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FITZPATRICK WINS PLAYOFF WITH SPIETH TO CLINCH HERITAGE WIN



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OMANI PORTS POST 8 PER CENT GROWTH FOR ALL OPERATIONS IN 2022



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ENJOY CITY HIKES AT NIGHT EVEN DURING SUMMER



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO SYRIAN PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Bashar al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Dr Bashar, praying to Allah the Almighty to realise the aspirations of the friendly Syrians for stability and development. — ONA

HM THANKED BY NEPAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Ram Chandra Poudel, of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on the occasion of being elected as the new president of his country. In his cable, President Ram Chandra Poudel expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's heartfelt sentiments. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people progress and prosperity. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO ZIMBABWE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Emmerson Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Mnangagwa and the people of his country further progress and prosperity. — ONA

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OUR CLIMATE FUTURE HINGES ON FORESTS

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'Fak Kurba' initiative manages to release 668 prisoners

MUSCAT: Fak Kurba, a humanitarian initiative aimed at ending loan crisis, adopted by the Omani Lawyers Association, has managed in releasing 668 prisoners who met the conditions of the initiative since the start of its 10th edition. At the end of the third week of the holy month of Ramadhan, the initiative managed to release 349 prisoners

from various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

Fak Kurba initiative, in its tenth edition, which comes under the slogan "Because we believe that a person deserves a second chance", aims to collect financial donations to relieve the families of the insolvents at prisons due to claims resulting from civil, commercial, legal,



or labour cases.

The initiative will continue until May 16.

Earlier, speaking to the Observer, Dr Mohammed al Zadjali, Head of the Fak Kurba initiative, said, "the initiative comes under the slogan 'Because we believe that a person deserves a second chance' and aims to collect financial donations to

release the insolvent in prisons due to claims arising from different financial cases."

"We are aiming at more than 1,300 individuals who are caught up in minor financial cases but were jailed or are about to be jailed, and the release will be made possible with donations from individuals, corporates and the like," he said. — ONA

THE FIRST MOSQUE OF OMAN



Mazin bin Ghadoubah Mosque is an important Islamic monument of the Sultanate of Oman. It has a unique status of the first mosque in the country. Nestled among greenery and houses with an internal road going past its main door, the mosque stands as it was when it was first built centuries ago. All throughout the years the mosque has been receiving care and attention and was finally restored. The mosque was renewed in 1979 and all through the renovation and rehabilitation, the mosque continues to stand on its ancient foundation. [DETAILS ON P4](#)

97 dead in Sudan as world calls for peace

KHARTOUM: International leaders are urging an immediate end to bloody fighting between rival military groups in Sudan that has left nearly 100 people dead and scores more wounded. Violent open conflict has broken out in recent days between forces aligned with Sudan's military leader and de facto president, AbdelFattah al Burhan, and his deputy, Mohammed Hamdan

Daglo, who leads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Daglo on Monday appealed to international support, accusing Al Burhan of being "a radical who is bombing civilians from the air." At least 97 people have been killed and another 942 people, both soldiers and civilians, have been injured, the committee of Sudanese doctors reported on

Monday. The World Health Organization (WHO) earlier gave a figure of 83 people killed and more than 1,000 injured. Daglo's RSF forces and the Sudanese army under Al Burhan's command have been fighting each other in the capital Khartoum and other parts of the country since Saturday in clashes involving heavy artillery, tanks and fighter planes. [SEE ALSO P6](#)

Air trough to bring rains from today

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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The latest analysis of weather maps in the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre indicate that an upper air trough will affect the Sultanate of Oman starting from Tuesday until Friday. The centre indicated that there is a chance of clouds advection and isolated thundershowers associated with occasionally fresh downdraft over Al Hajar Mountains range and adjacent areas. The peak of the effect of the trough is expected over the governorates of South Al Sharqiyah, North Al Sharqiyah, Al Wusta and Al Dakhiliyah. Heavy rainfalls are expected from 20-45 mm that may cause flash floods (wadis) on Wednesday and Thursday. Fresh downdraft is expected with a speed of 15 to 35 KT (28-64 km/h). Horizontal visibility

will be poor due to dust rising during thundershowers. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) advises all to take precautions during rain and wadis flow and to check the visibility and sea state before sailing, as well as follow the issued weather bulletins and reports. Drivers are requested to take caution as horizontal visibility could be low during rains and dust. The public is also requested to stay away from low-lying areas in case of flash floods. The Civil Aviation Authority advised fishermen and sea-goers to check weather updates before venturing into the sea. Many wilayats witnessed cloudy conditions as medium to high clouds were seen in several parts of the country. Cumulonimbus clouds formed over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas brought scattered rain. Dense fog and dust prevailed over deserts and open areas leading to causing low visibility.

SpaceX postpones test flight of world's biggest Starship

STARBASE, UNITED STATES: SpaceX on Monday postponed the first test flight of Starship, the most powerful rocket ever built, designed to send astronauts to the Moon and Mars and beyond. Liftoff of the gigantic rocket was called off just minutes ahead of the scheduled launch time because of a pressurisation issue in the booster stage, SpaceX said. SpaceX founder Elon Musk said a pressure valve appeared to be frozen, forcing a postponement of the launch which had been planned for 8:20 am Central Time (1320 GMT) from Starbase, the SpaceX spaceport in Boca

Chica, Texas. "Learned a lot today, now offloading propellant, retrying in a few days," Musk tweeted. SpaceX said the launch will be delayed for at least 48 hours. The US space agency Nasa has picked the Starship spacecraft to ferry astronauts to the Moon in late 2025 — a mission known as Artemis III — for the first time since the Apollo programme ended in 1972. Starship consists of a 164-foot tall spacecraft designed to carry crew and cargo that sits atop a 230-foot tall first-stage Super Heavy booster rocket.



A view of the SpaceX Starship as it stands on the launch pad ahead of a flight test from Starbase in Boca Chica, Texas. — AFP

SpaceX conducted a successful test-firing of the 33 Raptor engines on the first-stage booster in February but the Starship spacecraft and the Super Heavy rocket have never flown together. The test flight is intended to test their performance in combination. Musk had warned ahead of the test that a delay was likely. "It's a very risky flight," he said. "It's the first launch of a very complicated, gigantic rocket. "There's a million ways this rocket could fail," Musk said. "We're going to be very careful and if we see anything that gives us concern, we'll postpone."

Nasa will take astronauts to lunar orbit itself in November 2024 using its own heavy rocket called the Space Launch System (SLS), which has been in development for more than a decade. Starship is both bigger and more powerful than SLS. It generates 17 million pounds of thrust, more than twice that of the Saturn V rockets used to send Apollo astronauts to the Moon. SpaceX foresees eventually putting a Starship into orbit, and then refuelling it with another Starship so it can continue on a journey to Mars or beyond. — Reuters



Transport
ministry
conducts
study on
digital
innovation



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union, conducted a study on 'Digital Innovation in the Sultanate of Oman: Analysis of Reality and Future Ambitions'.

The study focused on assessing the enabling milieu for digital innovation in the Sultanate of Oman, prominent challenges and opportunities for developing digital innovation, in addition to the importance of identifying strategic priorities and recommendations, and the importance of developing a roadmap for technical innovation. It also included best international practices and experiences.

The study concluded by proposing a set of initiatives that the Ministry will work to implement in cooperation with various authorities concerned in order to achieve the objectives of the National Programme for Digital Economy and Oman Vision 2040".

The study will be available on the website of the International Telecommunication Union and the Arab Regional Office, and will be shared with stakeholders for easy access.

— ONA

Students' company develops anti-fog coating product for glasses

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A students' company at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat developed an anti-fog coating product from natural and environment-friendly materials.

The new tool is to increase the comfort and choice of customers and relieve them from the problem of foggy glasses while drinking tea, leaving a cold or a hot place, which affects vision due to the accumulation of fog over the glass.

The finding is also a relief for those who tend to lose glasses frequently and suffer from the weight of eyeglasses.

'Nadera', a student company participating in Injaz Oman, showcased an anti-fog coating product developed in the laboratory from natural, and environment-friendly materials that last for a full year on eyeglass lenses. It also has a 24-hour anti-



fog spray.

A survey conducted by the company found that many who wear glasses have some problems with their glasses. They didn't want a product in the eyewear market beyond frames and lenses. 'Nadera' created its effective product at a competitive price to attract its customers, not only adults and

children but also those who had sunglasses, as well as workers in laboratories and factories who needed protective eyewear.

"The company offers a package of secondary products such as an eco-friendly leather bag that is lightweight and easy to use, in addition to a smart glass tracker that is linked to a mobile phone

to locate the glasses in case of loss. The company aspires to win this year in the Injaz Oman Student Company Competition and believes that its vision is that the company leads the field of entrepreneurship, as every Omani company working in the field of glass offers products with excellent standards and competitive prices,"



Said, Boutaina Boujrada, Head of Human Resources Department of the company.

The student company aspires to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by activating the role of Omani youth in the field of leadership, creating job opportunities and advancing development.

State Council discusses draft Labour Law



MUSCAT: The State Council on Monday discussed the draft Labour Law, which was referred by the Council of Ministers.

The discussion of the draft law came during the Council's 8th session of the 4th annual sitting of the 7th term held

under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

Today's session included a discussion of the "Draft Labour Law". The Economic Committee reviewed three

main factors that determine the level of economic growth (money market, labour market, and technological progress), and the extent of its direct impact on investment and the development of the business milieu. — ONA

Air India to reduce flights to Oman

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT

Air India has announced a temporary reduction in the frequency of flights to Oman, UAE, and Qatar after the Eid holidays, as the company navigates crew and plane shortages.

The airline will cancel one weekly flight on both sides between Delhi to Dubai and Abu Dhabi each, as well as Delhi and Muscat from the last week of April to May.

Air India and budget carrier Air India Express are aligning

their networks, causing several Air India flights to be cancelled.

Additionally, the airline will not operate its weekly Delhi-Muscat flights on Saturdays from April 29 to May 27 and weekly Delhi-Doha flights on Sundays from April 30 to May 28.

Similarly, Air India will not operate its Delhi-Dubai flight on Tuesdays from May 2 to 30 and its Delhi-Abu Dhabi service on Wednesdays from May 3 to 31.

Another official said the airline has temporarily increased flights between India and UAE in April due to the upcoming Eid holidays, the report said.

It is time for Omani Shuwa

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Ramadhan is coming to an end in a couple of days and people have started preparing for Eid.

This means visits to the traditional markets to get the ideal spices and ingredients for special Eid meals. Muttrah Souq gets busy during this time.

Think about Eid cuisine and the first thing that would come to mind is Omani Shuwa. Omani cuisine celebrates spices, marinades and herbs. For many families, the first day of Eid sets off the preparation of the dish. It takes patience and skill. What is interesting is that it is almost a community affair. As the close neighbourhood would cook their meat in the same pit, but each family might have their mix of spices. Some of the spices include coriander, cumin and nutmeg. The marinated meat is packed like a parcel and dropped into the underground pit.

This is where we see the skilful preparation of the oven as wood is used. The wood used for the pit is from a special tree called 'Sumr'. And this is also available in the Eid markets. The meat is covered



in banana leaves or leaves of date palms and then wrapped in sacks and then the pit is covered.

In most situations, the meat is taken out on the second day, whereas some families prefer to take it out on the third day.

But this traditional Eid dish is

gaining attention among tourists as well. As Al Jabal Al Akhdhar gets ready for the current tourism season and Eid holidaymakers, the kitchens are getting ready for Shuwa delight.

"We have already got reservations but the request is also for the Omani Shuwa," said Chef Samar Khalil

from dusicD2 Naseem Resort, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

At the hotel, Chef Samar makes sure to use spices from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar not throughout the year but in certain seasons, especially in the summer.

"As a chef, I do give the dish my stamp as well," he pointed out.

And how would that be? "It is in the sauce," he replied.

The sauce does have an important spice from Green Mountain.

"Al Jabal Al Akhdhar has very good thyme and I use this as the base for the sauce," Chef Samar said.

Of course, they do not use an underground sand pit but the meat is covered in banana leaves from Birkat Al Moz.

"Generally there are regular Omani spices but Omani pepper has a special place in the ingredients as well as tamarind. While there have been requests during Ramadhan, the point is people must tell us one day before they want to have it as the meat has to be prepared in the oven for one day - 24 hours," he noted.

The modern oven is way different but the taste is still captured due to the spices and the wrapped banana leaves...The tender Shuwa meat is served with rice.



MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) will start implementing the regulations for registering micro, small and medium enterprises and issuing the entrepreneurship Riyada card from May 1.

ASMED in February issued a regulation for registering micro, small and medium enterprises and issuing the entrepreneurship Riyada card. According to the regulation, an enterprise is considered micro if it has 1-10 employees with annual revenues below RO 150,000. A small enterprise has 11-50 employees with annual revenues

between RO 150,000 and RO 1,250 million, while a medium enterprise has 51-150 employees with revenues reaching less than RO 5 million.

The authority has also issued a decision in February specifying the segments illegible for the Riyada card. Those include five segments in a bid to boost the sector's contribution to the national economy and the gross domestic product (GDP).

Moreover, the Riyada card is considered a legal document which enables its holder from receiving a package of facilities in various sectors from authorities concerned. — ONA



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Gen Numani receives Ambassadors of UAE, Iran



Royal Office Minister Receives Ambassador of UAE



Royal Office Minister Receives Ambassador of Iran

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received here today Mohammed Nakhira al Dhaheri, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to the Sultanate of Oman. Al Numani wished the ambassador success in carrying out his duties as his country's ambassador to Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and areas of joint cooperation. They also touched on several matters of mutual interest.

Gen Sultan Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, also received in his office today Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman.

During this meeting, Al Numani reviewed areas of joint cooperation between Oman and Iran.

The two sides also reviewed the march of relations between the two countries. They also discussed several matters of common interest. — ONA

Drinking water consumption falls by 50pc during Ramadhan

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As people fast from dawn to dusk, the overall water consumption falls by about 50 per cent during the holy month of Ramadhan. There are many other factors responsible for this phenomenon, the major being closure of food outlets during the day and a total ban on eating and drinking in public during the holy month.

Giving an insight into the trend of drinking water supply during Ramadhan, a company executive of a major water firm in the Sultanate of Oman said, "Supply of drinking water gets drastically affected during the month because the fasting people don't drink water during the day and those who don't fast avoid drinking water in public out of respect towards fasting people." He summarised the fall in domestic demand for water up to 15 per cent while taking together domestic and commercial consumption the decrease is about 50 per cent. The consumption of water becomes relatively low even



among those who do not fast due to many factors.

Going by the trend some water companies prefer to go for maintenance in the event of reduced demand.

Almost all the food outlets in the country except for some emergency services at hospitals and hotels remain closed during the day during Ramadhan. Therefore, the requirement for water both for cooking as well as drinking decreases sharply during the day. Even though

they require water for evening meal preparations, the demand is far less in comparison to other months of the year.

Moreover, most of the offices discontinue their cafeteria services, which mainly serve tea, coffee and Omani Kahwa, which require water.

Dr Harish commented on the need to compensate for water intake after breaking the fast. "It is necessary to drink as much water as possible during the non-fasting period for the proper functioning

of the body. It is necessary to keep the body hydrated, but it is not easy for everyone to compensate day's water requirement at night. So most of the people tend to drink less water than normal during Ramadhan month," he said.

This also affects the drinking water supply and overall consumption. Another noticeable trend is the drop in sales of water bottles, which contain 1.5 litres and above and an increase in demand for small water bottles in the sizes of 200ml and 250ml.

