

The Sultanate of Oman took part in the China-Arab Cooperation Forum's 7th session on strategic political dialogue. The meetings were held in Chengdu, China. Oman's delegation at the forum was headed by Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its Permanent Representative to the Arab League. **DETAILS ON P5**



SETS GROUND FOR STRATEGIC COOPERATION

HIS MAJESTY CONCLUDES 2-DAY VISIT TO IRAN

TWO LEADERS DISCUSSED WAYS TO ENHANCE RELATIONS

STRATEGIC COOPERATION CHARTER TO MAXIMISE BENEFITS

KEENNESS TO WORK FOR REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

SUPPORT FOR JOINT COMMITTEES AND WORKING TEAMS

EMPHASIS ON ROLE OF PRIVATE SECTOR IN TWO COUNTRIES

DIRECTIVES TO ACTIVATE EXISTING BILATERAL AGREEMENTS



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq returned home on Monday, concluding an official two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, during which he conducted talks with the Iranian President and Leader of the Revolution.

His Majesty the Sultan was received at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, and others.

Earlier, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq and President Dr Ebrahim Raisi of the Islamic Republic of Iran, directed their governments to hammer out a strategic cooperation charter to maximise benefits and consolidate ties between the two countries in a sustainable manner. The two leaders also expressed their keenness to work for regional peace and stability.

This was stated in a joint communiqué issued by the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of the official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq to the Islamic Republic of Iran. The communiqué reads

as follows: “Based on the long-standing relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran and, in affirmation of mutual respect between the leaders of the two countries and, on the foundations of good neighbourliness, fraternity, religious and cultural ties, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq — the Sultan of Oman, made an official visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran from May 28 to 29 in response to an invitation by Dr Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

“During this visit, the two leaders discussed bilateral relations and ways of

enhancing them, notably in the areas of trade, energy, investment and culture - with the prime aim of achieving mutual benefits and cementing bonds between the two friendly peoples. The two sides expressed their satisfaction with the lofty status of bilateral relations, noting that these relations experienced greater growth, especially after the Iranian President’s visit to Oman last year upon the invitation of His Majesty the Sultan of Oman.

The two sides expressed their keenness to expand relations in the future. They pledged their support for the joint committees and work teams.

They also welcomed the exchange of visits aimed at following up the development of relations.

The two sides underscored the significant role of the private sector in the two countries in expanding economic cooperation.

They expressed their satisfaction with the continuous pace of trade exchange and the growth of joint investments. In this context, they welcomed the signing of agreements and memoranda of understanding in economic, commercial, transport, investment, energy and cultural fields.

TURN TO P2

■ A COMMERCIAL HUB AND TRADE GATEWAY



The coastal city of Qalhat in South Al Sharqiyah holds the distinction of being the oldest Omani city and the first capital of the Sultanate of Oman prior to the advent of Islam. With its strategic location overlooking the sea, Qalhat's port used to attract ships from all parts of the world. Vessels from India, Yemen, and those traversing the vital Strait of Hormuz would dock at its port. **DETAILS ON P19**

Shanghai records hottest May day in 100 years

SHANGHAI: Shanghai on Monday recorded its hottest May day in 100 years, the city's meteorological service announced, shattering the previous high by a full degree.

“At 13:09, the temperature at Xujiahui station hit 36.1 degrees Celsius, breaking a 100-year-old record for the highest temperature in May,” a post on the service's official Weibo account read.

Scientists say global warming is exacerbating adverse weather, with a recent report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warning that “every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards”.

Later in the afternoon, the temperature at the metro station in central Shanghai climbed even higher to 36.7 degrees Celsius,



the meteorological service for the eastern Chinese city said.

That put it a full degree above the old record, 35.7 degrees Celsius, which has been recorded four times previously -- in 1876, 1903, 1915 and 2018, according to the weather service. In May the United Nations warned that it is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, as greenhouse gases and El Nino combine to send temperatures soaring. — AFP



Communique sets ground for strategic cooperation

FROM PAGE 1

They gave directives to activate existing agreements and take steps to enter into any new agreements that meet their common approaches and serve their interests.

Also, within the perspective of establishing solid grounds for bilateral relations and securing their sustainability, the leaders directed their governments to work towards devising and signing a strategic cooperation charter between the two countries that covers various spheres, enhances joint cooperation and exchanging mutual benefits.

EXCHANGE OF VIEWS
His Majesty the Sultan of Oman and the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues of common concern.

They stressed the significance of maintaining efforts and benign endeavours in security, political, economic and cultural fields, with a view to consolidating the foundations of peace and stability in the region. They encouraged the pursuance of talks and political consultations between the two countries.

The two sides laid emphasis on 'a culture of dialogue' emerging in the region as a measure to settle outstanding issues, consolidate relations between neighbouring countries and accomplish peace and

prosperity for all peoples.

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran voiced great admiration for the efforts of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultan of Oman.

He commended His Majesty's wise approach and constructive policies on the regional and international arenas, noting that such a stance is capable of promoting positive bilateral relations, peace and stability in the region.

GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS
His Majesty the Sultan of Oman reciprocated the gesture. He expressed his great appreciation for the policy of good neighbourliness espoused by the 13th Iranian government. His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that rapprochement and cooperation between the countries of the region constitutes an important factor for establishing stability and peace in the region.

At the conclusion of the visit, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Dr Ebrahim Raisi, reiterated his pride over this historic visit made to Iran by his brethren, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultan of Oman.

Meanwhile, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik expressed his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Iranian president for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him and his accompanying delegation during the visit. — ONA





Follow us on facebook:
omanobserver



His Majesty holds talks with Khamenei to strengthen bilateral relations



TEHRAN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met on Monday with Ali Khamenei, Leader of the Revolution in the Islamic Republic of Iran at his office in Tehran. The meeting was attended by the Iranian President

Dr Ebrahim Raisi.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations. They underscored their keenness to enhance the historical relations between the two countries' peoples.

The meeting also touched on several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Iranian side by Dr Hossein Amirabdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ehsan Khandozi, Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs (Head of the Mission of Honour),

Ali Bagheri, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman.

— ONA

HIS MAJESTY CONCLUDES IRAN VISIT

TEHRAN: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik left Tehran on Monday afternoon, following an official two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran.

His Majesty the Sultan was seen off at Mehrabad International Airport by Mohammed Mokhber, First Vice President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ehsan Khandozi, Minister of Economic and Financial Affairs (Head of the Mission of Honour), Ali Najafi Khoshroudi, Ambassador of Iran to Oman and Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Muaini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran.

Meanwhile, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of thanks to President Dr Ebrahim Raisi of Iran.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere appreciation to President Raisi for the warm welcome and hospitality.

His Majesty the Sultan lauded the fruitful outcome of the visit, session of talks and meetings.

These, said His Majesty, will have a positive impact on enhancing the deep-rooted ties of friendship between the two countries to serve the joint interests of the Omani and Iranian peoples.

His Majesty the Sultan prayed



to Allah the Almighty to protect President Raisi and grant him good health, long life and success to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the Iranian people.

During his visit, His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied by a high-ranking official delegation that comprised HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, ambassador at large Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai and Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Muaini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran. — ONA



HIS MAJESTY RETURNS HOME AFTER IRAN VISIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home on Monday concluding an official two-day visit to the Islamic Republic of Iran, during which he conducted talks with the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi.

His Majesty the Sultan was received at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asaad al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Majlis Ash'shura , Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Mohammed bin Sultan al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Judiciary Council, Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman and Maj Gen Musallam bin Mohammed Ja'aboub Commander of the Sultan's Special Force.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during the visit by a high-ranking official delegation that comprised HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Ambassador at large Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai and Ibrahim bin Ahmed al Muaini, Ambassador of Oman to Iran.

— ONA



Joint Business Council signs MoU



TEHRAN: Within the context of the current official visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Omani-Iranian Joint Business Council on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Iran Khodro Industrial Group.

The MoU is related to conducting an economic and commercial feasibility study on finding a suitable platform for selling cars and after-sales service.

The MoU was signed by Mohammed bin Abdul Hussein Baqir, Head of the Omani side in the business council, and Alimardan Azimi, CEO of Iran Khodro Industrial Group.

The signing ceremony was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Mahdi Niazi, Acting Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade in Iran.

