designer, delved into green glass made for centuries by artisans in the Black Forest before conceiving of his variously shaped green vessels, whose speckles result from the area's soft red sandstone.

Designers pushed traditional glassblowing techniques in new directions, such as to make furnishings commonly constructed of sturdier materials: Philipp Weber, a German designer, created a curvy silver side table, while

Tamara Barrage, a Lebanese designer based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, who was in residence last summer, conjured up a statuesque candleabra.

Of-the-moment technology also came into play. Julia Körner, an Austrian architect, conceived fluted vessels that were 3D-printed by Swarovski, the crystal maker. Barry Llewellyn, an Irish designer based in the Netherlands, created mirrors rigged with solar panels and LEDs so that they charge during the day and light up at night.

Works by the designers in residence will remain at Schloss Hollenegg, alongside centuries-old castle furnishings including Flemish tapestries, stoves made of ceramic tiles and gilt-framed ancestral portraits. The castle has been in the family of Liechtenstein's husband for two centuries.

"Every generation has added something," she said. Her own efforts to incorporate 21st-century designs help "keep the place alive," she added.

Preparations for the 2023-24 session — to be devoted to wood — are in progress. "Ashes and Sand" is on view through May 28.

— **NYT**

ROYALE

Floral headpieces replace tiaras at Charles's dress-down coronation



PRINCE WILLIAM'S wife Catherine on Saturday chose a floral headpiece instead of a tiara for the coronation of Charles III, in line with the "green" tone set for the coronation by the king.

Charles, a long-time environmental advocate with a passion for nature, made his wishes clear when he sent out coronation invitations featuring the Green Man, an ancient figure from British folklore symbolising the arrival of spring and rebirth.

The break with tradition was also in keeping with Charles's reported desire that the coronation be "meritocratic not aristocratic", which saw the aristocracy largely replaced with "community heroes" who had earned their place.

At the last coronation in 1953, almost all senior royal women and female aristocrats wore tiaras featuring precious stones and pearls.

Catherine, whose formal title is Princess of Wales, instead wore a silver Jess Collett x Alexander McQueen headpiece with three-dimensional leaf embroidery, Buckingham Palace said.

Her dress, also by Alexander McQueen, was in ivory silk crepe with embroidery featuring rose, thistle, daffodil and shamrock motifs to signify the four nations of the United Kingdom.

It was worn with a ceremonial cape. She also wore a set of pearl and diamond earrings that belonged to Prince William's late mother Princess Diana.

FLORAL MOTIFS

Catherine's daughter Princess Charlotte, a granddaughter of King Charles, wore a headpiece that matched her mother's while her dress was also by Alexander McQueen and featured similar floral motifs.

Queen Camilla meanwhile turned to British couturier Bruce Oldfield, a favourite of the king's former wife Diana, for her coronation dress.

Her ivory silk dress with silver and gold embroidery featured "garlands of abstract wildflowers from fields and hedgerows: daisy chains, forget-me-nots, celandine and scarlet pimpernel", the palace said in a statement.

Oldfield designed dozens of evening gowns — several of them iconic — for Diana before her death in a Paris car crash in 1997.

Oldfield has since become one of Camilla's favourite fashion creators.

He designed the elegant black evening gown Camilla wore on the royal couple's state visit to Germany in March.

Charles, a biodiversity enthusiast, had a four-acre (1.6-hectare) wildflower meadow at his former Highgrove home in Gloucestershire, western England.

To mark his coronation, 200,000 packets of wildflower seeds have been sent to primary schools for children to scatter in their green spaces and encourage them to develop a love of nature.

— **AFP**

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Muscat photographer wins Foodelia Food Photography Award with bold use of colour

Liju Cherian
@lijucherianoman

Food photography has become increasingly popular worldwide, and the Sultanate of Oman is no exception. The scope of food photography in Oman is quite promising, as the country offers a rich and diverse culinary heritage that is sure to attract food lovers and photographers alike.

Oman's cuisine is a fusion of flavours from the Arabian Gulf, East Africa, and the Indian subcontinent, which makes it unique and exciting to capture through the lens.

Recently, Rachel Eapen, a lifestyle expatriate photographer residing in Oman, won the Foodelia International Food Award for its 90th collection, becoming the only one from Oman to receive this honour.

Foodelia Awards is the home of the best food photographs from all over the world. Here most talented creators showcase their works and compete with each other for a place in a monthly competition.

Rachel's photography style leans towards dramatic visual storytelling, and for her Foodelia Awards entry, she created a red-themed photograph with vibrant and contrasting colours.

She focused on product, food, and beverage photography creating a red colour theme with a fun, dark and vibrant capture.

Says Rachel, "Since my style is dark mood photography, I kept the background dark but emphasised more on the food and textures through vibrant colours as bold colours always brings power in the frame."

With no exact preparations, she decided to shoot at home using her Nikon D850 and with what was available around. As she preferred to use bold colours, the best way was to use elements that had red colour. So, it was natural that her composition had to be on point by making sure there is no overdose of red. Therefore,

she used a can of fizz which is red in colour, a book (Sun Tzu's 'The Art of War') with a pop of red and turquoise for contrast.

Says an elated Rachel, "I am humbled and happy to have won this award in the 90th collection among other prestigious and well-known food photographers around the world. Thank you so much for the support and being part of my journey."

Though being a part of food photographers' community, she never thought of participating in the Foodelia Award. "But for some reason I thought of taking part this time and I managed to submit my entry on the last day," she explains.

She dedicates her award to all the passionate photographers around the world, especially photographers who celebrate food and storytelling through food photography, because according to her, "food binds people together and nothing brings in more joy than food."

A blogger-cum-baker, Rachel likes to dedicate it to her family and close friends who believed and pushed her to pursue photography and is happy she could represent the Sultanate of Oman in the contest.

Rachel now has set her sights on Foodelia annual competition which will be held by the end of the year.

Foodelia received a whopping 2,752 photographs of which 129 photographs were selected.

Two food photographers whom Rachel has been inspired greatly are Rakhee Yadav (@boxofspice) and UK's Bea Lubas (@bealubas).

While Rakhee is great in dark and moody photography, Rachel says her images are unique, crisp and soft with an element of storytelling. "Each one of her frames are mind-blowing and adds an impact," she adds.

The work of Bea also greatly influenced Rachel especially with styling philosophy. She highlights her eye for textures, colours and the way she uses light influenced Rachel immensely.

Winner of Foodelia trophies in



Rachel Eapen and her winning food photography



Ariyani Tedjo from Indonesia

2021, 2022, Ariyani Tedjo (@miel.fotograaf) from Indonesia says "Being recognised in Foodelia promotes Indonesian cuisine as the main subject of my photography. Getting recognition is exciting and motivating and a rewarding experience."

A serious amateur food photographer with professional background, Ariyani's photography of Tempe (Soybean cake), a healthy traditional Indonesian vegan food that sees increasing popularity, was chosen the best photograph. Her first winning photograph was the Bubur Biji Salak, popularly called the Indonesian dessert.