"Small bottles are easy to serve during iftar, carry and even distribute during mass iftars at mosques and other public places. People prefer to keep small water bottles and some dates in vehicles to ensure that they can break their fast on time while travelling etc," said Prakash, who works as a supervisor in a water company in Muscat.

In a way, Ramadhan also works as a month of water conservation, the importance of which is discussed in the holy Quran as well.

Sur most preferred short holiday destination

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With just around 200km from the capital Muscat, Sur in the South al Sharqiyah Governorate is one of the most preferred short holiday destinations.

A ride along the pristine coast towards Sur from Muscat and Qurayat offers pleasant travel experiences that are unmatched anywhere in the country, perhaps even in the region.

With hotels and apartments of choice easily available online, Sur and South Sharqiyah are worth exploring around the year.

Sources in hotels around the Ras al Jinz Turtle said that bookings are nearly 90 per cent during April 21-24.

"Sur and the travel to Sur is one such that people will get never bored despite making several visits I still feel the route to the wilayat can be commercially exploited giving

announced many times, I feel there is a shortage of enough restrooms and refreshment places on the route which can be provided even if it is for a small fee."

It may be noted that the travel to popular tourist destinations such as Ras al Hadd, Ras al Jinz and Al Ashkharah, and even Masirah are via this route.

The Wadi Daykhah Dam, Fins Beach and Wadi Shab, Bimmah Sinkhole, and the Qalhat ancient city are located on the route to Sur.

First-time visitors to Sur should not miss the Bilad Sur Castle, Dhow industry, maritime museum, and Al Ayjah Lighthouse.

Bilad Sur Castle offers a spectacular view of the surrounding areas and it hosts a museum.

Situated to the south of the Khor al Batah suspension bridge, the Dhow Industry gives insight into how wooden boats were made in the past.

Fatah Al Khair is the name of a ship that is currently part of an open-air museum which is dedicated to the shipbuilding lineage of the city of Sur in Oman.

Built over 70 years ago, the wooden fishing vessel of Fatah Al Khair has strong historical significance to it. It was brought back to Yemen, restored, and grounded on dry land.

The ship is said to be hand-built without any nails.



Believers throng mosques seeking 'the night of power'

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In the holy Quran, it is said that there is a night which is more powerful than 1,000 nights and believers from different ethnic origins throng the mosques during the last phase of the holy month seeking the 'Lailatul Qadr' which is described as the 'the promised night' or the 'most powerful night'.

Mosques across the country are alive with the recitation of the holy Quran, keeping believers busy engaged in supplications, and prostration towards the Almighty expressing repentance for the shortcomings and seeking a position aloft on the day of judgment.

It is the same night that has the greatest rewards for all good deeds and the night the holy Quran was sent down to mankind, during one of the nights of the last ten days of Ramadhan.

"The holy Quran was sent down to mankind during one of these nights with more probability for the 27th night, and believers keep themselves busy engaging in prayers, supplications, and other deeds such as 'zakath' and Sadaqa which are two forms of supporting the fellow beings during the last phase of the holy month which is about to leave," said Hatim Abdussalam, a religious scholar and Director of Al Istiqama TV.

The long prayer usually held in the later part of the night is called 'Qiyamul Lail' which can be prayed either individually or as a group and implicates standing supplications which is a part of the last ten days of the holy month.

Almighty Allah has said in the holy Quran that there is a night in the odd nights of the holy month which is more powerful than 1,000 nights and it is the night when the holy Quran, the guiding book for



the entire mankind, is sent down to the people.

While the first 10 days of the holy month are dedicated to gaining Mercy of Allah, the second part reflects the Forgiveness of Allah and the Third part reflects Safety from Hell. Prophet Muhammad (May Peace Be Upon Him) said: Ramadhan is the month, whose beginning is mercy, its middle, forgiveness and its end, emancipation from the fire (of hell).

As far as the believers are concerned, these special days and nights will be followed by the preparations for Eid al Fitr after nearly thirty days of fasting.

Believers continue to engage themselves in such supplications, special prayers and mandatory fasting till the moon is sighted for the beginning of the month of 'Shawwal' heralding the arrival of Eid al Fitr the next day.



Mazin bin Ghadouba — The first mosque of Oman

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Mazin bin Ghadouba Mosque is an important Islamic monument of the Sultanate of Oman. It has unique status of the first mosque in the country. It is nestled amongst greenery and houses with an internal road going past its main door. The mosque stands as it would have when first built centuries ago. The sound of prayer calls brings in worshippers. Some arrive slightly earlier to reflect and read the holy Qur'an. It is

a Ramadhan afternoon and the mosque has its visitors reading holy Qur'an. Even young children run in as they return from their school. All throughout the years the mosque has been receiving care and attention and has finally been restored. During the Sultanate of Oman's modern renaissance, the mosque was renewed in 1979. All through the renovation and rehabilitation, the mosque continues to stand on its ancient foundation. Samayil is located in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and this is the location of the mosque of high significance next to the Hajar Mountains. The site's history goes back to the seventh century AD,

according to historians. Mazin bin Ghadouba Mosque is a historic Mosque and is considered the oldest Mosque as it was built by Mazin bin Ghadouba in 627 AD. The legend goes that Mazin bin Ghadouba heard about the messenger of Allah, Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him, and took the journey to meet him. The wadi of Samayil is one of the largest and is also known as Samayil Gap. The valley divides the Hajar Mountains into East and West subranges. This was an important part of the land route for the frankincense trade once upon a time. It is said that upon meeting the Prophet (PBUH) Mazin bin Ghadouba

embraced Islam. Thus Mazin bin Ghadouba is also referred to as 'Sahabi e Rasool.' When he returned to his homeland after the visit, he built the mosque, which is considered to be the mosque that introduced others to Islam, including Aabd and Jaiffer, the sons of Julanda, Kings at that time in the Sultanate of Oman. The mosque was renovated in 1979 by Late Sultan Qaboos and the inscription states this at the main door. The road to the left takes up to the other side of the mosque where cars can be parked. Today the mosque is equipped with all the modern amenities. The marble tiles, the carpeted area in the prayer hall, and the shelves for the holy Qur'an might be of

the modern day, but the ceiling reminds one of the traditional architecture of the past. The most interesting aspect is its service to the community and is not just a historical monument. Right at the entrance to the hall is this description: 'The mosque of the companion Mazin bin Ghadouba bin Subaiy'ah bin Shimas al Sa'adi, the first Omani who embraced Islam in the sixth Hijri year. The mosque was built when the companion Mazin returned to the Sultanate of Oman coming from Medinah, so it is the first mosque built in the country. The mosque was restored and was inaugurated on Friday, the first of Ramadhan 1438 Hijri, May 27, 2017.



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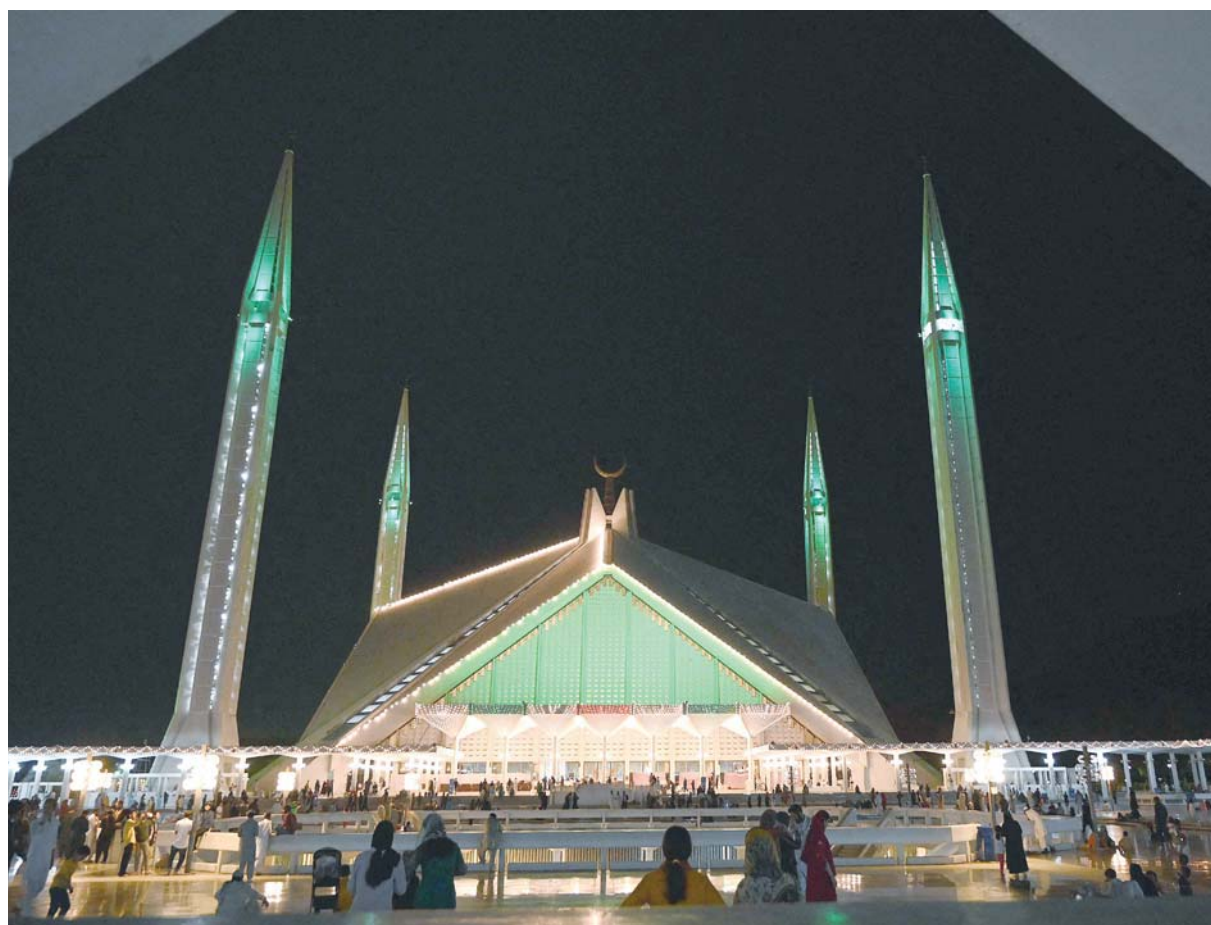
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■ THE NIGHT OF POWER



Worshippers arrive to pray at the illuminated Grand Faisal Mosque on the Lailat al Qader, also known as the Night of Power, the 27th night of the fasting month of Ramadhan, in Islamabad, on Monday. – AFP

Apple CEO to meet Indian PM

NEW DELHI: Apple Chief Executive Tim Cook will meet India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and its deputy IT minister as part of his visit to inaugurate the iPhone maker's first retail store in the country this week, people familiar with the plans said.

The visit by Cook to open the first official company-owned outlets in Mumbai and New Delhi this week underscores Apple's growing ambitions for India, where despite having just a 3 per cent market share the company has been expanding iPhone assembly via contract manufacturers, and also boosting its exports.

Cook will meet Modi on

Wednesday in New Delhi, said the two sources, who included an Indian government official.

One of the sources added the Apple chief would also meet India's deputy IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar.

The sources did not elaborate, but Cook's meetings come amid Apple's growing focus on India, the world's second-largest smartphone market.

Around \$9 billion worth of smartphones were exported from India between April 2022 and February this year and iPhones accounted for more than 50 per cent of that, data from the India Cellular and Electronics Association shows.

On Monday, Apple opened its

first store in Mumbai, but only for a private event where bloggers and some tech analysts reviewed the design and store layout. It will open to the public from Tuesday, while a second store will be inaugurated inside a New Delhi mall on Thursday.

So far, Apple has sold its products in India via resellers or e-commerce websites such as Amazon.

The Mumbai store is in the premier Reliance Jio World Drive mall, home to luxury clothing and jewellery brands like Michael Kors, Kate Spade and Swarovski. It is 20,800 square feet, far bigger than the planned Delhi outlet, local registration documents show. — Reuters

Biden lags in declaring re-election campaign

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden is running again, he and White House officials insist, he's just not ready to announce it yet. The expected date for Biden, 80, to make his 2024 presidential plans official has slipped from just after the State of the Union address in February to March, to potentially May or even later, according to aides and advisers.

Biden trails recent Democratic incumbent presidents on the issue: Barack Obama announced he would run for a second term in 2012 on April 4, 2011, and Bill Clinton's 1996 re-election announcement was April 14, 1995. Jimmy Carter, however, waited until December 4, 1979, to announce his 1980 re-election run. Republican Donald Trump said on June 18, 2019, that he would run for a second term in 2020, while George W. Bush made his 2004 plans public on May 16, 2003.

The lack of a formal announcement has given jitters to supporters unsure if the Democrat president, one of the oldest world leaders, would or should commit to another four-year term. He would be 86 at the end of a prospective second term.

Several factors have been in play, allies said, including picking a campaign team and locking down fundraising plans for financing what may be the most expensive campaign in history.

In recent weeks, Biden has laid out the likely themes of a re-election bid in political speeches, secured a doctor's note that he is "fit for duty," told Democrats to re-order the party's primary calendar in a manner favouring his nomination and picked



US President Joe Biden walks onstage during an event at St Muredach's Cathedral in Ballina, County Mayo, Ireland. – Reuters

Chicago as the city where he would ostensibly formally become the nominee next year. Biden is yet to face a serious challenge for his party's nomination.

"We'll announce it relatively soon. But the trip here just reinforced my sense of optimism about what can be done," Biden told reporters at the tail-end of an emotional trip to Ireland last week. "I told you my plan is to run again."

Biden started the month by kicking off a multi-week, nearly 30-state "Investing in America" tour where the president and top administration officials highlighted infrastructure, chips and inflation act money that is starting to flow into states.

It is part of broader push to send Biden administration officials from coast-to-coast talking about the over \$1 trillion in federal money Biden and Democrats put through Congress to fund roads, bridges and high-tech jobs.

This week, Biden plans

remarks on childcare and environmental justice, along with a visit to a labour union training facility in Maryland to talk about the economy.

While not technically campaign events, they offer a platform for the president to promote likely campaign themes on the need to lower childcare costs, seek racial justice and build an economy that benefits the working class.

Once Biden is officially running for president, his campaign will be asked daily for responses on hot-button issues as well as the latest salvos and foreign policy observations from top Republican candidate Donald Trump, and to respond to Trump's long list of legal woes. Until then, the Biden White House seems ready to stick with a policy of near-silence on Trump.

Biden has still not decided who will run his campaign, and as of last month was considering at least three people to serve as his campaign manager. — Reuters

Best chance for peace in Yemen: UN envoy

UNITED NATIONS: Yemen faces its best chance to strike a peace deal since the country's civil war started over eight years ago, although much work remains to be done, UN envoy Hans Grundberg said on Monday.

"One year on since the parties agreed to a truce under UN auspices, Yemen is again at a critical juncture," Grundberg, the secretary-general's special envoy for Yemen, told the United Nations Security Council via video-link.

"The truce has continued to deliver well beyond its expiration six months ago. And the parties are engaging on next steps." "I believe we have not seen such a serious opportunity for making progress towards ending the conflict in eight years," Grundberg added.

The country has been devastated by the war, which started in 2014. The conflict is between pro-government forces – backed by an international military coalition – and the Ansar Allah group.