— ONA

Oman, Iran explore boosting economic, business relations

TEHRAN: Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met here on Monday with Mahdi Niazi, Acting Minister of Industry, Mines and Trade of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Iran.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed means of enhancing economic, business and investment relations between the two countries. They also touched on augmenting trade exchange and investments.

The meeting discussed the memorandum signed between the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Iran's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance.

The memorandum deals with investment promotion and exchanging investment opportunities and information in



a bid to attract Iranian investors to invest in various sectors in Oman, especially in industry, tourism, mining, food security and logistics.

Moreover, the meeting highlighted the matter of providing further incentives to Omani and Iranian business people. — ONA



MoTCIT and MoD sign pact on investigating aircraft accidents

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Defence on Monday signed a memorandum of cooperation in the field of aviation accident investigation, as well as coordination between the concerned authorities in order to achieve and enhance the safety of air transport in Oman.

The memorandum was signed on the part of the MoTCIT by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Zaabi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, at the MoTCIT headquarters.

By signing this memorandum, the two sides seek more fruitful cooperation and aspects of joint coordination in aspects related to



investigations of aviation accidents, the necessary protection for accident sites, and the rapid access and management of those sites according to the highest international standards, in a way that achieves the required safety. — ONA

Oman at China-Arab Forum meeting



CHENGDU: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 18th session of the senior officials meeting and the 7th session of the strategic political dialogue of the China-Arab Cooperation Forum, which was held in Chengdu, China, on Monday. The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman was headed by Abdullah bin Nasser al Rahbi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Arab Republic of Egypt and its permanent representative to the League of Arab States, in the presence of Nasser bin Mohammed al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman accredited to the People's Republic of China.

The Ambassador conveyed in the Sultanate of Oman's speech during the forum the greetings of His Majesty the Sultan and his appreciation to President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China for the efforts made by in making the dialogue a success and the objectives related to the work of the Forum.

The meetings will discuss a number of issues of common concern at the regional and international levels, and the activities of Arab-Chinese cooperation to be held during the current year. — ONA

BIOETHICS COMMITTEE HOLDS FIRST MEETING FOR 2023



The National Bioethics Committee, in its first meeting this year, chaired by His Highness Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University and Chairman of the Committee, discussed a number of topics; Including a proposal to organise training in the field of communication skills for medical and paramedical staff. The National Committee also discussed a proposal for the Committee to host the meeting of the Regional Office for the Middle East of the National Bioethics Committees in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) and the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean on June 14 and 15, in addition to the

forthcoming intellectual forum and the third international conference. to the committee.

The meeting was attended by His Eminence Shaikh Dr Kahlan bin Nabhan al Kharousi, Vice Chairman of the Committee, and a number of committee members.

The regional meeting of the National Bioethics Committees is held every two years in order to promote and develop national ethics committees in the Middle East, and to establish an effective mechanism for regional coordination and cooperation to address emerging issues related to bioethics.

The meeting will focus on the ethics and governance of digital innovations and biotechnology. — ONA

Nusuk exhibition showcases holy rituals

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The 9th edition of Nusuk organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) was held at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque on Monday under the auspices of Sultan bin Said al Hinai, Head of Omani Haj Mission.

The Haj Mission, which will comprise representatives from the Ministry, Department of Fatwa, Administrative and Financial sections, ROP, Oman Scouts, Media, medical, and various Haj companies will depart Oman on June 14.

The Nusuk exhibition which was at the events hall of the Grand Mosque which showcased the various facets of the holy ritual.

“The first official Omani pilgrimage mission was formed in 1972 by a noble order from the then His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and it was headed by Shaikh Sulaiman bin Mohammed al Salmi, who was Director of Governors’ Affairs at the Ministry of Interior and Justice at the time,” remembered Sultan al Hinai.



The Omani Haj missions in the following years continued from that date to the present day working hard to serve the pilgrims to the Sacred House of God through their various delegations, each of which assumed specific roles and responsibilities and served Hajis every year.

The Presidency of the Omani Haj Mission comprises the head of the mission, his deputy and adviser. They have to draw up general policies for the work entrusted to the mission, and supervise all the services and care that must be provided to the pilgrims.

The Mission will also have representatives from the Department of Awqaf, Fatwa, Administrative and Financial sections, ROP, Oman Scouts, Media, medical, and various Haj companies.

The first flight carrying pilgrims from Oman will leave Muscat on June 14 corresponding to Dhul Qa’ada 25, 1444 followed by regular flights carrying other pilgrims in the following days.

The ministry received as many as 33,536 applications including 29,930 requests from Omanis, and 3,606 requests from residents for this year’s Haj after the registration was closed on March 5.

Oman will only be able to send 14,000 people to perform Haj this year through MoARA based on the agreement with the General Authority for Awqaf (GAA) of Saudi Arabia.

Those who are eligible for performing Haj this year, who are selected electronically through the e-sorting and e-selection process, were contacted directly and we’re given five days to contract through the electronic system with Haj companies.

CPA launches drive to control supply of prohibited goods

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

Consumer Protection Authority launched a campaign titled ‘Your awareness protects you’ to limit the supply of prohibited goods.

It is part of the efforts to control misuse by some suppliers and hold the violators accountable.

The campaign is done in cooperation with a number of government institutions as part of CPA’s series of awareness campaigns that it is implementing during the current year to enhance awareness among consumers and suppliers alike in various fields. It will continue until the end of June of this year.

Saif bin Nasser al Rawahi, Director of the Communication and Media Department at the Consumer Protection Authority, said: “The campaign seeks to enhance the knowledge and legal background of suppliers about prohibited goods and related decisions and penalties for violating them, in addition to introducing consumers to prohibited goods and their dangers, and strengthening their national duty to report any practices associated with it, which would contribute to reaching a stable and safe market for all.”

The campaign includes the implementation of a number of awareness activities and programmes in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to ensure that its educational messages reach the different target groups. Awareness lectures will be organised in government, private and other academic institutions. Also, there will be direct meetings with suppliers



and workers in commercial activities related to prohibited goods.

An electronic guide of prohibited goods will also be launched to serve as a reference for consumers and suppliers to identify prohibited goods, their dangers, and the penalties for those who deal with them. In addition, various awareness and knowledge messages will be broadcast through social networks and external advertising outlets on the main roads of the Muscat Governorate.

Consumer protection efforts are meant to monitor the markets, control everything that may harm consumers’ health and safety or detract from their rights, and take legal measures against violators. It also appeals to consumers to report any violations they may notice in the markets through the various communication channels of the Authority.

Consumers confirm that awareness campaigns are of great importance in providing special protection for the consumer and raising community awareness regarding the supply of prohibited goods and ways to avoid and combat it in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

OPAL holds Oman Road Safety Forum

MUSCAT: Oman Energy Association (OPAL) on Monday organised Oman Road Safety Forum 2023.

The forum covered a spectrum of topics related to the field of safety on roads, including the Road Safety Strategy 2023-2030, as well as changes to the second edition of OPAL’s standard

for safety on the road and fatigue management techniques.

The event also included a discussion panel on challenges on roads and the numbers of accidents and fatalities.

The panel also reviewed how OPAL’s strategy contributes to reducing the number of dangers on roads. — ONA



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (20/2023)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
PRE/23/028 2023/MM/ QS-36	Design and Construction of Storm Water Drainage in Al Ansab	30	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	First
PRE/23/063 2023/MM/ QS-37	Construction of Proposed Solution to Resolve Water Stagnation at Boshier (35)	25	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	First
PRE/23/100 2023/MM/ HQ-21	Consultancy Services for Upgrading Al Amirat Street	125	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	First
PRE/23/109 2023/MM/ HQ-22	Supply and Installation of Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI)	25	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	Excellent & First
PRE/23/114 2023/MM/ HQ-23	Consultancy Services for Upgrading Al Shabab, Al Mazun and Al Khoudh Streets	75	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	First
PRE/23/115 2023/MM/ QS-38	Supply of Fertilizers to Al Mubailah Park	25	19/06/2023	09/07/2023	Specialist

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

• For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).

• For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

• For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).



Turkish President Erdogan and his party's allies greet his supporters following his victory at the Presidential Palace in Ankara. — AFP

Erdogan confronts polarised Türkiye after historic win

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday confronted the tough task of uniting his deeply divided country after winning a historic run-off election to extend his two-decade rule to 2028.