The government and the fighters have exchanged nearly 900 prisoners in recent days, as hopes grow for peace amid a war that has plunged Yemen into one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

– Reuters



TENDER

Nama Holding (NH) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2023/13	Outsource Call-Off (Treasury and Investment Function for Nama Holding)	1-May-2023	8-May-2023	100/- Plus VAT Amount (5 OMR)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in the website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 3.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Monday, 8 May 2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200 / 237-277
E-Mail: Yasmeen.allawati@Holding.nama.om - sami.alrabhi@holding.nama.om



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

INTERNATIONAL TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee in Ministry of Information announces its International Tender for the following work:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
1/2023	Supply, Instillation, Testing and Commissioning a New Data Center Infrastructure in MOI Premises in Salalah	International Excellent Frist	1/5/2023	28/5/2023	25/-

- All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bidder shall submit their offers electronically accompanied with an electronic copy of the a bond issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to the Ministry of Information. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value valid for (90) days. Any tenderers which do not meet the required bond shall not accept. Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically
- The Ministry has the right to:
 - Add or Cancel some works in the tender if necessary.
 - Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:

Telephone: 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)



US targets IS leader in northern Syria raid

BEIRUT: US troops have said they carried out a helicopter raid targeting a senior IS leader in northern Syria who was in charge of planning attacks in the Middle East and Europe.

“The raid resulted in the probable death of the targeted individual,”a statement from US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on Monday.

It added that two armed individuals were killed in the operation.

The statement said that no US troops were wounded and that “they assess that no civilians were killed or wounded in the operation.”

Rami Abdel Rahman the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed that the operation had taken place and said three people were killed, two on the site of the operation itself and a third on the outskirts of a village.

The observatory said the attack took place in the countryside of Jarabulus, east of Aleppo after midnight on Sunday.

It said that the US-led coalition forces carried out an airdrop in the village of Al-Suwaida in the Ghandoura district in the Jarabulus

countryside. According to Abdel Rahman the leader who was targeted was called “Abu Al-Baraa” and he comes from the town of Al-Safira in the southern countryside of Aleppo. He has been living in a building in the village of Al-Suwaida for nearly a month now, he said.

On April 12, the US Central Command announced it had captured an operative for the terrorist IS militia and two of his associates in a helicopter raid in eastern Syria.

US forces were deployed to Syria in 2015 to assist the Syrian Kurdsand their allies in the fight against IS.

At least 26 collectors of truffles were killed previously on Sunday in an attack by IS in a Syrian village, Syria's state media and a war monitor reported

Aid organisation Handicap International estimates that up to 300,000 mines and unexploded ordnance are scattered across Syria following more than a decade of unrest. The IS in Syria has targeted truffle collectors in recent weeks, kidnapping or killing them, according to the Observatory. — dpa



American soldiers patrol the countryside of Rumaylan (Rmeilan) in Syria's northeastern Hasakeh province. — AFP



Sudanese greet army soldiers in the Red Sea city of Port Sudan. — AFP

Sudan council declares rival faction as ‘rebels’, battles unrelenting

KHARTOUM: Sudan's army chief on Monday branded the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces a rebellious group and ordered it be dissolved, as the faction battled the army in deadly violence that derailed a shift to civilian rule and prompted US calls for a ceasefire.

Both sides claimed they made gains on Monday, in a violent, nationwide power struggle the Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors, an activist group, said has killed at least 97 civilians and 45 soldiers, with a total of 942 injured, since the fighting started at the weekend.

The government has not published a toll in fighting that

has spurred fears of a wider civil conflict.

Bombardments and strikes from fighter jets rocked Khartoum on Monday, including near the military headquarters, and in Bahri just across the Nile River near another base, witnesses in the areas said. Smoke billowed from the runway of the capital's international airport, where explosions and fires were visible on TV images.

The rare outbreak of fighting in the capital has spread to other parts of Sudan, pitting the armed forces against the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a former militia that had been due to merge with the army and whose leaders shared

power in a ruling military council.

Army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan heads the ruling council while RSF leader General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, is his deputy. Both sides said they had made gains on Monday.

LIMITED CLASHES

The RSF claimed it had captured an airport and military bases, while the military said it was in control of its headquarters despite what it called “limited clashes” in the vicinity.

The army regained control of the main television station, which briefly went off air after gunfire was heard during a live broadcast.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said an immediate ceasefire was needed. Germany called on both sides to de-escalate.

“There is a shared deep concern about the fighting, violence that's going on in Sudan - the threat that that poses to civilians, that it poses to the Sudanese nation and potentially poses even to the region,” Blinken said in Japan.

It appeared that the army was gaining the upper hand in the fighting in Khartoum, using air strikes to pound RSF bases. The RSF posted videos showing its soldiers in Merowe airport and in a base in a southern district of the capital and in part of a military headquarters in the city centre. — Reuters

G7 top diplomats seek unity on China after Macron remarks

KARUIZAWA: The G7's top diplomats began talks in Japan on Monday, looking to project a unified message on concerns about China after controversial remarks by French President Emmanuel Macron.

The foreign ministers are keen to move past the firestorm created by Macron's assertion, after a trip to Beijing, that Europe should avoid “crises that aren't ours”, and China was on the agenda even before official talks kicked off on Monday morning.

After arriving at the mountain resort town of Karuizawa on a special bullet train, the group held

a working dinner on China and North Korea, with Japan's Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi telling his counterparts that “the unity of the G7 is extremely important”.

Monday's first session again focused on China and regional challenges, and Hayashi opened the talks by warning the international community was “at history's turning point”.

He urged counterparts to “demonstrate to the world the G7's strong determination” to defend the “international order based on the rule of law”.

Host Japan is keen to put regional challenges atop the agenda, and

recent events including Chinese military drills and North Korean missile tests have sharpened that focus.

Even as the ministers began talks, the US Navy announced it had sailed a guided-missile destroyer in a freedom-of-navigation operation.

The controversy over Macron's remarks will prompt closer scrutiny of whatever language a final statement, expected on Tuesday.

Trips to Beijing by Macron and other G7 officials “will be a topic of discussion”, a senior US official said on Sunday, speaking on condition of anonymity. — AFP



G7 representatives pose for a photo during the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting at The Prince Karuizawa hotel in Karuizawa. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

NAIROBI

‘Killer cop’ pleads not guilty

A Kenyan police officer accused of murdering two teenagers pleaded not guilty to the charges on Monday, in a case that raised questions about extrajudicial killings after video footage of the shootings went viral. Dubbed the “killer cop” by media outlets, Ahmed Rashid was filmed shooting the two young men as they lay on the ground on a busy street in the capital Nairobi on March 31, 2017. The Independent Policing Oversight Author-



ity (IPOA) watchdog recommended murder charges against him last November. Rashid contested the charges, saying that he was carrying out his duty.

DEHRADUN

Villages under curfew after tiger attacks

Hundreds of villagers in northern India were under orders not to leave their homes after dark on Monday after two people were killed in tiger attacks, authorities said. Last week India said its wild tiger population had risen above 3,000 but the growing numbers combined with habitat loss and urban expansion are leading to more attacks.

The curfew issued on Sunday banned people in two districts of the hilly state of



Uttarakhand from going out between 7:00 pm and 6:00 am. Schools have also been closed for two days, starting on Monday.

DHAKA

A prayer for rain as temperatures soar

Hundreds of Bangladeshis gathered on an open field in Dhaka on Monday to pray for rain after the metropolis of 20 million people recorded its hottest day in almost 60 years.

Police said more than 500 worshippers congregated on the Aftabnagar playing ground, where popular TV cleric Shaikh Ahmadullah led the prayers.

“They held the prayers for rains. They also held prayers for easing the temperature and protection from the heatwave,”



local police chief said. The South Asian nation of is at the forefront of climate change with frequent floods and ever-more-erratic rains.



omanobserver.com/podcast

In brief

ROME



TWO TONNES OF COCAINE FOUND IN THE SEA

The Italian financial police have found packages containing about two tonnes of cocaine with an estimated market value of more than 400 million USD in the sea off the east coast of Sicily.

Officers noticed about 70 packages floating in the sea and held together by nets during a patrol through the coastal waters of Sicily, the financial police said on Monday.

According to the report, the drugs were packed so that no sea water could penetrate and the packages could not sink.

The 70 or so packages contained a total of about 1,600 other smaller packages, in which the approximately two tonnes of cocaine.

MEXICO CITY



MEXICO OFFICIAL ARRESTED OVER FIRE THAT KILLED 40

A top Mexican immigration official has been arrested over a fire at a detention centre last month that killed 40 migrants, according to federal authorities.

Salvador Gonzalez Guerrero, head of the National Immigration Institute (INM) in the state of Chihuahua, was taken into police custody on Sunday night, according to the Ministry of Public Safety's arrest records.

Mexican authorities have accused the people in charge of the facility in Ciudad Juarez of doing nothing to evacuate the migrants, who were locked in their cell during the blaze.

Thirty-nine people died of asphyxiation, including 18 Guatemalans, 7 Salvadorans, 7 Venezuelans, six Hondurans and one Colombian.

BUDAPEST



WOMAN RESCUED AFTER 30 HOURS IN CAVE

A woman hit on the head by a rock in a cave in Slovenia was rescued only after spending 30 hours underground.

The 33-year-old woman was lying seriously injured in an unexplored cave system near the municipality of Cerknica.

According to the Slovenian rescue agency report, a medical rescue team was able to reach the unconscious woman relatively quickly and provide first aid. However, extracting her from the cave proved to be much more difficult.

She was finally lifted out on a stretcher on Monday morning. Doctors at the university hospital in the capital Ljubljana described the woman's condition as life-threatening.

Macron to address public after ‘pensions victory’



French CGT labour union leader Sophie Binet talks to journalists during a demonstration in front of the Paris City Hall. — Reuters

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron is on Monday to address France for the first time since signing into law his controversial pension reform, facing warnings the political and social crisis it sparked is not over.

Macron signed the legislation early on Saturday, just hours after the banner change to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64 had been validated by the constitutional court, prompting accusations he was smuggling the law through in the dead of night.

After three months of protests and strikes, the left and unions have vowed not to give in and warned of mass protests on the May 1 Labour Day.

Polls have consistently recorded a majority of French opposed to the reform, which the government rammed through parliament using a controversial mechanism to avoid a vote.

Macron's personal popularity ratings have eroded with some analysts suggesting he has given a head start to far-right leader Marine Le Pen down the long path to 2027 elections.

The press has widely dubbed it a "Pyrrhic victory" after the Greek king who defeated the Romans but saw most of his army destroyed in the process.

Macron is to address the nation from 1800 GMT on all France's major TV channels, the presidency said, in a speech government spokesman Olivier Veran insisted on Saturday would be in the spirit of "pacification".

But the leader of the powerful CGT union Sophie Binet said in an interview with regional newspapers on Sunday that Macron was "on his way to becoming the president of chaos".

"He is opening the way to the National Rally" party of Le Pen,

who one poll gave as the victor if the 2022 presidential election was re-run today, she said.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne vowed on Saturday the government would press ahead with more reforms now the pensions overhaul was done.

"We are determined to accelerate" the pace of reforms, she told the national council of Macron's Renaissance party.

Binet and other union bosses have called for a "popular and historic tidal wave" of people on the streets to oppose the reforms on May 1.

As a prelude to the May 1 protests, railway unions are calling for a day of "railway anger" on Thursday.

"I find that the country is anxious and also angry. This anger has to be heard," warned French parliament speaker Yael Braun-Pivet. — AFP

Ukraine seeks re-opening of grain transit via Poland

KYIV: Kyiv aims to re-open food and grain transit via Poland as "a first step" to ending import bans at talks in Warsaw on Monday as countries halted grain from Ukraine to protect their local agriculture markets from an influx of supply.

Poland and Hungary announced bans on some imports from Ukraine on Saturday. Slovakia said on Monday it would do the same and other countries in central and eastern Europe said they were also considering action.

Some Black Sea ports were blocked after Russia's invasion of Ukraine began in February last year and logistical bottlenecks trapped large quantities of Ukrainian grain — cheaper than that produced in the European Union — in Central European countries.

Local farmers say this has lowered prices and reduced their sales. Governments, under pressure to act, have asked the European Union for a response.



Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky

In Poland, the issue has created a problem in an election year for ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party that relies on rural areas for high level of support.

The export and transit bans also come as a deal to allow the export millions of tonnes of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea.

The combined impact of the bans and failure to agree an extension would strand millions of tonnes of grain inside Ukraine, a major agricultural producer that makes a substantial part of its gross domestic product

from food sales.

"The first step, in our opinion, should be the opening of transit, because it is quite important and it is the thing that should be done unconditionally and after that we will talk about other things," Ukrainian Agriculture Minister Mykola Solsky said before talks due in Warsaw.

"The ultimate goal is not that the import ban will be in force indefinitely, but to ensure that grain from Ukraine, which is to be exported, goes (where it is headed)," Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Pawel Jablonski told radio station RMF.

A senior EU official said EU envoys would discuss Poland and Hungary's bans on Wednesday - after the bloc's executive said on Sunday that unilateral action was unacceptable.

The official said low global prices and demand meant grain was staying in the bloc rather than being sold on.

— Reuters

Spain govt vows to block farming near threatened wetlands

MADRID: Spain has vowed to block a regional plan to legalise farming near one of Europe's largest and fauna-rich wetlands, where water supplies have plunged due to climate change and agriculture.

The proposal to rezone lands near the huge Donana National Park in the southern Andalusia region comes amid a prolonged drought and it has drawn the ire of Brussels.

The area is home to many rare species such as the Iberian lynx and on the route of millions of migratory birds, including flamingos, spoonbills and ibis.

"Donana will not be touched, Donana is the heritage of Andalusians, of all Spaniards," Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warned.

Andalusia's parliament voted on Wednesday to consider the plan proposed by the region's conservative Popular Party (PP) government.

If it becomes law, roughly 2,000 hectares near the park and its endangered wetlands will be declared irrigable.

This would grant an amnesty to many unauthorised farms, mainly growing strawberries, that have sprouted here.

A final vote on the proposal — which is also backed by far-right party Vox — is due soon. It is expected to pass as the PP and Vox have a majority in the regional parliament.

Sanchez's government has said it will challenge the proposal in court if approved. Sitting on an estuary where



Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez

the Guadalquivir River meets the Atlantic Ocean, the park stretches across 100,000 hectares of forests, lagoons, marshes and dunes.

A study by the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) published last week said 59 per cent of the park's largest lagoons have not been filled "since at least 2013".

It blamed changes in temperature and precipitation in the area, as well as the "increase in the amount of cultivated land".

Defenders of the proposal argue it will help farmers who missed out during a previous regularisation of farms in the area in 2014 under a Socialist government.

Huelva, the drought-prone province where the park is located, produces 300,000 tonnes of strawberries a year, 90 per cent of Spain's output.

Known locally as "red gold", strawberry farming employs up to 100,000 people and accounts for nearly eight per cent of Andalusia's economic output. — AFP



محافظة شمال الباطنة
AL BATINAH NORTH GOVERNORATE

Advertisement

Companies specialized in the field of this Tender may obtain tender documents for the following tenders, on tender board website (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/product/publicDash>) on payment of non – refundable fee as went as in the website:

Tender No.	Description of Work	Tender Fee (non refundable)	Start Date for Selling Tender	Last Date for Selling Tender	Site Visit Date	Return Date
32/2023/NBGO/HQ-32	Design and Construction of Expressway Access Road (Yanba - Wadi AL Arad Link)	R.O. 240	Monday 17/04/2023	Sunday 07/05/2023	Wednesday 10/05/2023	Sunday 28/05/2023
33/2023/NBGO/HQ-33	Consultancy Services for Designing of Internal Roads at North Al Batna Governorate	R.O. 75	Monday 17/04/2023	Sunday 07/05/2023	-	Sunday 28/05/2023
34/2023/NBGO/HQ-34	Designing Consultancy Services for Sea Road in Saham (Cornish) at North AL Batinah Governorate	R.O. 37.500	Monday 17/04/2023	Sunday 07/05/2023	-	Sunday 28/05/2023

Comments:

- Has the right to distribution items or works or quantities there of between more than one contractor without giving reasons to the bidder.
- The Tender Committee is not obliged to accept the lowest or any tender that may.