The four-point victory margin was Erdogan's narrowest of any past election, highlighting the sharp polarisation the conservative will contend with in his final term in office.

Erdogan, 69, sounded conciliatory in a victory speech to thousands of jubilant supporters gathered outside Ankara's presidential palace, calling on Turks to "come together in unity and solidarity".

Erdogan's elated supporters hailed the man they call "Reis" (chief) after he won the first run-off in Türkiye's history.

His opponent Kilicdaroglu defiantly vowed to "continue the struggle" against Erdogan and his AKP party, which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002.

Erdogan "will double down on his brand of populist policies... political polarisation is here to stay", said Emre Peker of the Eurasia Group consultancy.

Relieving Turks of the country's worst economic crisis since the 1990s is an urgent priority.

Nato partners are anxiously waiting for Ankara to approve Sweden's stalled bid to join the US-led defence alliance.

Erdogan has blocked the application, accusing Stockholm of sheltering Turkish opposition figures.

"Another five years of Erdogan means more of the geopolitical balancing act between Russia and the West," said Galip Dalay, an associate fellow at the Chatham House think tank.

"Türkiye and the West will engage in transactional cooperation wherever its interests dictate it," not joining Western sanctions on Moscow for the war in Ukraine and seeking economically profitable relationships, Dalay added.

US President Joe Biden and Erdogan are due to talk on Monday, presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told television channel A Haber. Nato issues and the delivery of US F-16 fighter jets to Türkiye are likely to be high on the agenda. — AFP

Heavy clashes in Sudan's capital as truce set to expire

DUBAI: Heavy and sustained clashes could be heard on Monday in parts of Sudan's capital, residents said, hours before the expiry of a shaky ceasefire deal that had brought some respite from a six-week-old conflict but little humanitarian access.

Fighting continued from Sunday into Monday in the south and west of Omdurman, one of three adjoining cities that make up Sudan's greater capital.

Across the River Nile in southern Khartoum residents also reported clashes.

Both fighting sides have said they are considering extending a deal for a week-long ceasefire brokered by Saudi Arabia and the United States that was designed to allow for the distribution of aid and is due to expire on Monday.

Saudi Arabia and the United States, which are also remotely monitoring the ceasefire deal and have appealed for its renewal, said on Sunday that both the army and the RSF had repeatedly violated the truce and had impeded the delivery of humanitarian access and restoration of essential services.

"Since yesterday evening there has been bombardment with all types of weapons between the army and the Rapid Support.

We're in a state of great fear. Where's the truce?" Hassan Othman, a 55-year-old resident of Omdurman said.

Across the country, the health ministry has said more than 700 people have died.

It has separately recorded up



Destroyed vehicles are pictured outside the burnt-down headquarters of Sudan's Central Bureau of Statistics, in the south of Khartoum. — AFP

to 510 deaths in El Geneina, one of the main cities in Darfur, a western region already scarred by conflict and displacement.

In Khartoum, factories, offices, homes and banks have been looted or destroyed.

Power, water and telecommunications are often cut, there are acute shortages of medicines and medical equipment, and food supplies have been running low.

At one orphanage in the capital, dozens of babies have died since the start of the conflict, which one official attributed mainly to staff shortages and recurrent power outages caused by the fighting.

The truce deal has brought some respite from heavy fighting but sporadic clashes and air strikes have continued.

The United Nations and aid groups say that despite the

truce, they have struggled to get bureaucratic approvals and security guarantees to transport aid and staff to Khartoum and other places of need.

A statement from Saudi Arabia and the US late on Sunday cited breaches of the truce including air strikes and commandeering of medical supplies by the army, and the occupation of civilian buildings and looting by the RSF.

— Reuters

Israeli forces kill Palestinian officer in the West Bank

JENIN: Israeli forces killed a Palestinian security officer during clashes in the occupied West Bank flashpoint city of Jenin on Monday, the official Palestinian news agency Wafa said.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the report. Earlier it said in a statement that its forces came under heavy Palestinian fire while seeking the arrest of security suspects in Jenin and returned fire at the gunmen.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah party identified the officer as Ashraf Sheikh Ibrahim, saying he had died "as he confronted the aggression and the occupation's storming of the city of Jenin."



Israeli soldiers walk outside a portable building under construction at the former Israeli settler outpost of Homesh in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

In another part of the West Bank on Monday, Jewish settlers inaugurated a seminary in an area that has been a focus of US scrutiny, drawing Palestinian condemnation.

Most countries deem Israel's settlements illegal - a view Israel disputes.

Palestinians say they eat away at the land they want for a future state and cite growing violence by settlers.

Abbas said Homesh must be removed.

"Statements of condemnation are no longer enough in the face of the (Israeli) extremist right-wing government," said his spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh.

In a bid to quell international concern, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel has no intention of building any new settlements as his nationalist-religious government has vowed to bolster existing ones.

Two days ago, an Israeli settler shot dead a Palestinian man who the military said tried to carry out a stabbing attack in a settlement in the occupied West Bank.

The incident came as several European countries condemned Israeli demolitions and settler violence in the West Bank, which flared again as Palestinian farmers said Jewish settlers fired at them while they were working on their agricultural land. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

BEIRUT

5 wounded in strikes targeting sites near Damascus

Israeli air strikes hit the Damascus region overnight on Sunday, the Syrian defence ministry said, with a war monitor reporting five wounded in attacks on air defence sites.

"At around 11:45 pm, the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial attack," the defence ministry said.

It targeted "certain positions in the vicinity of Damascus", but anti-aircraft defences came into action and brought down several missiles, according to the



ministry.

It reported material damage but no casualties.

People in the Syrian capital heard explosions shortly before midnight local time. — AFP

TUNIS

Tunisia arrests 3 over deadly stabbing attack

Three Tunisians including a teenager have been arrested on suspicion of stabbing to death a migrant from sub-Saharan Africa and wounding five others, a court spokesman said on Monday.

A 30-year-old man from Benin died after seven Tunisians set upon a group of 19 migrants in a house in El Haffara, a working-class area of Sfax, Tunisia's second city, local court spokesman Faouzi Masmoudi said.

Five others were hospitalised in the attack but "not seriously



wounded", he said. Many migrants use the country as a springboard for attempts to reach Europe by sea, usually to the Italian island of Lampedusa which is 150 kilometres away. — AFP

CAIRO

One person killed in floods in southern Jordan

One person was killed in the southern Jordanian city of Aqaba when his car was washed away by floods, the security authorities said on Monday. The body was found after civil defence teams searched overnight for him. Another passenger in the car was rescued, the statement said.

Jordan's Interior Ministry warned that more floods are expected in eastern and southern parts of Jordan.

It urged people to avoid valleys whether in cars or on foot.



Several people in the capital Amman shared videos and photos of their cars damaged, with windows or windshields broken due to large ice pellets, according to Al Mamlaka TV. — dpa



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | MAY 30 | 2023

7

In brief

■ BRUSSELS



EU DOUBLES FIREFIGHTING AIR FLEET FOR SUMMER

The European Union has doubled to 28 the number of aircraft available to help fight forest fires in the bloc and neighbouring countries, the EU commissioner for crisis management Janez Lenarcic said. The 10 water-bombing Canadair planes, 14 light amphibious planes and four helicopters will be on hand for what threatens to be a “busy, busy summer,” he said in an interview with the European Newsroom.

“This year has already started much drier than average,” he said, noting parched conditions until recently in Portugal, Spain, southern France and northern Italy.— AFP

■ BELFAST



7 CHARGED WITH SHOOTING APPEAR IN COURT

Seven men charged with the attempted murder of a senior off-duty police officer earlier this year appeared in a Northern Ireland court on Monday where they were remanded in custody.

Detective Chief Inspector John Caldwell was shot several times as he left a sports complex in Omagh, some 70 miles west of Belfast, with his son in February.

The high-profile officer had been coaching a youth football group at the time of the attack, which was later claimed by dissident republicans. The men appeared before Dungannon Magistrates’ Court via videolink charged with attempted murder and included a father and two sons, according to Irish broadcaster RTE. — AFP

■ ROME



4 DEAD AFTER BOAT OVERTURNS ON LAKE MAGGIORE

Four people died when a boat carrying tourists overturned on Lake Maggiore in strong winds, Italy’s fire brigade said on Monday. The boat tipped over Sunday off Lisanza, at the southern end of the lake in northern Italy, after the weather suddenly turned stormy.