Eid is round the corner

The last week of Ramadhan is always with mixed feelings - excitement of Eid, togetherness, new clothes, gifts, holidays, but sentimental of yet one more month of fasting coming to a conclusion. People of all faith have an opportunity to reflect on the blessings and empathise with others who have challenges of hunger, have the opportunity to share your blessings and ask for forgiveness in the depth of your heart.

Fasting, not just with food, but with negative thoughts and words, that is also between you and yourself; which is why we need the quiet moments.

Maybe the month gave us the time to evaluate and reevaluate our actions and deeds.

Often time we think we are strong people who cannot be influenced negatively by others. We are only normal and it is so easy to be carried away on the surf of life reacting not responding. The month of Ramadhan gave everyone to pause although on many occasions, nights became longer along with meal durations. But in good company it all meant well. The last week also means there is a feeling of heading towards graduation.

There is a feeling of achievement and it truly is especially for the younger ones who harnessed their will power through discipline and fasting.

But now people are already into the planning mode for the Eid days. Friends have begun to prepare the ancestral homes to receive the family members to celebrate Eid at hometown. A lot of long drives are to be made, Eidiya has to be prepared as children must be already making plans in anticipation, and not to forget visits to the tailors and shops.

Maybe online is thriving, but there is nothing like hopping around shop to shop to get the right accessories and shoes for the new clothes to be worn on Eid days.

The mood is set off by the habtas that pop up in wilayats around the governorates. There could be retail satisfaction when it comes to malls but even they do not stand a chance when compared to habta markets. It comes with a lot of nostalgia. In some places it starts ten days to Ramadhan, while in other areas it could be from 25th day to 28th day of Ramadhan.

These open air markets could be under the shades of the trees mostly date palm trees or could be allocated areas arranged by the municipalities. The vendors begin by 5 am most of the time so they are ready to receive visitors by sunrise.



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THE MOOD IS SET OFF BY THE HABTAS THAT POP UP IN WILAYATS AROUND THE GOVERNORATES

And shoppers can enjoy at least until midday. The vendors also feature goods people need for Eid, but as well as somethings for children - toys, and not to forget traditional clothing and spices for traditional Omani recipes.

As we all know Eid is an occasion where shuwa is made as per the custom so this could also include availability of firewood as well as banana leaves for shuwa at the open markets. Habta's important element is also livestock. Al Munada is the place where auction takes place for the livestock.

So even if one is a tourist in the country there is great excitement to be captured at the habta scenes around.

There is no chance to set foot in a beauty salon if one has not taken a prior reservation as there just would not be any space left to settle down for a henna session so the next option would be to sort out a cousin or friend who excel in the art of drawing with henna on the palms.

The body has already got used to the fasting, so there must be some tiredness but the eyes are twinkling looking at all these prospects of fine tuning the plans that are being laid out for the days of Eid.

Then it is the holidays. Some expected longer, but the announced dates seemed to be fine because they have moved on to plan B. It is interesting how people have options planned out and these are the one who never seemed to waste time on disappointments.

The beautiful part of it all is to have learnt what it is to not have food and to share with people who have not.

Giving need not be only about money, food or clothes, as the Indian community is joining hands with the Indian Embassy to raise the amount of blood units available at the Oman Blood Banks for seven days. There were bus loads of teachers arriving to donate their blood. There was a gentle elderly lady who felt the need to donate her blood and for few seconds she went through weakness but soon she recovered and was sure she wanted to serve the society in this unique way.

How can a sense of selfishness exist where there is a feeling towards the welfare of others?

Who would even entertain a thought of harming others when one has the heart to give blood for others?

We have crossed more than 21 days, proving that we would have formed some good transformations and now it is also time to start fresh with good health and habits.

Eid Mubarak in advance!

A FLOWER PARK



This aerial photo taken on Monday shows people looking at flowers at the Dafeng Holland Flower Park in Yancheng, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. – AFP

Our climate future hinges on forest preservation

Even before taking office in January 2023, Brazil's president Luiz Inácio Lula de Silva promised to end illegal deforestation in the Amazon. He also revived partnerships to amplify financing of forest protection and announced a presidential summit of Amazon Basin countries to be held in Belem in August. Lula is determined to accelerate global cooperation to protect the world's largest tropical forest, including by leveraging the newly capitalised Amazon Fund which is supported by Norway and Germany. President Lula and his environment minister, Marina da Silva, have made the protection and preservation of the Amazon a priority.

They have a point. The value of intact forests, especially the vast tropical biomes in the Amazon, Congo, and Indonesia, is immense. And without them, there is no hope of keeping global warming below 1.5° Celsius. To protect them (and, by extension, the Earth), we believe a new incentive mechanism that provides direct compensation for forest conservation can help.

Most climate scientists agree that the only way to reverse global warming is by phasing out the use of fossil fuels and ensuring that more greenhouse gases are removed from the atmosphere than are emitted. Reducing emissions is simply not enough.

The key is to protect forests, which



Ilona Szabó

Co-Founder and President of the Igarapé Institute, is a member of the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism



Tasso Azevedo

A former director-general of the Brazilian Forest Service, is General Coordinator of MapBiomass

cover 31 per cent of the Earth's land surface (around four billion hectares) and are a net carbon sink, absorbing an estimated seven billion metric tonnes of carbon dioxide per year even after discounting all emissions from deforestation and other land-use change. Tropical forests, in particular, have a global cooling effect of 1°C when both carbon-locking and biophysical effects are considered.

One solution for safeguarding our forests involves planting trees to compensate for those that have been felled. Several bold initiatives, including the Trillion Trees initiative and platform and the so-called Great Green Wall stretching across the width of Sub-Saharan Africa, are focused on restoration efforts.

But equally important is the conservation of old-growth tropical forests, which can serve as an important carbon sink when they are well preserved. Conversely, unprotected forests can start degrading and become a source of net emissions, as is occurring in parts of the Amazon Basin.

One increasingly popular approach is to place a monetary value on keeping trees in the ground. While investment in carbon credits, biodiversity credits, and similar instruments is expanding, these market-

REDUCING GREENHOUSE-GAS EMISSIONS IS NOT ENOUGH TO REVERSE GLOBAL WARMING. ENDING DEFORESTATION IS AN EQUALLY IF NOT MORE IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE

based approaches are still not deployable at the speed and scale required to slow the degradation of the world's major tropical forests.

All of these strategies – from planting trees to carbon offsets – are necessary to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. But reducing emissions, reversing global warming, and regenerating natural systems requires a bolder and more comprehensive plan that guarantees, at a minimum,



Forests cover 31 per cent of the Earth's land surface.

halting deforestation by 2030 and adding a billion hectares in forest cover by 2050.

The question is how to accomplish such ambitious objectives. We believe that a global incentive mechanism – in short, paying individuals, entities, or even states to preserve forests – is the best way forward.

To have an impact at scale, this innovative source of financing should encourage accelerated investment by ensuring that conservation yields tangible returns. The incalculable value of forests needs to be acknowledged, and investment on a truly unprecedented scale must be mobilised immediately.

The basic premise is to create a system that pays annually per hectare of forest preserved. To fast-track implementation, the mechanism's design must be

simple and intuitive. For example, an individual, community, company, or government entity could register a private lot or publicly owned land in an accessible registry, after which land tenure and forest integrity can be verified. Payment would be made if a registered hectare of forest is still intact the following year – a relatively easy outcome to monitor using remote sensing. Penalties should be steep: for every registered hectare that is deforested, the beneficiary would lose the equivalent of payment for 100 hectares, for example, or even the total registered area.

Obviously, funding a project along these lines requires global buy-in and coordination. One idea is to implement a type of carbon tax – a fee on every barrel of oil, tonne of coal, or cubic meter of gas produced on the planet.

Despite the difficulty of executing such a scheme, we can't afford to throw up our hands. Every day, the trees in the Amazon rainforest release 20 billion tonnes of water vapour into the atmosphere. To put this in perspective, the amount of electricity required to turn the same amount of water into steam would, according to one estimate, equal to the output of 50,000 power plants, or roughly a trillion dollars a day.

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Tougher than expected 8th place for Oman racing

PORTIMAO: Round two of the FIA World Endurance Championship proved more challenging than expected for Oman Racing with TF Sport on Sunday, 16th April, with Ahmad Al Harthy, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood having to settle for an eighth place result in the 6 Hours of Portimao.

Going into the Portuguese round, the team-mates hoped to mount a push for a stronger finish after Al Harthy had qualified a very competitive fifth fastest in GTE Am, just half a second from pole position – and with the potential for more too with yellow flags spoiling the Omani’s best attempt.

Frustratingly, the performance compared with rival entries in race conditions meant the Aston Martin was always on the back foot. Struggling for pace, despite a great set-up, the team had to be satisfied with a, nonetheless season

best, top eight finish after six hours of racing in the Algarve.

Dinan took the wheel for the start of the race at midday local time in Portimao, and although he was challenged initially he maintained fifth. Despite losing some time on lap five, he chipped away to reduce the gap to the No.83 Ferrari and around the 50-minute mark Dinan was able to grab fourth.

Just before the first hour was complete, the opening round of pit-stops began and Dinan emerged in fifth. Midway through hour two he began to come under pressure from the No.54 Ferrari and was soon edged back to sixth. At the second set of pit-stops at the end of hour two, Al Harthy climbed aboard the Aston Martin and emerged in seventh – with one of the leading cars yet to pit.

Determined to try and gain some

2023 FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP GTE AM DRIVER STANDINGS:

14th Ahmad Al Harthy / Michael Dinan / Charlie Eastwood, 7pts

2023 FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP GTE AM TEAM STANDINGS:

11th Oman Racing with TF Sport, 7pts

ground, the Omani – supported by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omanel and MHD-ITICS – was also mindful of looking after the car. When the out-of-sequence Porsche eventually made its second stop, Al Harthy re-assumed sixth place.

Later in hour three Al Harthy moved up into fifth position before serving his

first pit-stop as the race tipped into its second half. Holding seventh when he rejoined the action, the Omani moved back into sixth a short while later but halfway through his second stint the Aston slipped to seventh and then eighth with the outright pace just not there to extract from the car.

The team’s ‘Pro’ driver Eastwood took over the car with just under two hours of racing to go and after dropping to ninth he reclaimed eighth. Remaining there into the final hour, following the last pit-stop he continued in eighth where he stayed to the chequered flag.

AHMAD AL HARTHY:
“We had a perfect strategy, perfect performance from all of the drivers – we all drove perfectly in the race. Unfortunately, though, we were no match

for our competitors as we clearly lacked the power we needed to be competitive in Portimao. With no interruptions in the race with Safety Cars, that only magnified the performance difference.

“There are positives, and hopefully the organisers will re-evaluate the performance comparisons between us and our competitors. There’s nothing else we could have done, so hopefully we will be back at Spa in a few weeks’ time with a much better performance. Eighth was the best we could do, we were the best Aston and we couldn’t have climbed any higher. It was out of our hands.”

There are less than two weeks to wait for the third event of the FIA World Endurance Championship, the TotalEnergies 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps, which will take place in Belgium on Saturday, 29th April.

Oman grouped with Palestine, Sudan and Egypt in Arab beach soccer

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 17

The Oman beach soccer team are pooled along with Palestine, Sudan and Egypt in Group B of the fifth edition of the Arab Beach Soccer Championship 2023 which will be hosted by Saudi Arabia in Jeddah city during May 1 to 20.

The draw ceremony took place late on Sunday in Jeddah city. Hosts Saudi Arabia are grouped with Mauritania, Morocco and Lebanon in Group A while UAE are leading Group C besides Libya, Kuwait and Comoro Islands.

As the Union of Arab Football Associations (UAF) gets ready to host the forthcoming edition of the prestigious championship, a sense of excitement is seen among the participating teams as action resumes after a gap of seven years from the last tournament in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt in 2016. United Arab Emirates (UAE) are the last edition champions when they beat Morocco 3-2 in the final. Oman finished fourth. Hosts Egypt were the champions in the third edition also at Sharm El Sheikh in 2014, defeating Lebanon 6-5 in the final.

The team, coached by the long-serving national coach Talib Hilal, will commence their campaign in the tournament with a match against Palestine on May 12 and the match will start at 18:30 (Oman time). Then, the national beach soccer team will take on Egypt on May 14 and on the following day they will face Sudan.

It is expected that Oman team will return back to the action after Eid break with a series of internal and external camps. The preparatory programme



will feature a series of friendly games ahead of the forthcoming assignments.

SIGNIFICANT OUTING
The Arab beach soccer 2023 will act as a significant step in Oman’s team preparation for the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup UAE 2023 which will be hosted by Dubai during November 16 to 26. Oman are ranked 14th internationally in the latest Fifa world ranking and will be looking to claim maximum technical output from this significant event. Oman team recently concluded their participation in the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup in Bali city, Indonesia, in third place.

The 16 teams from different Arab countries have been drawn into three groups with the top-two teams from each group advancing to the quarterfinal round along with the best two among the third-placed teams. The tournament will begin on May 18. The semifinals will take place on May 19 and the winners of the semifinals will vie for the trophy on May 20.

The first edition of the Arab beach soccer championship was in Egypt’s Marsa Alam in 2008. Libya beat UAE 5-3 to emerge champions. In 2010, it was in Damam, Saudi Arabia and the hosts beat UAE 6-3 after extra-time to win the title.

Oman Squad: Khaid al Araiimi, Mashal al Araiimi, Younis al Owaisi, Abdullah al Souti Amjad al Hamadani, Sami al Balushi, Munthir al Araiimi, Shareef al Balushi, Sami al Balushi, Ahmed al Owaisi, Hamed al Araiimi, Yahya al Muraikhi, Salim al Araiimi, Abdulrahman al Fazari and al Yaqdhan al Hindasi.

Rins wins in Texas after Bagnaia crashes out of the lead

AUSTIN, Texas: Alex Rins won a crash-hit Grand Prix of the Americas in Austin on Sunday after MotoGP world champion Francesco ‘Pecco’ Bagnaia, the Saturday sprint winner, fell while leading from pole position.

The Spaniard’s surprise victory on a clear afternoon in Texas was a first for the LCR Honda team since Britain’s Cal Crutchlow in Argentina in 2018.

It was also the first by any Honda rider other than compatriot and six times MotoGP champion Marc Marquez, who was absent this time due to injury, since Crutchlow’s win.

Italian Luca Marini, MotoGP great Valentino Rossi’s half-brother, was second for the VR46 Ducati team -- his first MotoGP podium in a full distance grand prix since he moved up from Moto2.

France’s 2021 world champion Fabio Quartararo completed the podium on a Yamaha for his first top three result of the 2023 season.

Aprilia’s Maverick Vinales and Miguel Oliveira finished fourth and fifth.

VR46’s Marco Bezzecchi finished sixth to stretch his championship lead to 11 points over fellow Italian Bagnaia after three rounds, with Rins third overall and a further six points behind.

“We got the victory (in Austin) with Moto3, Moto2,



Suzuki and then Honda,” Rins said of his impressive record of success at the Circuit of the Americas.

Bagnaia, who had seemed certain to retake the championship lead with his second double victory of the campaign, threw away 25 points when he made an unforced error on the eighth of 20 laps and crashed -- for the second time in two weekends.

In Argentina two weeks ago

the Italian crashed out of the Sunday race while in second place.

“Today, just crashing like this, was something too strange,” said Bagnaia, who had led away from the start with Rins doing his best to apply some pressure, of the turn two incident.

“Losing 45 points in two weekends is not a good thing.”

Rins, who won in Austin with Suzuki in 2019, managed

the remaining laps without incident for his sixth career win in the top class and first since he joined LCR Honda at the start of the season.

Team boss Lucio Cecchinello had reminded the Spaniard to keep calm in the closing lap and said he felt like he was in a dream.

“It was difficult to stay always with my eye on the television,” said the Italian of his anxious pitwall experience. “I tried to look around, look at the board and say something to the mechanics.”

Spaniards Jorge Martin and Alex Marquez collided on the first lap, the Pramac Ducati rider losing the front of his bike and taking out Gresini Ducati’s Marquez.

That completed a nightmare weekend for the younger of the Marquez brothers, the Spaniard also crashing on Saturday after vomiting in his helmet.

Aprilia’s Aleix Espargaro was another faller at turn 12 on the opening lap. KTM’s Australian Jack Miller soared to third from 10th on the opening lap but then crashed on lap seven with Quartararo taking the podium place. The Frenchman was second after Bagnaia’s crash before Marini came past.

Repsol Honda’s Spaniard Joan Mir, the 2020 world champion for Suzuki, was another faller at the half distance. Team-mate Stefan Bradl and LCR’s Takaaki Nakagami also fell, leaving only 13 finishers. — Reuters



Jayasuriya bags five as Lanka devastates Ireland

GALLE, SRI LANKA: Sadeera Samarawickrama and Dinesh Chandimal hit unbeaten centuries before Prabath Jayasuriya claimed a five-for as Sri Lanka put visitors Ireland to the sword on the second day of the first Test in Galle on Monday.

Sri Lanka declared their first innings on a mammoth 591-6 before reducing Ireland to 117-7, still needing another 274 to avoid the follow-on.

Lorcan Tucker was batting on 21 at the close, with Andy McBrine alongside him on five.

Playing only their fifth-ever Test, and seeking their first win since attaining the status in 2017, Ireland could only demonstrate their weakness against a team ranked seventh in the world in the five-day format.

Left-arm seamer Vishwa Fernando — playing his first Test in 10 months — dismissed Murray Commins for a golden duck and captain Andy Balbirnie in just the second over of the Ireland innings.

Harry Tector (34) and James McCollum (35) put together a 70-run partnership before left-arm orthodox spinner Jayasuriya wreaked havoc with a double wicket maiden, claiming the scalps of Tector and Curtis Campher.

In his next over, Jayasuriya cleaned up top scorer McCollum with a peach of a delivery that pitched on middle stump, spun past the bat and clipped top of off-stump.

Jayasuriya next had Peter Moor caught behind and completed his fifth five-wicket haul when George Dockrell was

Jayasuriya cleaned up top scorer McCollum with a peach of a delivery that pitched on middle stump, spun past the bat and clipped top of off-stump

trapped leg before wicket.

Earlier, wicketkeeper-batsman Samarawickrama celebrated his return to Test cricket with a maiden hundred after last featuring in a Test in 2017.

His 104 not out was the first time a Sri Lankan wicketkeeper has made a century in Test-match cricket in seven years, the previous being Kusal Perera in 2016.

Chandimal was unbeaten alongside him on 102 at the declaration, posting his 14th Test ton against tired Irish bowlers who toiled in hot conditions.

The pair added an unbroken 183 runs for the seventh wicket, after skipper Dimuth Karunaratne (179) and Kusal Mendis (140) posted centuries earlier in the innings.

Chandimal, 18 overnight, was the first to reach three figures with an elegant punch for four through extra cover.

The 27-year-old Samarawickrama joined him in the next over, his 104 the highest score by a Sri Lankan number eight.

The match is the first-ever Test between Sri Lanka and Ireland, who have lost all four of their previous Tests, including against Bangladesh this month. — AFP

NBA INJURY FEARS FOR GIANNIS, MORANT AS LAKERS, HEAT WIN

Los Angeles: Milwaukee superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo and Memphis star guard Ja Morant suffered serious injuries that threatened to disrupt two title contenders on Sunday in NBA playoff series-opening defeats.

The Los Angeles Lakers took advantage of Morant’s absence late in the fourth quarter for a late surge that produced a 128-112 victory at Memphis while the top-seeded host Bucks, who lost their Greek star in the first quarter, fell 130-117 to the eighth-seeded Miami Heat.

INJURY FEARS

But injury fears for Antetokounmpo and Morant, two of the NBA’s most electrifying stars, were amplified by upset home losses for their clubs in best-of-seven first round openers.

Antetokounmpo averaged 31.1 points and



11.8 rebounds a game this season for an NBA-best 58-24 Bucks squad while Morant averaged 26.2 points for a Grizzlies team that was 51-31.

Morant hurt his already-sore right hand midway into the fourth quarter trying to brace a hard landing after contact while driving to the basket.

Morant’s taped right hand took the impact. Morant rose and ran off to the locker room, grabbing his sore hand and screaming as he exited after scoring 18 points. “I’m in a good bit of pain,” Morant said after the game, declaring his status was “in jeopardy” for game two on Wednesday. “Feels like it’s one thing after another.” Memphis coach Taylor Jenkins said after the game that x-rays on Morant’s right hand were negative but he would likely be kept out of workouts, his status “one game at a time.” — AFP

Mumbai aim to continue winning run against Hyderabad



There have been huge discussions on social media, whether Arjun Tendulkar deserved the debut cap against Kolkata, or was it another case of nepotism. With Arjun bowling in mid-120s with some marginal swing on offer, he certainly didn’t make a case for himself. Another thing that was disappointing was that he was not able to make the ball carry to the wicketkeeper consistently. With him just bowling 2 overs at the start, he needs to fit in the batting all-rounder category and whether he is able to impress with the bat, is something that we will only know with time. But all said and done, in a country of almost 1.5 billion people, a farmer’s son bowling at mid-120’s would have surely not been able to make it to this level, so there has to be some kind of influence from him to have this opportunity with arguably the best team of IPL with 5 championships.

SRH vs MI AT HYDERABAD

TEAM INFO Mumbai had a terrible start to IPL 2023, but have finally come back with two back-to-back wins against Delhi and Kolkata. Just like Mumbai, even Sunrisers Hyderabad had a terrible start, but with back-to-back wins against Punjab and Kolkata, they have also caught up. Although, both these teams are currently second and third last on the table and that’s what they would like to change with time to come. Mumbai have given captaincy to Surya Kumar Yadav, although whether it’s a long-term decision or a short one, only time will tell. Hyderabad are struggling with their bowling department, something which they would like to improve substantially.

HEAD-TO-HEAD - PLAYED - 19; Won by MI - 10; Won by SRH - 9

SRH possible XI - Mayank Agarwal, Rahul Tripathi, Aiden Markram (c), Abhishek Sharma, Heinrich Klaasen (wk), Marco Jansen, Bhuvneshwar Kumar, Mayank Markande, Umran Malik, Harry Brook/Washington Sundar (Impact Player), T Natarajan

MI possible XI -Ishan Kishan (wk), Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav (c), Hritik Shokeen, Cameron Green, Tim David, Nehal Wadhwa, Arjun Tendulkar, Piyush Chawla, Duan Jansen,



Riley Meredith/Rohit Sharma (Impact Player).

Pitch & Weather Report - The pitch at Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium is on the slower side. The spinners will play a major role while bowling at this venue as the ball tends to grip off the surface. Run-scoring becomes easier once the batters spend some time in the

middle.

Match Prediction - Both SRH and MI are on a roll with 2 wins out of 2 games and they would surely look to further extend their impact to secure the position in the play-offs as soon as possible. Although it is Mumbai which has looked vulnerable because of their below average bowling attack. Hyderabad have their concern with out-of-form Mayank Agarwal and Tripathi and I assure you that both will fancy their chances against the medium pace of Arjun Tendulkar. For the same reason, I feel that it’s going to be Hyderabad that will be celebrating with some special ‘Hyderabadi Sheer Kurma’ (a dish).

FAN COMMENTS

“Back-to-back wins will motivate both teams to make it three in a row. Though happy to see ‘Sky’ back amongst runs, I am backing SRH to win.” - Arjun Krishnamoorthy, 32, Analyst/ KPMG, Indian.

“It’s my son’s birthday and as hardcore cricket fans, we are rooting for Mumbai to win in a very closely contested encounter between two teams that have had an even-steven past. - Hemlata Jesrani, 72, Social Worker, Indian.

“One team that has been having the title of

underdogs since the start and also the support of everyone is the Sunrisers Hyderabad. But, I feel that this is the year when all of that is going to change and Hyderabad is going to rise as one of the strongest teams in the IPL, under the captaincy of Markaram.” - Rafiq Mohammed, Computer Hardware Technician & Ex-Junior National Team Captain, Omani.

“I have been a big fan of T20 cricket and really look forward to seeing the clash of talented Indian batsmen vs the quality Pakistani bowling in one of the T20 leagues. Hopefully, in the future, good leaders will open doors to youth of both sides, which will be a big boon for cricket.” - Ibn Eameen Habib, 36, Luxury Car Garage Owner, Pakistani.

Send us your comment for the next day’s match before 12 noon on WhatsApp on ‘00968 92470544’ and the best comments will be included. 30 words on the team that you support, full name, age, designation and nationality.

You could post us your views and questions on our social media handles and we will pick the best question in our future articles, Twitter - @OmanObserver @PranavMehtaOman or Instagram - @OmanObserver @pranav_mehta.18. Don’t forget to use #OOIPL2023 for better reach.

Sayyid Loay, Ali al Said pass Slovakia qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 17

International jockeys HH Sayyid Loay bin Ghalib al Said and HH Sayyid Ali bin Ghalib al Said qualified successfully from the second round of the qualifiers in Slovakia for the World Endurance Championship which will be held in France next year. Both jockeys need to finish and qualify from three rounds out of five rounds in total to secure slots in the World Endurance Championship.

The race qualifiers in Slovakia was for a distance of 120 km and featured participation of international jockeys from different parts of the world including UAE and Oman. All the jockeys were seeking to qualify from the qualifiers in order to get close to the world class event next year.

The next round of the qualifiers will take place in Buch city, Germany and will be the deciding round for Oman's jockeys to qualify for the World Endurance Championship. The German race in Buch will be for a distance of 160 km and is expected to be the most difficult race in the qualifying stage.

Sayyid Loay and Sayyid Ali managed to end the race in Slovakia on a successful note as they preserved the horse's health to obtain the certificate of race completion. Both international jockeys began the race with low speed in order to reach the final

The next round of the qualifiers will take place in Buch city, Germany and will be the deciding round for Oman's jockeys to qualify for the World Endurance Championship

point of the race which comprised difficult and challenging areas. Moreover, the temperature was up to 4 degree Celsius in some of the highest mountains besides the mud in the surface which acted as a barrier for the jockeys and horses.

Sayyid Loay expressed his satisfaction on completing Slovakia round qualifiers on a successful note. "The race was too tough and it is considered as one of the most difficult qualifying races. Our focus now is shifted to the next deciding qualifiers in Buch city, Germany, which will determine our presence in the World Endurance Championship," he said.

Sayyid Ali said that he was happy to make a good finish in Slovakia qualifiers. "This is my first time in the European mega events for a distance of 120 km. It was a challenging event for me and I managed to end it on a successful note. I am working hard with the team to impress at the next qualifier in Buch city, Germany, to claim a spot for the World event. A special thanks to the supporting team during the race period," he concluded.



Fitzpatrick wins playoff with Spieth to clinch Heritage win



MIAMI: England's Matt Fitzpatrick beat defending champion Jordan Spieth in a thrilling sudden-death playoff on Sunday to win the PGA's RBC Heritage tournament.

The pair, who played in the same group in the final round, both ended regulation play on 17-under 267 after Spieth shot 66 and Fitzpatrick 68 at Harbour Town on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

It took until the third hole of the playoff for a champion to be decided when Fitzpatrick produced a brilliant 9-iron approach shot on the par-4 18th and made a simple birdie putt to win.

Spieth, who beat fellow American Patrick Cantlay in a playoff last year, had over-hit his approach going to the back of the green and needed two putts to make par.

Fitzpatrick, the US Open champion, becomes the first Englishman to win the tournament since Nick Faldo in 1984 and he did so in the town where he spent many of his family vacations after first visiting as a six-year-old.

"It's hard to describe. I said to (caddie) Billy (Foster), it doesn't get better than this — walking

Fitzpatrick, the US Open champion, becomes the first Englishman to win the tournament since Nick Faldo in 1984 and he did so in the town where he spent many of his family vacations after first visiting as a six-year-old

down here, just looking around. It's a course I dreamed of playing when I was young," he said, with his family congratulating him at the side of the green.

"I managed to play a couple of times with my dad and yes, this one means more than anything."

Spieth had made four birdies in the opening six holes but he missed a short putt for bogey on the par-3 14th and left the door open for Fitzpatrick.

The Englishman then made birdies on the 15th and 16th to grab a share of the lead and could have won it at the death if Spieth hadn't made a tricky six-footer to force the playoff.

"It was a really good round. I got off to a dream start and then

just kind of hung in there for a little while and then made a nice putt to get into the playoff, and then played the playoff really well," said Spieth.

"Someone was going to make a birdie. It wasn't going to be a bogey to lose that playoff the way that we were both playing today. He just did what he needed to do on 15 in, when it had been kind of me and Patrick for a little while there. He just snuck in and played some tremendous golf."

Cantlay, the other member of the leading group, finished in third after carding a 68 to leave him one shot behind Fitzpatrick and Spieth.

Cantlay paid the price for bogeys on the par-4 13th and the par-3 14th, where his ball had stuck in the wood barrier by the waterside green.

Xander Schauffele's final-round 66 earned him fourth place, two shots behind the leaders after he ended with a late surge by making birdies on 15, 16 and 17.

World number two Scottie Scheffler's final round of 70 left him 12-under overall and tied for 11th while Masters champion and world number one Jon Rahm shot 68 but was tied for 15th, six shots off the pace. — AFP



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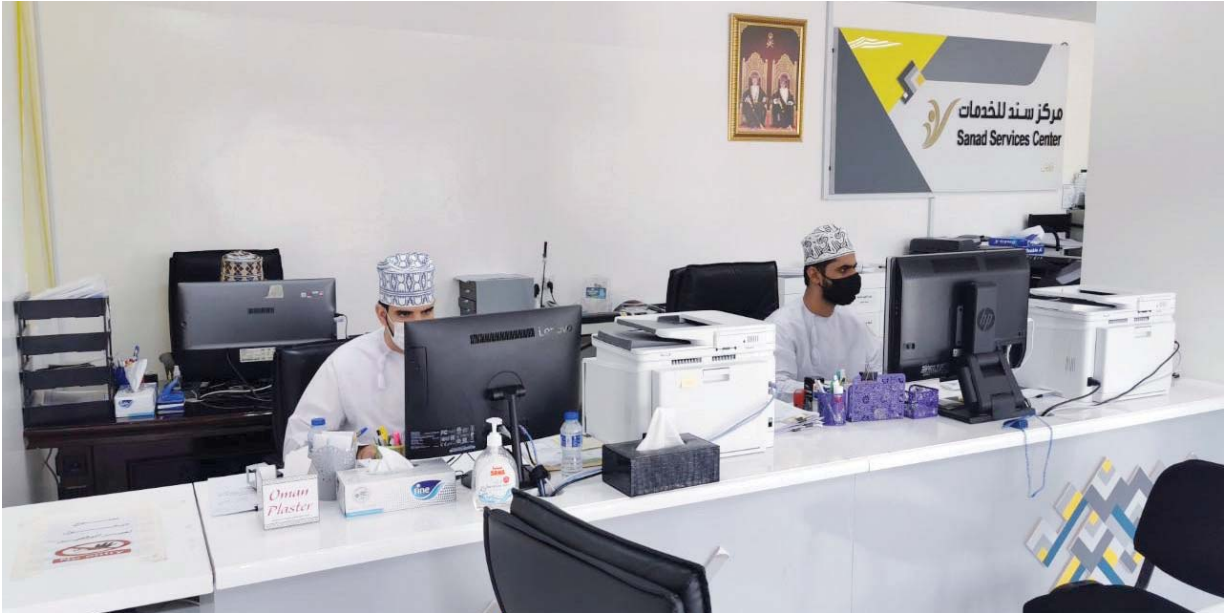
Award of licences for new Sanad Services Centres soon

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 17

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development has invited applications for 10 new licences for the opening of Sanad Services Centres in a number of governorates across the Sultanate of Oman.