“The bodies of four people have been recovered,” fire brigade spokesman Luca Cari said. The president of the Lombardy region, Attilio Fontana, said a “whirlwind” had caused the 16-metre long boat to overturn.

Around 20 survivors were rescued by passing boats or swam to shore, Italian media said. — AFP

Russia hits military facility in Ukraine in new wave of strikes



Police experts load fragments of a missile into a car after Russia fired a barrage of missiles targetting the Ukrainian capital. — AFP

KYIV: Russia said on Monday its military had hit Ukrainian air bases in overnight strikes and Ukrainian forces had shelled industrial facilities inside Russia as both sides sought the upper hand ahead of what Kyiv hopes will be a decisive counter-offensive.

In a rare acknowledgement of damage to a military “target,” Ukraine said that work was under way to restore a runway and that five aircraft were taken out of service in the western region of Khmelnytskyi, although it did not name the site or sites.

A large military airfield was located in the region before the war.

“At the moment, work is continuing to contain fires in storage facilities for fuel and lubricants and munitions,” the Khmelnytskyi region governor’s office said.

Russian state-owned news agency RIA

cited the defence ministry as saying more than one air base was hit, but there was no confirmation from Ukraine of damage to any other air bases.

The Ukrainian capital came under attack for the 16th time this month in the morning after a second successive night of bombardments. But officials said most of the drones and missiles fired overnight had been shot down and no targets were hit in the morning.

The attacks were part of a new wave of Russian air strikes this month as Ukraine, armed with new Western weapons, prepares a push to try to take back territory occupied by Russian forces.

Ukraine’s military said an attack on Odesa port had caused a fire and damaged infrastructure but did not specify whether the damage threatened grain exports.

The country is an important global grain supplier and the port is vital for shipping agricultural products abroad. It is also one of three included in a UN-brokered deal on the safe export of grain via the Black Sea.

“A fire broke out in the port infrastructure of Odesa as a result of the hit. It was quickly extinguished. Information on the extent of the damage is being updated,” the military’s southern command said.

Russia said on Monday that the Black Sea grain deal would no longer be operational unless a UN agreement with Moscow to overcome obstacles to Russian grain and fertiliser exports was fulfilled.

This month Moscow reluctantly agreed to extend the Black Sea grain deal until July 17, but said more progress had to be made to advance its own interests. — Reuters

Japan puts missile defences on alert as N Korea warns of satellite launch

TOKYO/SEOUL: Japan put its ballistic missile defences on alert on Monday and vowed to shoot down any projectile that threatens its territory, after North Korea notified it of a planned satellite launch between May 31 and June 11.

The nuclear-armed North says it has completed its first military spy satellite and leader Kim Jong Un has approved final preparations for the launch.

It would be the North’s latest step in a series of missile launches and weapons tests in recent months, including one of a new, solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile.

Tokyo expects North Korea to fire the rocket carrying its satellite over Japan’s southwest island chain as it did in 2016, a defence ministry spokesperson said.

Analysts say the new satellite is part of a surveillance technology programme that includes drones, aimed at improving the ability to strike targets in wartime.

“We will take destructive measures against ballistic and other missiles that are confirmed to land in our territory,” Japan’s defence ministry said in a statement.

Japan would use its Standard Missile-3 (SM-3) or Patriot Missile PAC-3 to destroy a North Korean missile, it added.

Any North Korean missile launch would be a serious violation of UN Security Council resolutions condemning its nuclear and missile activity, Japanese



Japan Self-Defence Forces soldiers walk past a Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile unit in Tokyo. — Reuters file photo

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters.

“We strongly urge North Korea to refrain from launching,” his office said, adding that it would co-operate with the US, South Korea and other countries and do all it could to collect and analyse information from any launch.

South Korea joined Japan in calling on the reclusive North to scrap its plan, which it described as “illegal”.

“If North Korea presses ahead, it will

pay the price and suffer,” a spokesperson of the South’s foreign ministry said in a statement.

Kim Gunn, the South’s special envoy for peace and security affairs on the peninsula, held a three-way telephone call with his counterparts from Japan and the United States, the ministry added.

They agreed to work together closely in leading a united response by the international community to Pyongyang’s planned move, it said. — Reuters

France’s Macron urges end to plastic pollution at global talks

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday warned that global plastics pollution was a “time bomb”, as diplomats began five days of talks in Paris to make progress on a treaty to end plastic waste.

Representatives of 175 nations with divergent ambitions met at the UNESCO headquarters with the aim of making progress towards reaching, by next year, a historic agreement covering the entire plastics life cycle.

As the talks opened, the head of the negotiations Gustavo Meza-Cuadra Velazquez said the challenge was “immense, as we are all aware here, but it is not insurmountable”

“The world’s eyes are on us,” he said.

Macron urged participating nations to put an end to today’s “globalised and unsustainable” production model, where richer countries export plastic waste to poorer ones.

“Plastic pollution is a time-bomb and at the same time already a scourge today,” he said in a video message, adding that the fossil-fuel based material posed a risk to global warming goals, as well as biodiversity and human health.

He added that the first priorities of the negotiations should be to reduce production of plastics and to ban “as soon as possible” the most polluting products like single use plastics.

The stakes are high, given that annual plastics production has more than doubled in 20 years to 460 million tonnes.

Two-thirds of this output is discarded after being used once or a few times, and winds up as waste. More than a fifth is dumped or burned illegally, and less than 10 per cent is recycled.

The head of the UN Environment Programme Inger Andersen told the delegates that a throwaway plastic culture was “gushing pollution galore, choking our ecosystems, warming the climate, damaging our health” and that the most vulnerable were the hardest hit.

“Only elimination, reduction of, a full lifecycle approach, transparency and a just transition, only those can bring success because the truth is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess,” she told delegates to loud applause.

Many countries are reluctant to aim for absolute cuts in production, insisting that recycling and better waste management is the answer.

— AFP



A general view of the plenary room during the opening of the second session of negotiations around a future treaty on tackling plastic pollution at the Unesco Headquarters in Paris. — Reuters

A mindful guide for engaging and energising kids



Dr Nisma Haris

The writer is a general physician and content creator

The countdown is on and the kids are waiting eagerly for their summer break to set in. With the soaring temperatures, staying inside and turning to watch stuff seems a go-to respite. However, with a little vigilance, the upcoming summer days can be turned more mindful than just a mere idle thing for our young cadre. Unquestionably, summer break means ample time for the kids to relax and detach from the rundown of school activities. Yet at the same time, it is inherent that they utilise their time more efficiently without going overboard for endless summer activities. Beginning with bedtime,

though there is no need to set an alarm for the next morning for school; albeit going to bed early and waking up early leaves one with a lot more positive energy at the start of the day to invest in the day effectively. A little late can be okay though, but letting your kid wake up close to noon hours for the next couple of months might not be a wiser thing. What better can be to learn something new and interesting during this period? A new skill or a new language at the kid's desired pace will surely mark a kick to his or her abilities. If the entire academic year your kid wasn't able to pursue some hobby and the constant school

IF TRAVELLING DURING SUMMER, MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD CAN CONNECT WITH THE PLACE YOU ARE VISITING BE IT YOUR HOMETOWN OR SOME RECREATIONAL SPOT. LET THEM MINGLE WITH THE LOCALS, WITH THE CULTURE, AND EXPLORE THE VIBE OF THE NEW PLACE

assignments pressures kept him off; this is the time to give that venture new wings. After setting a proper schedule

for the summer days it is wise enough to give online time its due worth. Divide the time judiciously between offline, online, and family time. When online, make sure they are spending this time watching educational stuff and not just scrolling clumsily. If you are travelling for summer, make sure your child can connect with the place you are visiting be it your hometown or some recreational spot. Let him mingle with the locals, with the culture, and explore the vibe of the new place. A little discomfort of being in a new environment is okay as experiences are the unparalleled gifts that we can provide to our children as they immensely help

with their learning abilities and stays in their memories forever. And before everything else, take the necessary steps to keep your child off that summer heat. Let them have well-balanced meals with yummy and healthy beverages to prevent dehydration or diarrhoea. When indoors as well, do remind them of sipping water at regular intervals as air-conditioned environments instil a dehydrating effect on the body. Moreover, take care while switching between cool indoor settings and hot outdoors to prevent heatstroke. Let it be gradual and not in a jiffy. All that is being said, the kids are ready for summer.