Of late, Sanad Service Centres have emerged as vital facilitators of a wide range of government services routinely sought by businesses and individuals.

By outsourcing service delivery to Sanad centres, the government has opened up opportunities for



Omani entrepreneurs to operate in this sector, as well as to recruit nationals to man these centres — a move that has create self-employment opportunities for Omanis.

According to the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, new licences will be granted for the start of Sanad centres to cover the needs of the different wilayats of the country.

The new licences will enable the opening of centres in the following locations: Al Dereez in Al Qabil Wilayat (North Al Sharqiyah Governorate); Al Jarda in Al Mudhaibi Wilayat (South Al

Sharqiyah Governorate), Tiwi in Sur Wilayat (South Al Sharqiyah); Khasab (Musandam); Raysut Industrial City (Dhofar); Saham (North Al Batinah); Mawaleh Industrial Area (Muscat); Hamra Al Dhuru in Ibri Wilayat (Al Dhahirah), and Al Sayh Al Ahmar in Bidbid Wilayat (Al Dakhiliyah Governorate).

While conditions governing the validity of the new licences will be announced soon, interested applicants can register for the licences to launch new centres. Previous applicants are not eligible to participate in this round, the Authority added.

Two new water projects to bolster Oman’s desalination capacity



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 17

The Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), the sole national buyer of power and water output, is firming up plans for the procurement by competitive tender of two new Independent Water Projects (IWP) to meet demand growth.

One of these projects is planned for development in North Al Batinah Governorate. Dubbed ‘North Batinah IWP’, the proposed 150,000 m3/day capacity project (equivalent to 33 million imperial gallons per day MIGD), is targeted for commercial launch in 2029.

According to state-owned OPWP — part of Nama Group, North Batinah IWP was first initiated for procurement in 2018 but was the process was paused after the completion of the prequalification stage.

“The project was suspended pending confirmation of the demand as well as the site allocation. As per the latest forecast, it

POTABLE WATER: Privately-financed 150,000 m3/day capacity plants planned for procurement in North Al Batinah, Dhofar governorates

is expected that around (11 MIGD) of water is required by 2028 and the SCOD (Scheduled Commercial Operation Date) for the full capacity is planned for 2029,” the OPWP stated.

A similar sized IWP is also planned in Dhofar Governorate.

Although first initiated in 2019, the procurement process for the ‘Dhofar Water 2026 IWP’ is proposed to be revived with the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RfP) tentatively planned during the second quarter of this year. The timeline however is still subject to confirmation of site allocation among other approvals, the procurer said.

Based on the provisional timelines, bids for either project are due in by Q4 2023 with awards anticipated in Q1 2024. **TURN TO PAGE 14**

Omani ports register 8 per cent growth for all operations in 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 17

The main ports of the Sultanate of Oman — Salalah, Sohar and Duqm — achieved 8 per cent total growth in their operations in 2022. More than 62.3 million tonnes of general cargo were handled with a growth rate of 10 per cent compared to 2021.

The liquid cargo handled amounted to more than 23.7 million tonnes, an increase of 22 per cent compared to 2021. The number of containers handled in the three ports amounted to about 5.2 million standard containers, and more than 1.59 million head of livestock and 71.7 thousand vehicles and equipment were handled. More than 6,500 ships docked to these ports in 2022.

The Port of Salalah ranked second in the ranking of the most efficient container ports in the world, according to the Container Ports Performance Index 2021 report issued by World Bank.

In addition, the number of containers handled in the port in one day reached 1,157 containers, which is a record since its opening.

The Port of Salalah also increased its capacity to meet the growing global demand in accordance with the expansion strategy adopted by the Asyad Group, so it put into service 16 gantry cranes and 3 mobile jib cranes for the general cargo berth and proceeded to develop the capabilities of the port’s container terminal in Q4 2022 and prepare it to receive giant container ships.

In the framework of enhancing operational capabilities, the Port of Salalah launched a new shipping line directly linking China and Yemen through the Al Mazunah land crossing.

It also concluded a global strategic partnership to start the



THE NUMBER OF CONTAINERS HANDLED IN THE THREE PORTS AMOUNTED TO ABOUT 5.2 MILLION STANDARD CONTAINERS, MORE THAN 1.59 MILLION HEAD OF LIVESTOCK AND 71.7 THOUSAND VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT WERE HANDLED. MORE THAN 6,500 SHIPS DOCKED TO THESE PORTS IN 2022

business of refuelling ships, with the aim of transforming the Port of Salalah into a preferred regional destination for refuelling services for ship operators.

On the other hand, Sohar Port witnessed the year 2022 as a model for the operational integration of the various Asyad units, as the port received the first batch of containers via Asyad Lines coming from the Singapore and Malaysian ports, with a full occupancy rate of 100 per cent, which indicates an expected annual operating volume of 100 thousand modules for this

line only.

The port also launched the direct line that passes through the ports of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya and Greece, in cooperation with the international companies CMA CGM and Hutchinson Ports.

Sohar Port also continued its expansion plans by signing an agreement in June 2022 to expand storage facilities with C-Steinweg Oman, which is responsible for operating the third terminal at the port.

It also concluded another pact with Advorio to extend the contract for operating the oil storage terminal, to enhance the port’s capacity and to develop the level of its integrated services as a major marine gateway to the industrial sector in Oman.

With regard to the port of Duqm, which was officially opened in February 2022, it has begun to receive and operate heavy logistical machinery and equipment, including mobile gantry cranes and cranes for unloading goods from ships.

It signed an agreement with Jindal Shadeed Group to establish a green iron production plant on an area estimated at 2 square kilometres and investments of approximately \$3 billion.

It also signed a land reservation agreement with Mitsui and Partners Ltd and Kobe Steel to develop a ferrous metals project with Low carbon dioxide emissions at the port of Duqm.

At the level of free zones, the volume of confirmed investments in Sohar Free Zone, Salalah Free Zone and Khazaen Economic City reached more than RO 600 million in 2022, which confirms the success of the group’s strategy in attracting global capital to its free and economic zones, and strengthening the Sultanate of Oman’s position as a safe and desirable destination for global investments.

OQ’s Ramadhan convoy ‘Marsa Al Khair’ concludes voyage across 7 governorates

MUSCAT: The Marsa Al Khair convoy, organised by the global integrated energy group OQ, has successfully completed its journey across seven coastal Omani governorates from Musandam to Salalah.

Launched in celebration of the holy month of Ramadhan, the convoy aimed to raise public awareness about the importance of alternative energy.

Two wind-powered sailboats navigated along the coastline throughout the journey. The convoy’s objective was to promote clean energy sources to generate positive environmental impact and emphasise their potential benefits.

Encouraging the adoption of wind and other clean energy sources aligns with the Sultanate of Oman’s transition towards sustainable energy under His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, may the Almighty protect him.

The goal is carbon neutrality by 2050 and a sustainable future. Enthusiastic receptions, featuring lively chants and cultural performances, marked the convoy’s



arrival in each wilayat. Various events showcased sustainability and the close relationship between the communities and the sea.

Local students participated in activities like drawing, painting, and group games. Omani Women’s Associations exhibited heritage and household products, and

beach games were organised for all to enjoy.

This inaugural convoy during the holy month of Ramadhan highlights the deep bond between the Omani people and the sea, reviving the rich maritime heritage among successive generations and emphasising the country’s strong

connection to its seafaring roots.

The convoy symbolises OQ’s collaborative partnerships with government entities and private sector organisations, reflecting the commitment to cooperation and community engagement among all stakeholders involved.

Research shows that Oman has significant potential for wind and solar power generation. Optimal wind power generation sites are primarily located along the southeastern coasts of Al Jazir and Al Duqm, while suitable locations for hybrid solar radiation generation centres are likely to be found in Suhar and Thamrait.

OQ’s Chief Executive of People, Technology and Culture, Ashraf bin Hamad al Maamari, expressed his elation at the successful outcome of the Marsa Al Khair maritime Ramadhan convoy. He thanked the esteemed Walis, directorates of education in the governorates, Oman School Sports Association (OSSA), Omani Women’s Associations, and sports teams for their valuable contributions.

The OQ Ramadhan convoy

played a significant role in raising awareness about alternative energy and sustainable development, two key focus areas for OQ’s operations in Oman and abroad.

The convoy also promoted sports activities for health and entertainment, activated community initiatives across Omani governorates, and offered opportunities for various entities to participate in community partnership projects.

OQ is committed to reducing the use of traditional energy sources, mitigating their environmental impact. Utilising wind energy is a crucial step towards reducing the carbon footprint and promoting the overall health of our planet.

Appointed by the government as Oman’s alternative energy enabler, OQ launched its Ramadhan convoy, as part of the ‘Elevate’ initiative.

The convoy sailed across Omani governorates in an environmentally friendly sailboat powered by wind energy, reflecting OQ’s efforts to bring joy and happiness to families through their support.

Two new water projects to bolster Oman’s desalination capacity

FROM PAGE 13

At the same time, OPWP is evaluating the need for new capacity within the Main Interconnected System (MIS) serving much of the northern half of Oman, to plug any production gap upon the expiry of the current license of Barka II Independent Water & Power Project in 2024.

Unless covered by other sources, new capacity of between 100,000 – 120,000 m3/day will be required for procurement, according to the company.

MIS comprises an integrated supply network that provides potable water to the Governorates of Muscat, Batinah South, Batinah North, Ad Dakhiliyah, and Al Buraimi.

It was extended last year to cover the Governorate of Al Dhahirah as well.

Water demand across this network is projected to grow at an annual rate of about 4 per cent over the next six years to 2028, according to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), also a member of Nama Group.

This growth will be driven by a recovering economy and an expected return of activities in the tourism, retail business and other sectors to pre-pandemic levels, it is pointed out.

Oman Power and Energy Forum 2023 to start from May 22

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will host, starting from May 22, the second edition of the Oman Power and Energy Conference, under the auspices of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and with the international and local participation of the power and energy sector, at the Grand Millennium Hotel, Muscat.

Over the course of three days, the conference will discuss the latest developments in the power and energy sector and the progress achieved by the Sultanate of Oman in terms of energy transition efforts in line with the goals of Oman Vision 2040. It will also review the latest technologies and innovations in the sector and



exchange knowledge with the participation of officials, experts

and specialists in the sector from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

Talking about the event, Prof Abdullah al Badi, Chairman, the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) Oman Section, stated, “After the highly successful first edition, IEEE Power Talks – Oman’s Power & Energy Forum presents yet another excellent platform to share knowledge and drive collaboration between industry leaders and stakeholders from various organisations.

The programme is designed to spread expertise and present the latest technologies and innovations across power and energy sector through a plenary session, panel discussions, presentations by subject

matter experts, workshops and masterclasses.

These meaningful interactions will go a long way in enhancing Oman’s potential to become a leading energy hub in the region and fast-track the energy transition path in alignment with Vision 2040 goals.”

On the focus areas for the event, Eng Abdullah al Wahaibi, Chairperson, IEEE Power & Energy Society, said, “The event is based on six key themes. Under the first theme ‘Market and Policies Updates’, we will discuss topics such as energy economics, extension of PPA agreements based on Power 2024, demand projection and expected growth.

Omani ports register 8 per cent growth for all operations in 2022

FROM PAGE 13

Two new projects were opened in the Salalah Free Zone at the beginning of 2023 — the OQ ammonia project and the Felix Pharmaceutical Industries plant.

In Sohar, the volume of trade exchange exceeded RO 1 billion in 2022, and in the same year Khazaen started construction of the vegetable market and the central fruit, which is scheduled to open in 2024.

For his part, Ahmed bin Ali al Balushi, Head of Asset Management Unit at Asyad Group, explained that the distinguished performance indicators recorded by the group in the past year reflect the success of Asyad’s strategy to expand and upgrade the logistics sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

He added that the Asyad Group is working to improve the employment of the group’s assets

and the operational integration between its units. This led to the group achieving distinguished financial and operational performance, transforming international challenges on global supply chains into opportunities to achieve growth and enhance the presence of the Sultanate of Oman on the world’s logistics map.

He added that these ports have succeeded in connecting Oman with the most important global markets.

Through the creation of new shipping lines that enhance their role as logistic centres and vital commercial gateways, the economic and free zones affiliated to Asyad have also been able to attract foreign direct investment and take advantage of global business opportunities, establishing Asyad’s position as a leading and trusted brand in the world.

Changan Oman launches special Ramadhan offer on UNI models

MUSCAT: As part of its exclusive Ramadhan promotion to mark the holy month, Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC (AGAE), Changan Oman has announced an attractive offer on Changan Auto’s luxury model range – UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T. Positioned as futuristic and fashionable the UNI range feature progressive design and smart technologies offered only in luxury brands.

Changan UNI range of automobiles – UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T – is devoted to creating a new experience with highly technological and sporty exterior design coupled with avant-garde interiors. The ‘together, let’s celebrate the season of generosity’ offer includes, free service (5 years/105,000 kms), free insurance (1st year), free registration (1st year), free window tinting and ceramic coating and manufacturer’s super



warranty (6 years/unlimited mileage kilometres). All customers purchasing UNI models from Changan retail showroom till April 22, 2023, will be eligible to participate in the campaign scheme.

A senior official for AGAE said, “It is the season of generosity, and we are delighted to offer our valued customers the best deals on Changan UNI models during this

special time. As we celebrate the spirit of giving, we would like to express our gratitude for the trust you have placed in our brand.”

Free service for 5 years (PMS)

Customers can avail periodic maintenance service of five years/105,000 km on UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T. The offer includes 10,000 kms service

intervals.

Manufacturer’s Super Warranty
Customers of UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T models can enjoy manufacturer’s warranty for 6 years/unlimited mileage kilometres.

Free Insurance
Patrons of UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T can enjoy benefits such as free first year insurance (Oman and UAE).

Free registration
Customers will be offered free first year registration on purchase of Changan vehicles UNI-K, UNI-V and UNI-T.

Free window tinting and ceramic coating
Window Tinting and Ceramic Coating warranty on the models will be three years warranty against manufacturing defects and will be fitted at Changan service centres.

Opportunity Oman: Strategic location



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED
AL BALUSHI

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and CEO of Smart
Investment Gateway;
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Located along the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, the Sultanate of Oman is strategically positioned at the intersections of the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman, and Arabian Gulf.

This geographical position has placed Oman in the spotlight for international trade and commerce making it a hub for regional and global investments. Oman also used to be a centre of trade during the old times particularly using maritime routes with ships bringing in goods from Africa and Asia, which were later moved logistically to other GCC countries.

This advantageous strategic location continues to be an ideal hub for transportation and logistics, now with access to major shipping lanes, air routes, and road networks and hence an ideal gateway to the Middle East, Asia, and Africa.

According to US Energy Information Administration, 2021, its location has also made Oman a significant player in the oil and gas industry as the largest



non-Opec oil producer in the Middle East. As Oman is located outside the Strait of Hormuz, this makes it a suitable place for oil and gas storage as well as a distribution hub for humanitarian aid for the region.