70 years after first summit, Everest keeps giving

PAAVAN MATHEMA

When Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay Sherpa first climbed Everest 70 years ago, they paved the way for thousands of foreign climbers to try to follow in their footsteps. The eight-day trek to the Everest base camp is among the most popular multi-day hikes in Nepal, with tens of thousands of tourists making the journey every year. What were small agrarian villages when the British expedition passed through in 1953 have since been transformed into tourist hubs with hotels, tea houses and equipment shops, boosting the livelihoods of local communities. In many homes, three generations have found employment in mountaineering — a far more lucrative occupation than farming or yak-herding. The work is hazardous by definition, but in a climbing season of about three months, an experienced guide can make up to \$10,000 — several times the country's average annual income. And other Sherpas and Himalayan community members have opened restaurants and guesthouses that line Everest's money trail. Veteran mountain guide Phurba Tashi Sherpa was born and raised in Khumjung, a village about 10 kilometres from base camp. He grew up watching his father and uncles go to the mountains for work, and soon joined them on expeditions, eventually climbing Everest 21 times before he retired. "There would be just a few expeditions before but now there are so many every year," he said. "That means an increase in income. It has helped improve the lifestyle here. A lot has changed." Since the first British teams set their sights on summiting Everest in the 1920s, Nepali climbers — mostly from the Sherpa ethnic group — have been by their side. "Sherpa" became synonymous with high-altitude guiding as they became the backbone of the multimillion-dollar industry, bearing huge risks to carry equipment and food, fix ropes and repair ladders. Now local expedition groups — instead of playing second fiddle to foreign climbing agencies — bring the bulk of paying clients into Nepal. And a younger generation of Nepali climbers is slowly being recognised in their own right. Renowned Italian climber Reinhold Messner said in a 2021 interview that it was a well-deserved climb up the ladder. "It is an evolution," he said. "And this is also important for the future economy of the country." The first ascent of Everest brought Nepal to the world's attention and its mountains have since captivated adventurers and tourists alike. — AFP

His Majesty's visit to Iran sets the stage for economic partnerships



Ali Rashed Al Matani
alimatanii2@gmail.com



The visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Iran marks a significant milestone in the strong and enduring relationship between Oman and Iran, particularly in political and economic spheres. The relations between the two countries has been maintained throughout the stages of conflicts in the region that were unmatched worldwide, and which the region has gone through for half a century. However, despite the disagreements, the ties between the two countries have remained strong. The Sultanate of Oman has remained neutral to whom the opposing countries turned for peace whenever conflicts with Iran escalated. This took place during a time of bitter strife fuelled by contrasting ideologies and competing objectives, for which the region's governments paid an enormous price in terms of fatalities and so on. This had an impact on the wealth and stability of these countries, as well as a buildup in weapons on both sides at the price of growth and the economy. The evolution of these relations, as well as the return to their senses in terms of recognising the reality on the ground and analysing situations with the balance of reason and wisdom that Oman has championed for the past 50 years, gives satisfaction. This implies that, rather than fighting and conflict, nations' geographical neighbours are handled

HIS MAJESTY'S VISIT LAID THE GROUNDWORK FOR A STRONGER FUTURE COLLABORATION WITH IRAN. IT ADVANCES OMAN-IRAN COLLABORATION WHICH ARE VITAL AT SEVERAL BILATERAL, REGIONAL, AND INTERNATIONAL LEVELS

through relations, bridge building, and development, and that the winners of such battles are the biggest losers. Perhaps these presidential reciprocal visits represent the growth of these ties, overcoming all of the challenges and crises that the region has encountered. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's visit laid the groundwork for a stronger future collaboration with Iran. It advances Omani-Iranian collaboration and connections, which are vital on several bilateral, regional, and international levels. This partnership also marks a new turning point in cooperative efforts, particularly following the detente of

relations between the countries and developments in the world; which necessitates a great deal of consensus among countries, as well as a greater understanding of the political, military, and economic conditions that impose dealing with greater responsibility following periods of conflict in the region. The visit of His Majesty the Sultan was the result of a follow up visit by Iranian President Dr Ibrahim Raisi to the Sultanate of Oman. Additionally, the visit consolidated the burgeoning relationships at several levels. The two sides inked memorandums of understanding and agreements in oil, gas, agriculture, and fish. The economic cooperation between the two nations is critical at now and future phases. It promotes global collaboration, enhances interdependence of interests, and reflects the political connections between two neighbouring nations, as well as the phases of growth experienced in recent years. We hope that economic links between the two countries improve since bilateral ties will benefit both peoples. It is also hoped that Oman's investment climate is capitalised to the point where trade exchange value exceeds the present figures. The private sectors of both countries are expected to maximise the benefits of this engagement in accordance with the Omani-Iranian agreement.

Winning is living...

A champion is afraid of losing. Everyone else is afraid of winning — Billie Jean King.

Billie Jean King, an American tennis player, is somebody who has enjoyed winning as she was also the former world number one and has won many Grand Slams.

Read her statement again and it is amazing when you realise the depth. Once you are at the top one is afraid of losing that position. What others want is that position, but do they always think of winning? In what intensity?

Do others focus on the champion's qualities or do they work on their own weaknesses?

Are you performing better than yesterday. A champion being afraid of losing is easy to understand but the second part of the statement - 'Everyone else is afraid of winning,' is a bit tricky.

Are we afraid of winning?

How often do we believe in winning?

And how often do we think about what happens when we win.

There is one factor and that is, of course, skills. Skills enable us to win. While we might have an element of in born talent, it is skill that sets one apart and in order to achieve skills there is no other way about other than practice - practicing with discipline.

What does practice do?

Practice is actually an opportunity to keep trying. And then you notice you have got it.

It need not be tennis or any form of sports but anything in life.

Life is not all about winning, some might say. And it is not about competitions. Life remains to be challenging and if one has not been taking up challenges then that person is definitely missing out on life.

There might be areas that might not be of your interest and that is understandable. But how often are we walking away from an opportunity simply out of fear?

Of course Billie Jean went on to fight gender inequality especially in pay



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

LIFE REMAINS TO BE CHALLENGING AND IF ONE HAS NOT BEEN TAKING UP CHALLENGES THEN THAT PERSON IS DEFINITELY MISSING OUT ON LIFE

and fought to reduce poverty among women.

Life is about knowing what you want in life. Is it for your betterment and for the betterment of the society?

This very thought often helps us in determining our goals.

Even when we know what is good for us we are lost in procrastination and unable to achieve what we must or ought to. And the sad part is we never get our time back. As we grow we are not too much into taking advice from elders and we move with our thought process that are often rigid.

By the time life teaches us our lessons, most of our loved ones are gone and we are left wondering with the thoughts starting with, "If only.," thinking about all those moments that could have been wonderful, but instead was spent on complaints and arguments.

Life is precious and quite often people are questioning themselves, "Am I taking life too seriously?"

The trick it seems is to get the right balance. The right combination of relationships, work, fitness, play, emotions, knowledge and spiritual path. An imbalance in any of these areas tend to create stress sooner or later.

Contributing to the society also brings about a sense of satisfaction, which is why there are so many volunteers in the society. Where did they have that urge? Is it developed or inborn trait?

Our environment shapes us so it could have been an inspiration that someone set an example or something that we have read about and had been motivated. But what keeps us in that space is the satisfaction.

Most important of all elements is the practice of gratitude. This practice not only gives us an inventory of all our blessings, but also to recognise them.

Satisfaction leads us to happiness. Happiness can be channelled to creativity that can be a lot of opportunities for others. You can be a winner each day.

CLONING CAMELS!



Dr Nisar Ahmad Wani, kisses a surrogate camel at the farm of the Reproductive Biotechnology Centre in Dubai, which researches and creates novel cloning techniques to reproduce camels, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. – Reuters

Desert wells help Iraq harvest bumper wheat crop as rivers dry

TIMOUR AZHARI AND AHMED SAEED

Amin Salah used to grow wheat near the banks of Iraq's Euphrates River, but persistent droughts have led him to switch to farming unlikely new grounds deep in the harsh desert of Najaf.