In recent years, Oman has made significant strides in creating an attractive environment for foreign, local, and regional investors by building on the country's strategic geographic position, reliable transport infrastructure, and a stable political environment allowing investors to reap great returns.

Hence, the country has invested heavily in its transportation infrastructure, with projects such as the new Muscat International

Airport, the expansion of the Port of Duqm, and the development of the Salalah Free Zone.

These initiatives have helped establish Oman as a major logistics hub in the region, with the logistics sector contributing 7% to Oman's GDP in 2022.

Furthermore, Oman has also made significant investments in developing its logistics sector, with a focus on enhancing its connectivity to the rest of the world.

The country's flagship logistics project, the Duqm Special Economic Zone, is a massive industrial and commercial development that spans over 2,000 hectares.

It includes a deep-sea port, an

airport, and a range of industrial and commercial facilities. The project is aimed at attracting foreign investors and providing them with a world-class infrastructure to operate from.

According to the World Bank, Oman ranks 5th in the region in terms of the quality of its transport infrastructure, providing investors with reliable and efficient transport options. Its extensive network of ports and airports provides investors with a convenient and efficient means of transportation for their goods and services.

The country's seaports, in particular, are vital to Oman's economic growth. In 2022, the Port of Salalah handled over 4.5

million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs), making it the largest port in the country. In 2021, Port of Salalah was ranked the second most efficient port in the world.

This massive throughput has made Oman an attractive destination for international businesses looking to expand their reach in the Middle East and beyond.

Additionally, Oman has several free zones, including Freezone Sohar and the Salalah Free Zone, which offer investors tax exemptions and 100% foreign ownership.

According to a report by Oxford Business Group, the Port of Salalah's container throughput increased by 13% in 2020, demonstrating the port's potential for growth.

One of the major investment opportunities in Oman's logistics sector is the further development of ports and free zones.

The country has four major ports, including the Port of Salalah, which is one of the largest ports in the region, and the Port of Duqm, which is being developed as a major transshipment hub.

Investment opportunities also exist in the development of logistics parks and warehouses. Oman has several logistics parks, including the Sohar Logistics City, which is being developed as a multimodal logistics hub, and the Duqm Logistics Park, which is being developed as a major logistics hub for the oil and gas industry.

Additionally, several international companies, such as DHL, have established logistics warehouses in Oman. According to a report by Fitch Solutions, Oman's logistics sector

is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 7.2% between 2021 and 2025, providing investors with a significant potential for returns.

In conclusion, Oman's strategic location is a game-changer for global business, trade, logistics, politics, and manufacturing.

It's a country located at the crossroads of significant trade routes, making it a competitive advantage in boosting its economy and enhancing its role in the region and beyond.

Oman's Arabian Sea location positions it as a natural logistics hub for shipping and air freight, coupled with its existing infrastructure, making it an ideal location for investment.

The country's location also offers abundant solar energy potential, making it a suitable location to become a hub for renewable energy.

Oman's stable economy and strategic location make it an ideal location for a financial hub and a platform for businesses to connect and facilitate trade between Asia, Africa, and Europe.

With its streamlined business procedures, range of incentives, and extensive network of ports and airports, Oman provides investors with significant opportunities to expand their operations in the Middle East and beyond, and its commitment to creating a business-friendly environment further enhances its attractiveness to investors.

Overall, Oman's strategic location offers numerous opportunities for the country to foster innovation and growth across several sectors of its economy, making it a promising market in the region.

Big bank investors owe thanks to Team America

JOHN FOLEY

In his lengthy letter to JPMorgan shareholders this month, Jamie Dimon suggested that when his investors see the American flag, they should say thank you. While the original sentiment may have come from Berkshire Hathaway boss Warren Buffett, Dimon was dead right to apply it to the banking industry too.

JPMorgan, Wells Fargo, Citigroup and PNC Financial Services all reported a surge in profits for the first quarter on Friday, driven mostly by the unprecedented rise in US interest rates over the past year.

Dimon's firm makes an average 4.7% yield on interest-earning assets, compared with a cost of interest-bearing deposits of just 1.9%. JPMorgan has passed on just 40% of the rise in benchmark rates to those savers. Wells Fargo has managed to keep even more for itself, passing on just 26%.

Big banks are operationally complex, yet for earnings purposes they're essentially rent-seeking interest-income machines. Dimon's bank has raised its target for net interest income by nearly 10% to \$81 billion for this year and said it will stay north of \$70 billion for a while.

That's not only a record — it's more than the bank's entire

revenue in 2007, when rates were last this high. And it comes at negligible cost: JPMorgan hasn't shifted its expenses forecast for the year.

All that makes it easier to ignore less flattering developments such as the 19% fall in year-on-year investment banking fees, and the flat trading revenue, a trend broadly replicated at Citi.

A string of mid-sized bank failures has also left the giants predictably unruffled. American lenders overall lost \$600 billion of deposits over the first quarter of the year, but JPMorgan's balances increased by a net \$33 billion.

The people driving these firms — Dimon, Citi chief Jane Fraser and Bank of America boss Brian Moynihan, who will report earnings next week — deserve credit, and they get it via generous compensation packages. But the real props go to their monetary and regulatory pit crew.

It's the Federal Reserve that engineered rising rates, low levels of customer defaults, and capital and liquidity buffers that make failure of these banks unthinkable. Elsewhere in Dimon's letter, he describes himself as a "red-blooded, patriotic, free-enterprise and free-market capitalist." Investors may lap that up, but his bank's earnings show other forces at work too. — Reuters

Human nature in modern economics: From virtue to pleasure

SAIF AL ABRI

The study of economics has, in modern times, separated itself from morality, focusing on practical activities of economising individuals. However, the way in which economics views human beings has far-reaching implications for public policy and the perceived best course for economic development and, by extension, human life.

The dominant paradigm in modern economics is neoclassical economics, which is built on the foundation of the marginal revolution. This revolution brought about a shift in the understanding of economics and its perspective on human beings.

In the classical paradigm, the economic theory of value was viewed as a social process shaped by specific social systems.

However, with the introduction of the concept of marginal utility, economics shifted towards a utilitarian individualistic approach, where the theory of value is based on a calculus of pleasure and pain.

This shift influenced the acceptance of the utilitarian theory of morals, which prioritises the happiness (pleasure) of mankind as the



AS WE NAVIGATE THE COMPLEXITIES OF MODERN ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, IT IS CRUCIAL TO CRITICALLY EXAMINE AND REFLECT ON THE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND VALUES THAT SHAPE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE FIELD OF ECONOMICS AND STRIVE TOWARDS A MORE HOLISTIC AND ETHICALLY INFORMED APPROACH TO ECONOMIC POLICY AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

basis for determining what is right and wrong.

This change in economic thinking has direct and indirect effects on public policy, government roles, and the conception of an ideal state.

In classical times reflected in

almost all scriptures and most ethical books, economics was embedded within the moral dimension, viewing the ideal state of a human being as one who pursues what is virtuous and who is free from desire, focusing on what a human ought to be.

In contrast, modern economics portrays a human being as an undisciplined self, a pleasure-seeking individual driven by desire.

The role of government is now seen as facilitating the pursuit of individual pleasures and desires rather than helping individuals achieve harmony and balance within themselves.

This departure from the classical perspective has significant implications for societal values, norms, and policies. Neoclassical economics has influenced policy areas

such as taxation, social welfare, environmental regulations, and labour markets.

However, policies that prioritise economic growth and material wealth without considering broader ethical implications may lead to environmental degradation, income inequality, and a loss of what it means to be human.

Additionally, focusing on the individualistic pursuit of pleasure and self-interest in economic decision-making may disregard communal values, social cohesion, and the common good in public policy. In conclusion, the concept of the human being in neoclassical economics has far-reaching consequences.

The utilitarian foundation of modern economics, with its emphasis on pleasure-seeking behaviour and individualistic pursuit of self-interest, has shaped public policy, government roles, and societal values.

As we navigate the complexities of modern economic systems, it is crucial to critically examine and reflect on the underlying assumptions and values that shape our understanding of human beings in the field of economics and strive towards a more holistic and ethically informed approach to economic policy and human well-being.

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 is arranged in a dynamic, overlapping layout. At the top, a grey box contains the text 'HAVE A PROPERTY'. Below this, a red banner with yellow text reads 'FOR RENT?'. To the right of the figure, the text 'Advertise with us.' is displayed in black. At the bottom, a red box contains the text 'Contact us on:' followed by the large yellow number '99639264'. The background is white with grey geometric shapes.

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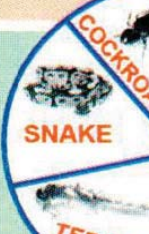
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ramadhan



Enjoy city hikes at night even during summer

As we are nearing summer, the best option is usually to go on a night hike. With the sun gone and the stars shining bright, the city transforms into a different world altogether. For those who want a leisurely walk, Muscat itself has multiple options for night hikes..... **P20**



QUR'AN VERSE OF THE DAY

{And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.]

Surah Al-Hajj, Verse 11

HADITH A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Ibn 'Umar reported that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Injustice will appear as darkness on the Day of Rising."

Sahih (Al-Albani)

HEALTH TIPS

Eating sweets immediately after Iftar will increase the size of your stomach and cause a delay in digestion. It will also cause a fluctuation in the blood glucose level, which will lead to your craving for more sweets. That's why it is recommended to have sweets in moderation 2-3 hours after Iftar.

Prophet Ibrahim and King Namrud

{HAVE YOU NOT CONSIDERED the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord [merely] because Allah had given him kingship? When Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death." Abraham said, "Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever

was overwhelmed [by astonishment], and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people. }Surah Al-Baqarah Verse 258:

IBRAHIM HAD ESTABLISHED a definite reason against idolaters. Nothing was left to prove for him except to reason against the rulers who proclaimed themselves gods.

The Quran discusses a certain conversation between an unrighteous ruler and Ibrahim. Although in the narration of the Quran, the name of the king/ruler has not been revealed, many historical sources suggest that it was Nimrod or Namrud. Nimrod became extremely arrogant due to his wealth and power, to the point that he made the claim that he possessed the power of creation and claimed divinity for himself. Namrud proclaimed himself as a living god and was worshipped as such by his subjects.

Namrud, King of Babylon, felt that his throne was in danger and that he was losing power because upon witnessing Ibrahim coming out of the fire unharmed, the majority of his people started believing in Allah and Ibrahim being a true prophet of Allah. Namrud wanted to debate with Ibrahim and show his people that he, the king, is indeed the god and

that Ibrahim was a liar. He feared that the status of godhead he had proclaimed for himself was not challenged by an ordinary human being. In order to safeguard his interests, he summoned Ibrahim to the palace and held a dialogue with him which Allah has narrated in Al-Quran:

Have you not thought about him who disputed with Abraham about his Lord (Allah) because Allah had given him the kingdom? When Abraham said to him: "My Lord (Allah) is He Who gives life and causes death." He said: "I give life and causes death." Abraham said: "Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise from the east; then cause it you to rise from the west." So the disbeliever was utterly defeated. Allah guides not the people who are Zalimeen (wrongdoers etc). (Surah Al-Baqarah: 2:258)

The king said to Ibrahim: "I hear that you invite men to worship the new God

and to abandon the old god." Ibrahim said: "There is no god except Allah, the One." The king, who is proud and arrogant, said: "What does your god do I cannot do?" Ibrahim said gently: "My Lord is the one who can bring life and death." The king arrogantly replied: "I give life and cause death." The Prophet Ibrahim did not ask how the king gave life and death as he knew that the king was lying. Ibrahim said: "Verily, Allah is able to bring the sun from the east, can you bring it from the west?"

King did not know what to say and what to do. After Namrud was silenced by Ibrahim, he (Ibrahim) left the royal palace. Then the truth of the Prophet Ibrahim spread throughout the land. Humans start talking about his miracle and his salvation from the fire and his arguments with king that made the king speechless.



STORIES FROM THE QURAN



Iraq’s ancient treasures sand-blasted by climate change

IRAQI ARCHAEOLOGICAL marvels that have survived millennia and the ravages of war now face a modern threat: being blasted and slowly buried by sandstorms linked to climate change.

Ancient Babylonian treasures, painstakingly unearthed, are slowly disappearing again under wind-blown sand in a land parched by rising heat and prolonged droughts.

Iraq, one of the countries worst-hit by climate change, endured a dozen major sandstorms last year that turned the sky orange, brought daily life to a halt and left its people gasping for air.

When the storms clear, layers of fine sand cover everything — including the Sumerian ruins of Umm al-Aqarib, “the Mother of Scorpions”, in the southern desert province of Dhi Qar.

Sandstorms have slowly begun to reverse years of work there to unearth the temples’ terracotta facades and many priceless artefacts, said archaeologist Aqeel al-Mansrawi.

Archaeologists in Iraq have always had to shovel sand, but now the volumes are growing.

After a decade of worsening storms, sand at Umm al-Aqarib now “covers a good part of the site”, that dates back to around 2350 BC and spans more than five square kilometres, he said.

In the past, the biggest threat was looting of antiquities at the ruins, where pottery fragments and clay tablets bearing ancient cuneiform script have been discovered.

Now the changing weather and its impact on the land, especially creeping desertification, spell an additional threat to ancient sites all across southern Iraq, said Mansrawi.

“In the next 10 years,” he said, “it is estimated that sand could have covered 80 to 90 per cent of the archaeological sites.”

WEATHERING AND DISINTEGRATION

The fabled land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers hosted some of the world’s earliest civilisations, the remains of which are under threat in modern-day Iraq.

The oil-rich country is still

recovering from decades of dictatorship, war and insurgency and remains plagued by misrule, corruption and widespread poverty.



Compounding its woes, Iraq is also one of the five countries most impacted by some effects of climate change, including drought, says the United Nations.

Upstream dams in Turkey and Iraq have reduced the flow of its big rivers, and more water is wasted by Iraq’s ancient irrigation system and outdated farming practices.

Summer temperatures topping 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) now often batter Iraq where droughts have parched agricultural areas, driving farmers

and pastoralists into crowded cities.

“The sandstorms became more frequent, the wind became dustier and the temperatures increase,”



said Jaafar al Jotheri, professor of archaeology at Iraq’s Al Qadisiyah University.

“The soil has become more fragile and fragmented because of the lack of vegetation and roots,” he explained.

As more farmers flee the countryside, “their land is left behind and abandoned and its soil becomes more exposed to the wind”.

Winds pick up “more sediment fragments that reach the archaeological sites”, Jotheri said, adding that the “sand and silt

cause physical weathering and disintegration of buildings”.

CONTAINING THE SAND DUNES

The problem is compounded by salinisation, said Mark Altaweel, professor of Near East Archaeology at University College London.

During extreme heat, he explained, water on the land surface evaporates so quickly that the soil does not reabsorb the crystals, which are left behind as a crust.

“When it’s hyper dry, the water quickly evaporates and that leaves that salt residue,” he said, adding that “you can see it on the bricks”.

Jotheri said that salt in the earth carried by sandstorms causes “chemical weathering for archaeological buildings”.

Iraqi authorities insist they are tackling the complex and multi-layered problem.

The government “is working

to contain the sand dunes”, said Chamel Ibrahim, director of antiquities of Dhi Qar province.

He pointed to a plan to plant a “green belt” of trees at a cost of about \$3.8 million.

But Jotheri voiced doubt, saying that to keep the vegetation alive, “you need a lot of water”.