Watered by sprinklers fitted to wells dug more than 100 metres under the sun-bleached earth, his land now produces double what it did compared to when he relied on ancient methods that flood fields with river water, he said.

"It's a golden year, a golden season," said Salah, wearing a traditional white robe and reflective sunglasses as he walked his field and noted the benefits: less money and water spent, as well as a bigger and quality harvest.

Iraq's government says this officially-supported shift has allowed the country to double areas cultivated with wheat this year to some 8.5 million danams (850,000 hectares) compared to roughly 4 million (400,000 hectares) last year.

Agriculture ministry spokesperson Mohammad al Khuzai said that has translated into a harvest of around 4 million tons of wheat - the largest in years and 80 per cent of the needs of a country with a 43 million population

HEAVY USE OF WELLS COULD BLEED DESERT AQUIFERS DRY, AGRICULTURAL EXPERTS WARN

who eat bread at almost every meal.

The shift in methods is driven by necessity: Iraq's two main rivers, along which civilisation emerged thousands of years ago, have lost more than half of their flow due to reduced rainfall, overuse and upstream dams.

Drilling the desert for water could provide immediate relief in a country that the United Nations says is among the five nations most vulnerable to climate change in the world, and where climate-induced migration has already begun.

However, heavy use of the wells could bleed desert aquifers dry, agricultural experts and environmentalists warn. Some farmers, including one near the Imam Hussein Holy Shrine in Karbala, have already noted a drop in the water table.

Neighbouring Saudi Arabia in 2009 scrapped a 30-year wheat-growing programme relying on desert wells that achieved self-sufficiency but depleted the kingdom's scarce water supplies.

Iraq has more than 110,000 wells, but only a fraction, some 10,000, are fitted with modern systems that prevent water waste,

said Karim Bilal, an agricultural engineer and former director of Najaf's agriculture directorate.

Hadi Fathallah, director of public policy at consultancy Namea Group who has researched agriculture in Iraq said: "It's very desperate to go to desert wells.

"You are plugging into aquifers that have been gathering water for thousands of years and will disappear in a few years if used this way," he said.

Iraq should focus on

modernising agriculture, engage in water diplomacy with its neighbours to increase river flows and revitalise agricultural areas that have not recovered from war, Fathallah said.

Al Khuzai played down the likelihood of Iraq following a similar path as Saudi Arabia and said the government was focused on sustainable use, supporting the installation of drip and sprinkler systems.

Large institutions have bought into the shift to desert wells: The

body that oversees the Imam Hussein Holy Shrine now farms 400 hectares of wheat in the desert — 55 km from the shrine — up from 100 hectares in 2019.

"We have turned the desert into a green oasis," declared Qahtan Awaz, an agricultural official with the shrine, though he noted that the water table had sunk between 12 to 15 metres since last season.

Behind him, a pair of large green US-made harvesters pulled in wheat grown in large circles, then funnelled processed grain into waiting trucks for delivery to government silos.

From there, much of the grain enters one of the largest government-run food programmes in the world, which provides most families with monthly rations.

Crop failures in 2021 and 2022 driven by drought, and a surge in food prices due to Russia's war on Ukraine put the scheme under pressure, which the government wants to avoid.

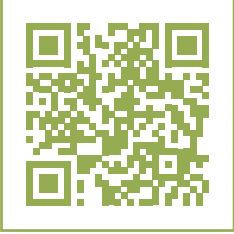
"The government are trying to alleviate a lot of pain," Fathallah said. "But this is not adaptation to climate change. It's a kind of morphine." — Reuters



An aerial view shows an excavator collecting wheat grains at a silo in Karbala, Iraq. – Reuters

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



INDIA HAMMER THAILAND, MOVE INTO SEMIS

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 29

India hammered Thailand 17-0 to power into the semifinals of the Men's Junior Asia Cup hockey championship in Salalah on Sunday night.

On Monday, Pakistan joined India as the second team in last four from Pool A after a thrilling 3-2 win over Japan.

Favourites India, who were until before the match second to Pakistan on goal difference, charged to top of Pool A with 10 points from four matches with a superior goal difference of 37.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Centre pitch in Salalah, India dominated throughout match scoring in all the four quarters.

Angad Bir Singh slammed four goals (13, 33, 47, 55th minutes), while Uttam Singh (24, 31) and Amandeep Lakra (26-pc, 29-pc) netted two apiece. Angad was adjudged as the best player of the match.

Yogember Rawat (17), Araijeet Singh Hundal (36), Vishnukant Singh (38), Bobby Singh Dhami (45-pc), Sharda Nand Tiwari (46-pc), Amandeep (47), Rohit (49-pc), Sunit Lakra (54) and Rajinder Singh (56-pc) were also on target for India to complete the 17-0 mauling of Thailand.

Thailand settled for fourth

place in Pool A with three points.

PAKISTAN THROUGH

In the last pool match of Pool A, Pakistan edged a fighting Japan 3-2 to move into the last four. Pakistan took the second spot from the group behind leaders India with 10 points from four matches over a lesser goal difference.

Japan finished third with six points from four matches.

It was Japan who took the lead in the second minute when Kumpei Yasuda struck from a penalty corner.

Pakistan came back in the second quarter with a Arbaz Ahmad goal from a penalty corner in the 23rd minute.

Just before the half-time break, Pakistan took the lead when Abdul Wahab found the target with a fine field goal.

In the 38th minute, Japan found the equaliser as Hyoto Yamada hit the target from a penalty corner.

Pakistan regained the lead in the next minute as Abdul Wahab repeated his feat with another good strike.

Pakistan survived some anxious moments as Japan pressed for another goal during the last quarter.

In the end, Pakistan, who needed a draw to advance, prevailed 3-2 to confirm their semifinal position.



India and Thailand players in action. – Abdulwahid al Hamadani

Al Suwaiq, Sohar ponder pulling out of next season

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 29

Omantel League 2023 runners-up Al Suwaiq Club has threatened to pull out of next football season due to their financial conditions blaming the Oman Football Association (OFA) for the technical decline of the sport in the country.

Al Suwaiq, who were in reckoning for the league title till the penultimate round of the OL, thrashed Sohar 4-0 in the last round to secure the second spot in the league.

Two days after the conclusion of Omantel League, where Al Nahda emerged champions, Al Suwaiq Club issued a statement regarding the club activities for the next season.

The statement begins by describing the technical decline of the level of the Oman Football Association championships for the previous seasons, especially the 2022-2023 season, which caused a negative impact on Omani clubs.

Al Suwaiq Club is about to make the decision to pull out of their football first team blaming the general situation of Oman sport and levels of the Oman Football Association championships.

Al Suwaiq cited some reasons for the decision. "The declining technical and organising status of football competitions and unclear vision of development. Prizes are not satisfactory and not commensurate with the expenses, not developing the



Ali bin Hamad al Khanbashi, former coach of Al Suwaiq.

level of refereeing and without applying a system. Not developing the level of arbitration and not applying the (VAR) technique. Absence of marketing. Absence of individual awards for players and administrators."

As soon as Croatia's Branko Ivankovic, Oman national team coach, announced the team's list for the internal camp from May 29 to June 3, the controversy over the Al Suwaiq crisis increased.

The camp included seven players from Al Suwaiq Club — Fayez al Rushaidi, Harib al Saadi, Mahmoud al Mushaifri, Khalid al Buraiki, Ahmed al Khamisi, Abdulrahman al Mushaifri and Esam al Subhi — which raised questions about the team's inability to achieve any championship this season.

Ali bin Hamad al Khanbashi, former coach of Al Suwaiq club, explained to *Oman Observer* that "Al Suwaiq's failure in the league is not due to the decline in the level of the players as much as it is due to the strength of Al Nahda

at a collective level."

"Al Nahda are the most organised and technically stable club, and they had planned to achieve the league title for more than two seasons. In addition is the stability of the team's formation, and therefore they deserved the championship," he added.

Ali Khanbashi affirmed his opposition to the Al Suwaiq administration's plan to pulling out the football activity, adding: "Al Suwaiq Club abound in a lot of talent, and a great team that has achieved championships is not supposed to study this decision."

Ali al Khanbashi expected that the fans of Al Suwaiq would also like the club to continue their involvement in the league and other OFA tournaments.