When it comes to climate change, he said, “we are the country facing the most and acting the least. We are at the bottom of the list in terms of acting against climate change.” — **AFP**

TRAVEL TALES

Nile-side Egypt town heralds spring with pungent delicacy



THE OVERWHELMING smell may be misleading, but the Egyptian town of Nabaruh, its streets lined with shops selling salty, fermented fish called feseekh, is far from the seaside.

Landlocked in the Nile Delta, “Nabaruh is the capital of feseekh,” boasted 44-year-old Sherif al Yamani, owner of one of the town’s famed shops.

The millennia-old delicacy of saltwater fish, buried in salt for weeks at a time, remains a staple as Egyptians celebrate on Monday the ancient spring festival of Sham el-Nessim.

But it is as acclaimed as it is divisive, pitting those who complain of the pungent odour against others gleefully marrying feseekh with flat bread and spring onion.

The traditional dish dates back more than 4,000 years and has been found in archaeological sites in Egypt, said former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass.

“Ancient Egyptians used to salt fish to extend its shelf life so workers could continue to eat it as they built the pyramids,” he said.



Karim Abdel Gawad drove from a neighbouring province, Gharbia, to buy the fish in Nabaruh where “it’s really something else”, he said.

“There’s no room for experimenting with feseekh, you need to get it from somewhere you trust.”

Yamani takes pride in coming from one of a handful of feseekh-making families that began curing fish a century ago, making a name for their town.

“Whether or not it’s the holiday season, we’re always getting customers from all over Egypt,” he said, serving a client who had come from the capital Cairo, some 120 kilometres (75 miles) to the south.

SMELL OF SUCCESS

The ancient craft is delicate. One wrong move — too much moisture in the fish, not enough salt in the barrel — and a bad feseekh might cause botulism, as Egypt’s health ministry annually warns ahead of



Sham el-Nessim.

“It all comes down to how the fish is prepared,” which is why it should never be bought from open-air markets or street vendors, Yamani said.

With a careful eye to catch any error, he supervised his workers as they piled fish into large wooden barrels, each layer separated by a thick coat of coarse salt.

After each barrel is sealed with plastic, a fresh heap of salt is piled on top, locking everything in for the pungent smell to brew for weeks.

The spring festival, celebrated on the Monday after Easter in the Coptic Orthodox calendar, falls this year during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan.

For those fasting from sunrise to sunset, consuming the salty dish could make them unbearably thirsty the following day. Many got their fill the week before Ramadhan, Yamani said.

But love for feseekh seems to transcend hydration concerns, as clients continued to come in and out of the small shop even during the holy month, which is set to end next week.

And even a sharp economic crisis impacting every facet of Egyptian life over the past year — with inflation hitting 33.9 per cent in March — has not stopped locals from getting feseekh at a price of about 220-240 pounds (£7-8) per kilo.

“We didn’t imagine we’d be selling this much, but it seems like feseekh purchases haven’t been affected,” the fishmonger said. — **AFP**



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FADING LIGHT



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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

New finds in Italian archaeological park include Eros riding dolphin



ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE discovered numerous terracotta figurines during excavations in southern Italy that provide insights into religious life in the ancient city of Paestum.

In addition to seven bulls' heads, several miniature temples and altars, representations of the Greek god of love Eros riding a dolphin have been found in the Paestum and Vella Archaeological Park in the Italian province of Salerno.

They are "small masterpieces of craftsmanship," a statement from the archaeological park said on Saturday evening.

The finds were made in a small temple discovered by archaeologists in 2019 that dates back to the first decades of the 5th century BC.

The discoveries shed a "very interesting light on



ancient religious life," said Massimo Osanna, director general of the state museums.

For example, in addition to the figurines and other decorative elements, a stone slab with a kind of gutter was excavated in which -in front of the temple's altar - liquids such as the blood of sacrificed animals could be collected during religious rites, the park's director, Tiziana D'Angelo, explained.

Paestum was founded around 600 BC by the Greeks under the name Poseidonia and later fell into the hands of the Romans.

Located about 100 kilometres south-east of Naples, the ruined city is a Unesco World Heritage Site and is famous for its well-preserved temples from the Greek period.

"The discovery of hundreds of votive offerings, statues and altars in the small temple of Paestum confirms the extraordinary value of this site," said Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano. — dpa

LIFESTYLE

Takeaways from 2023's history-making Coachella



COACHELLA'S FIRST WEEKEND made history, brought back rock and boasted one of its most international slates ever, all while offering no shortage of its customary barely there fashion.

Here's a rundown of the weekend's takeaways:

HISTORY-MAKING HEADLINERS

Coachella 2023 was the first time none of the premier desert festival's headliners were white, and the three sets ran the gamut of representation while setting historic precedent.

Reggaeton giant Bad Bunny blazed through two hours of his oeuvre while honouring Latino music pioneers, offering his frenzied fans fireworks, special guests — including Post Malone — and a dance break.

The biggest pop star in the world was the first Spanish-language and first Latin American act to headline Coachella: "There's never been someone like me before," he said in Spanish.

The next night K-pop phenomenon BLACKPINK became the first Asian act to headline, exceeding already high expectations for a tightly performed show heavy on effects, as tens of thousands of festival-goers partied to a string of their pop smashes.

And on day three, Frank Ocean closed the weekend in his signature enigmatic fashion, after taking a full hour beyond his scheduled start time to begin. He did not allow press photos and nixed the increasingly customary YouTube live stream.

"Come on Frank, let's go!" shouted one onlooker as the massive crowd grew increasingly twitchy.

He finally appeared centre-

stage wearing a blue hoodie, mostly turned away from the crowd to perform his track "Novacane," and took prolonged pauses between songs including "Crack Rock" and "White Ferrari."

When Ocean finally spoke, he teased a new album to cries of joy from the audience, but he gave no indication of its content or timeline.

Ocean closed his set as abruptly as he began: "Guys, I'm being told it's curfew so that's the end of the show," he said, and the stage screen cut to black.

THE ROCK SHOW

For years, Coachella's fans have complained that the festival has veered too far from its alt-rock roots; Rage Against the Machine, Beck and Tool headlined the first edition in 1999.

But for all the weekend's eminently danceable sets — Charli XCX, Rosalia and Latto to name a few — rock was alive and well, from legacy acts to the cutting edge.

Blink-182 reunited with its original lineup for the first time in nearly a decade, offering a nostalgic headbanging moment for the droves of 30-somethings reliving the soundtrack to their youths, from "The Rock Show" to "What's My Age Again" to "All The Small Things."

After the set, many rushed to catch a blockbuster show from Blondie, who delivered hits including "Heart of Glass" and "Call Me," and invited guest Nile Rodgers onstage.

Fresh off the release of their album "the record," boygenius — the indie rock supergroup comprised of Phoebe Bridgers, Julien Baker and Lucy Dacus — reunited for a set that ranged from heartstring-tugging to a guitar-smashing vibe.

They had the crowd swaying and singing along to a setlist jam-packed with beloved tracks, including "True Blue" and "The Record."

The trio also got political, voicing support for trans and abortion rights, while also delivering an expletive-laden rebuke of Ron DeSantis, the extreme-right Florida governor considering a run for his party's 2024 presidential nomination.

Also among the rockstars was Ethel Cain, who brought her ethereal, southern gothic brand of folk-rock to the desert, donning a cheerleader skirt and letterman's jacket to lead the crowd through her tracks including the hypnotic hit "American Teenager."

"You guys like a good little yee haw?" said the Alabama native to cheers.

GOING GLOBAL

Along with Bad Bunny and BLACKPINK, major artists including Spain's Rosalia, Iceland's Bjork and Nigeria's Burna Boy received top billings on the festival's main stage, while India's Diljit Dosanjh and Pakistan's Ali Sethi drew large crowds to their high-octane sets.

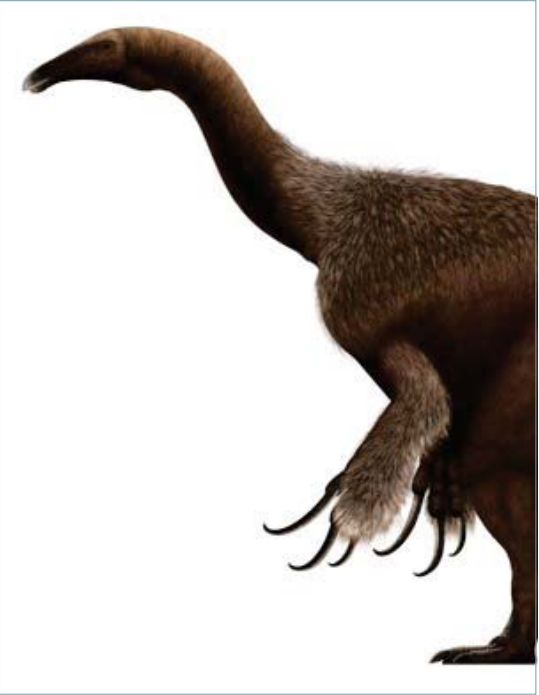
It was perhaps Coachella's most globalised lineup yet, reflective of international music trends brought into relief by streaming metrics.

Belgium's Angele bopped through her Coachella debut, as France's Christine and the Queens and Domi and JD Beck, the rising jazz duo comprised of a French keyboardist and American drummer, also played respective sets.

And the elusive electronic producer Jai Paul earned acclaim after playing his first public performance ever. — AFP

SCIENCE

Mysterious teeth may be of dinosaur never seen before in Britain



FOSSILS OF MYSTERIOUS teeth could belong to a dinosaur never seen before in Britain, according to Natural History Museum research conducted with help from artificial intelligence.

Researchers believe teeth found in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset are the remains of the earliest relatives of birds, a group of dinosaurs called maniraptorans.

The findings include the oldest evidence in the world of therizinosaur dinosaur, a large herbivore with long scissor-like claws which featured in the most recent Jurassic World film.

The Natural History Museum and Birkbeck College used machine learning to train computer models to identify which extinct animal the fossils were most likely to belong to.

The researchers gave the computers data about thousands of teeth from different dinosaur species and made 3D models of the fossils to find out which extinct creatures they were from.

Maniraptorans are thought to have walked the earth between 174 million and 164 million years ago during the Middle Jurassic era, but the new research suggests some of the dinosaurs could have existed almost 30 million years earlier.

Fossils from this time period are rare and little is known about the origins of these dinosaurs.

Simon Wills, a PhD student at the Natural History Museum, said."Previous research had suggested that the Maniraptorans were around in the Middle Jurassic, but the actual fossil evidence was patchy and disputed.

"Along with fossils found elsewhere, this research suggests the group had already achieved a global distribution by this time.

"The teeth we analysed include what are currently the only troodontid (a small bird-like dinosaur) and therizinosaur fossils ever recorded from the UK and are the oldest evidence of these dinosaurs anywhere in the world."

The Natural History Museum believes learning technology could be used more often to find out more about dinosaurs and their fossils. — PA Media/dpa

ramadhan

Local Scene

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TUESDAY | APRIL 18 | 2023

Enjoy city hikes at night even during summer

Hiking in Oman can be challenging, especially during the summer months when temperatures can soar to over 40°C. However, with the right preparation, it's still possible to enjoy the trails even in the hottest months.

For hardcore hikers who don't mind the hot temperature during the summer, here

until you feel better.

As we are nearing summer, the best option is usually to go on a night hike. With the sun gone and the stars shining bright, the city transforms into a different world altogether. For those who want a leisurely walk, Muscat itself has multiple options for night hikes.

serts after a tiring walk.

WALKING ON THE SOFT SANDS OF AZAIBA BEACH

Azaiba Beach is known for its soft white sand and calm, shallow waters, making it a great spot for swimming and sunbathing. At night, it also enjoys a visit, not just from youngsters trying to unwind

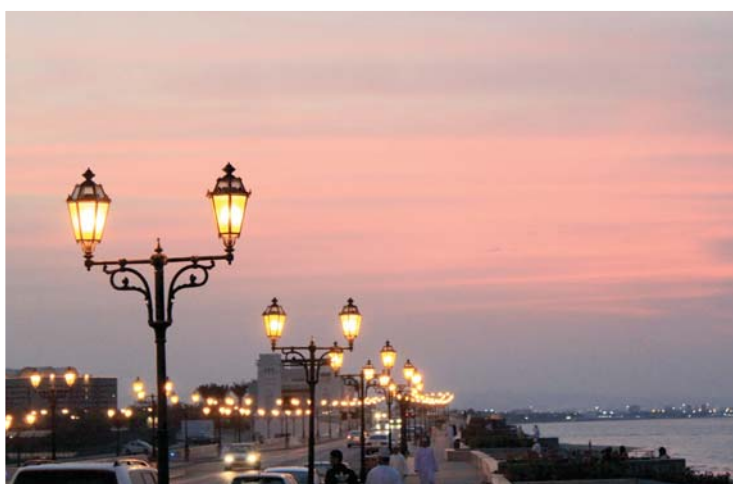
door experience that can be more relaxing and meditative than the more strenuous activity of hiking.

ENJOYING THE TRAILS OF AMERAT PARK

A lot of people think that Amerat Park only comes alive when there is a festival or celebration. Far from that, the

located in the heart of Muscat stretching along the picturesque Muttrah Bay. Offering stunning views of the sea, the mountains, and the city skyline, the corniche is a popular attraction among tourists due to its rich cultural heritage, lively atmosphere, and beautiful natural surroundings.

It's a great night hike destination, as the walkway is well-



are key things to remember.

Start early: The best time to hike in Oman is early in the morning before the heat of the day sets in. Plan to start your hike at sunrise and finish before noon.

Stay hydrated: Make sure to carry plenty of water with you and drink regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty.

Wear appropriate clothing: Choose lightweight, breathable clothing that covers your skin to protect you from the sun. Don't forget a hat and sunglasses to shield your face and eyes from the sun's rays.

Take breaks: If you start feeling overheated, take a break in the shade and rest

STROLLING IN SHATTI AL QURUM

Shatti Al Qurum is a popular tourist destination because it is a vibrant neighbourhood situated along the coastline of the Sea of Oman. Taking a stroll from the corniche all the way to the embassy area, you can expect to see a mix of traditional Omani culture and modern amenities. The area is lined with palm trees and well-manicured parks. One of the main attractions in Shatti Al Qurum is the long stretch of white sandy beach. Dotted with cafes, restaurants, and food trucks that offer a variety of cuisines, you can always grab some cold drinks or des-

but also for families wanting to enjoy the beach for a picnic. For hikers, the area offers a unique alternative to hiking in Oman. Visitors can walk along the shoreline, explore the rocky outcroppings, or simply relax and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. One of the advantages of Azaiba Beach as an alternative to hiking is that it is accessible to a wider range of people. Hiking can be physically demanding and require specialised equipment and experience, but Azaiba Beach is easily accessible and can be enjoyed by people of all ages and fitness levels. Additionally, the beach offers a different kind of out-

park is actually filled with different activities the locals enjoy, especially at night during the summer.

There are numerous trails to choose from, and because it is a park, these are family-friendly and can be done not only by adults but also by kids. From one end of the park to the other, it's already a good way of burning calories and just the right distance for those hoping to do short hikes in the middle of summer.

SOAK IN CULTURE WHILE HIKING ON MUTTRAH SEA ROAD

Muttrah Sea Road is a scenic waterfront promenade

paved and well-maintained, making it easy to traverse. Additionally, the Muttrah Sea Road is relatively flat, which means that it is accessible to hikers of all levels of fitness.

Muttrah Sea Road is an ideal hiking spot as it offers a variety of landscapes. The Sea Road winds its way through bustling markets, historic landmarks, and quiet neighbourhoods, providing hikers with a unique perspective on Oman's culture and history. Along the way, hikers can enjoy panoramic views of the sea, watch fishermen at work, and admire the stunning architecture of traditional Omani buildings.