AL WUSTA, SOHAR ALSO PLAN PULL OUT

In addition, Al Wusta Club also announced the suspension of football activities for the 2023 season, the statement explained that due to the general conditions of the Oman sport and the financial challenges faced by the club, adding to the lack of clarity in the vision of the club's facilities and structures.

Sohar Club also issued a statement to suspend football activities for the 2023 season. In a club statement they said to suspend some sports activities for the coming period.

On the other hand, the Oman Football Association is yet to respond on the Al Suwaiq's statement of withdrawing their first team.



AUGER-ALIASSE
LOSES TO FOGNINI

STEPHENS BEATS
PLISKOVA

DJOKOVIC BATTLES INTO 2ND ROUND



Italy's Fabio Fognini celebrates after beating Canada's Felix Auger-Aliassime. — AFP



Sloane Stephens of the US celebrates after beating Czech Karolina Pliskova. — Reuters

PARIS: Novak Djokovic started his bid for a men's record 23rd Grand Slam singles title with a straight-set victory over Aleksandar Kovacevic in the French Open first round on Monday, as Carlos Alcaraz waited to open his tournament.

Two-time Roland Garros champion Djokovic held off a late rally from his American opponent on Court Philippe Chatrier to clinch a 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/1) victory. He has still not lost in his opening match of a major since the 2006 Australian Open.

"I'm very motivated to stay in this tournament for a long time, it's just the start now," said Djokovic after kicking off his 19th consecutive French Open campaign. "I'm happy. I've started well and hope I can improve further for the next match."

The 36-year-old will face Hungarian Marton Fucsovics, who he has beaten four times in as many meetings, in the second round.

Djokovic is only seeded third at Roland Garros this year despite the absence of his great rival and 14-time winner Rafael Nadal through injury, behind world number one Alcaraz and Daniil Medvedev.

Kovacevic, the world number 114 playing in his first Grand Slam match, battled hard but could not put Djokovic under sustained pressure until it was too late.

One break in the sixth game was enough for the Serbian star to take the opening set, before he raced through the second. Djokovic broke to love to start the third set before saving three break points in the second game.

Kovacevic did break for the first time in the match to level the set at 3-3, only to drop serve again immediately.

Djokovic uncharacteristically stumbled when serving for the match as Kovacevic forced a tie-break to the

delight of the crowd. But the world number three quickly regrouped, dominating the breaker before ending Kovacevic's resistance on his first match point with a thumping forehand return.

AUGER-ALIASSE BEATEN Canadian 10th seed Felix Auger-Aliassime suffered a third defeat at the opening hurdle in four visits to Roland Garros as he lost 6-4, 6-4, 6-3 to Fabio Fognini. The unpredictable Italian, who himself has lost in the first round six times in nine tournaments so far this season, pulled off a shock win on Court Simonne Mathieu.

The world number 52 will next face Australian Jason Kubler.

British 14th seed Cameron Norrie came through a five-set thriller on Court Suzanne Lenglen to beat home wildcard Benoit Paire 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4. Last year's Wimbledon semifinalist will take on resurgent Frenchman Lucas Pouille for a third-round berth.

Canadian Denis Shapovalov scraped past Brandon Nakashima 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3. Chinese hopes of a first men's singles match win at the French Open since 1937 were dashed as Wu Yibing lost 7-6 (7/4), 6-1, 6-1 to Robert Bautista Agut and Shang Juncheng was beaten 4-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-1 by Juan Pablo Varillas.

Zhang Zhizhen is the third and final Chinese man in action later on Monday.

In the women's draw, former runner-up Sloane Stephens dumped out 16th seed Karolina Pliskova 6-0, 6-4.

Russian Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova, the losing finalist in 2021, brushed aside Czech teenager Linda Fruhvirtova 6-2, 6-2. Croatian 22nd seed Donna Vekic and American Madison Keys also secured their places in round two. — AFP

FRENCH OPEN RESULTS

Men (first round)

Taro Daniel (JPN) bt Christopher O'Connell (AUS) 6-0, 6-2, 6-4; Denis Shapovalov (CAN x26) bt Brandon Nakashima (USA) 6-4, 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-3; Cameron Norrie (GBR x14) bt Benoit Paire (FRA) 7-5, 4-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4; Fabio Fognini (ITA) bt Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x10)

6-4, 6-4, 6-3; Diego Schwartzman (ARG) bt Bernabe Zapata Miralles (ESP x32) 1-6, 6-7 (5/7), 6-2, 6-0, 6-4; Novak Djokovic (SRB x3) bt Aleksandar Kovacevic (USA) 6-3, 6-2, 7-6 (7/1); Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP x19) bt Wu Yibing (CHN) 7-6 (7/4), 6-1, 6-1; Juan Pablo Varillas (PER) bt Shang Juncheng (CHN) 4-6, 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-1; Aslan Karatsev bt Alexei Popyrin (AUS) 6-3, 6-7 (4/7), 6-1,

6-2; Tomas Martin Etcheverry (ARG) bt Jack Draper (GBR) 6-4, 1-0 - retired; Alex de Minaur (AUS x18) bt Ilya Ivashka 6-1, 5-7, 6-1, 6-3

Women (first round)

Kayla Day (USA) bt Kristina Mladenovic (FRA) 7-5, 6-1; Madison Keys (USA x20) bt Kaia Kanepi (EST) 6-1, 3-6, 6-1; Diana Shnaider (RUS) bt Rebecca Marino (CAN) 6-3,

7-5; Bernarda Pera (USA) bt Anett Kontaveit (EST) 7-6 (8/6), 6-2; Donna Vekic (CRO x22) bt Dayana Yastremska (UKR) 6-2, 7-5; Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova bt Linda Fruhvirtova (CZE) 6-2, 6-2; Camila Osorio (COL) bt Ana Bogdan (ROM) 3-6, 6-3, 7-5; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE) bt Alycia Parks (USA) 6-4, 6-0; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Karolina Pliskova (CZE x16) 6-0, 6-4

OVA, clubs to set up volleyball training centres

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 29

The Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) signed agreements with seven local clubs to establish players' training centres across the Sultanate of Oman. The signing function took place on Monday at the headquarters of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) in presence of Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, Chairman of OVA, and representatives of the clubs.

The seven clubs who signed the deals were: Al Bashayer, Al Salam, Seeb, Sohar, Saham, Qurayat, and Majees. OVA chairman signed on behalf the OVA with

each of the club representative.

Establishing volleyball training centres in domestic clubs is part of the ministry initiative to support the sports associations and committees to focus on the junior faces and develop the potential players from clubs to represent the national teams.

The signed agreements also targeted to boost volleyball through domestic clubs and provide a suitable practicing place at the club headquarters.

DEVELOPING JUNIOR TALENTS

Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas appreciated the efforts taken by OVA towards ensuring this number of clubs to have the training centres. "The ministry is working closely with the sports associations and



committees to involve them in developing the junior candidates in different sports. There is focus to develop the talented faces in different sports and ensure presence of top candidates in the national teams. We hope to see athlete centres that are full of the potential players with

a comprehensive plan for their technical improvement," he said.

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali, OVA Chairman, said that these centres will start with junior ages in order to form strong national teams in under-17, under-19 and under-21 age categories as per the international standard.

"There is a plan to organise an internal competition for these centres. The top centres may participate in the official competitions of the OVA to compete with the other clubs," he added.

"As per the agreement, the OVA in coordination with the ministry will support the domestic clubs to provide transportation allowance, monthly

coach salary and the sporting tools and equipment. There is an appointed coach to supervise the junior national teams. Another coach will be appointed soon to monitor the progress of all the volleyball training centres across the Sultanate of Oman," he concluded.

Rashid al Hashmi, Chairman of Al Bashayer club, said that this training centre will assist the club to prepare and develop their young players who can join the national teams in the future.

"In Al Bashayer club, there are many volleyball players and this is one of the favourite sport. We are very pleased with the selection of Al Bashayer among the clubs and will work closely with the OVA to ensure graduating of proper candidates from this club," he said.

TROUBLED CHELSEA HIRE POCHETTINO AS NEW MANAGER

LONDON: Chelsea hired Mauricio Pochettino as their new manager on Monday as the Argentine accepted the daunting task of reviving the troubled Premier League club.

Pochettino agreed a two-year contract with an option for an additional year and will return to the Premier League four years after being sacked by Chelsea's London rivals Tottenham.

The 51-year-old had been out of work since being dismissed by Paris Saint-Germain in July 2022.

"Mauricio is a world-class coach with an outstanding track record. We are all looking forward to having him on board," Chelsea co-owners Todd Boehly and Behdad Eghbali said in a statement.

Pochettino, who will begin his new role on July 1, replaces Frank Lampard after the former England midfielder returned to Chelsea as caretaker boss until the end of the season.

Lampard was Chelsea's third manager of a dismal campaign that featured Boehly sacking Thomas Tuchel in September and then axing his successor Graham Potter in April after less than seven months in charge.

Pochettino emerged as the favourite after Chelsea held talks with the former Spain manager Luis Enrique and Julian Nagelsmann, who was sacked by Bayern Munich in March.

Pochettino verbally agreed to take charge at Chelsea in April, but the appointment was put on hold until the end of the season.

With the Blues wrapping up their lacklustre Premier League campaign with a draw against Newcastle on Sunday, Pochettino flew into England to officially seal the deal.

Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley, Chelsea's co-sporting directors, said: "Mauricio's experience, standards of excellence, leadership qualities and character will serve Chelsea Football Club well as we move forward.

"He is a winning coach, who has worked at the highest levels, in multiple leagues and languages. His ethos, tactical approach and commitment to development all made him the exceptional candidate."

Pochettino will arrive at Stamford Bridge to find a club in crisis after ending the season 12th in the Premier League -- their first



bottom half finish since 1996. They also lost to Manchester City in the FA Cup and League

Cup and made a limp Champions League quarterfinal exit against Real Madrid.

STANDARDS SLIPPING
Believed to be keen to sign a new goalkeeper, central

midfielder and striker, Pochettino has a big job on his hands. Just two years after Tuchel led

the Blues to Champions League glory, Chelsea face a rare season without European football.

Boehly reportedly told his players their season had been "embarrassing" after a home defeat against Brighton that featured fans shouting abuse at the American.

Boehly has come under fire after overseeing a haphazard £550 million (\$679 million) spending spree on new signings.

That record outlay failed to fix Chelsea's numerous issues and left them with such a bloated squad that there weren't even enough places in the changing rooms for every player to have their own seat.

Pochettino will have to fix the fractured morale among a squad packed with frustrated stars keen to leave after failing to secure regular game-time.

Lampard admitted after his final game on Sunday that standards in Chelsea's squad had slipped dramatically at a club who last won the Premier League in 2017.

Chelsea fans quickly grew tired of Potter and it will be intriguing to see if Pochettino's history with Tottenham proves a source of angst among the Blues faithful.

At least Pochettino knows what it takes to succeed in the Premier League after leading Tottenham to four top four finishes during his five-year reign in north London.

The demanding Argentine, who first managed in the Premier League with Southampton from 2013 to 2014, also took Tottenham to their maiden Champions League final appearance in 2019.

They were beaten by Liverpool in the final but although Pochettino was unable to end Tottenham's long trophy drought, it was still a surprise when he was sacked just months after that memorable Champions League run.

He was hired by PSG in January 2021, failing to win the Ligue 1 title in his first season, while leading the club to victory in the Coupe de France.

While PSG were crowned French champions in Pochettino's second season, their disappointing Champions League last 16 exit played a major role in his dismissal and replacement by Christophe Galtier last July. — **AFP**

Oman Sail team heads to Netherlands to prepare for Allianz Regatta

MUSCAT: Oman Sail's 49er team have travelled to the Netherlands for training as they prepare for an important second half of 2023 culminating in Asian Qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. After training in Medemblik, 50km north of Amsterdam, the team will compete at the Allianz Regatta from May 31 to June 4 where

seven of the 10 Olympic classes will be in action.

The Omani team will be led by Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, and Zakaria al Wahabi, 49er coach. The four sailors – Musab al Hadi, Waleed al Kindi, Abdulrahman al Maashari and Ahmed al Hasni – will train for 10 days before competition begins.

Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "This is a pivotal moment in the history of Oman Sail and the national sailing programme. We narrowly missed out on a place at Tokyo 2020, but the shorter qualification cycle presents another opportunity for



the team. The scheduled training camps and competitions have been arranged to make the most of the timing and maximise our capabilities in time for the 2023 Asian Championships in Thailand where the places will be decided. We are all focused and the training camps will

help to provide the ideal environment for the team to perform at its best."

Zakaria al Wahabi (pictured), Oman's 49er coach, added, "The first training camp of the summer season is an exciting opportunity to learn alongside some of the very best sailors in the world. From there we have



the chance to train and improve over the course of several months while competing in very high-level championships. This experience, alongside the support from the coaching

and performance team, will be invaluable as we look to achieve the ambitious goal of having an Omani sailor compete at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games."

The Allianz Regatta is the

first stop on a journey that could lead to Paris 2024. Following the conclusion of competition, the team will head to Kiel in Germany for training ahead of Kiel Week, taking place from 17-25 June.

After that the team will travel to China for a 10-day training camp in August and another in September to prepare for the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, being held from September 23 to October 8.

The team has also scheduled training in Pattaya, Thailand, in November and in the first week of December to familiarise themselves with the local waters in preparation for the 2023 Asian Championships, a qualification event for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games taking place in Chon Buri, Thailand, from December 10-21. In between each training camp the team will return to Oman to analyse and assess their progress in order to secure Olympic qualification for the Olympic Sailing event, being held in Marseille from July 28 to August 8 2024, and take a huge step forward in achieving Oman Sail's objective of winning an Olympic medal for the nation in sailing.



* Terms & Conditions Apply

Take advantage of reduced interest rates on all loans

Interest rate starting from 3.25% p.a

2479 11 11 | www.bankdhofar.com | f t i n

The offer is extended to 31 May 2023



Investments in Nizwa Industrial City exceed RO 480m

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 29

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) has completed the implementation of Phases 3 and 4 development works in Nizwa Industrial City, and is now gearing up to float a tender for the consultancy services project for Phase 5, covering an estimated area of 4 million sqm.

Ahmed al Hajri, Director General of Nizwa Industrial City, said that development works of Phases 3 and 4 were assigned to a local company in May 2020 as the total cost exceeded RO 5 million.

“The project included the construction of a 6.3-km internal roads, a paved pedestrian walkway along the roadsides, installation of 205 LED lighting poles, and the implementation of control and monitoring system at the industrial city’s entrances and internal roads,”



Al Hajri pointed out.

He added, “The project also included two security guard rooms at the entrances, rainwater drainage channel, a 5.9-km irrigation

network, an underground water tank, sewage and water networks, and fire-fighting system.

Additionally, truck parking areas were created at the industrial

city’s entrance, comprising more than 90 parking spaces and covering a total area of 13,000 sqm, which will serve investors and cargo owners around the clock.”



Madayn aims to further strengthen the contribution of these industrial cities to the in-country value in alignment with the priorities set forth in Oman Vision 2040

AHMED AL HAJRI
Director General of Nizwa Industrial City

Al Hajri emphasised that this project represents the commitment of Madayn towards supporting the growth of industrial cities and providing essential infrastructure services to attract both local and international investors.

“By doing so, Madayn aims to further strengthen the contribution of these industrial cities to the in-country value in alignment with the priorities set forth in Oman Vision 2040,” he added.

Nizwa Industrial City now covers a total area 7.2 million sqm following the approval of an expansion plan last year.

The industrial city is home to 155 projects representing manufacturing, service and commercial sectors, recording investments exceeding RO 480 million. The workforce in the industrial city has reached 6,150, with an Omanisation rate of 45 per cent.

Oman extends bid deadline for various mining projects



JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 29

Oman’s Ministry of Energy and Minerals has announced the extension of the auction period for several mining projects in the country. The move is aimed at attracting more local and international companies to invest in Oman’s mineral sector and to promote economic growth in the country.

The auction process was initially launched in March 28, 2023, with a deadline of May 28, 2023, for interested companies to submit their bids. However, due to the high level of interest shown by local and international investors, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals has decided to extend the deadline for submitting bids until July 30, 2023.

The projects that are up for auction include the exploration and mining of minerals in various parts of the country.

The concession areas in Dhofar Governorate are believed to be rich in gypsum, limestone, dolomite, phosphates and clay. It

covers Concession 71 — a 5,638 square kilometres (sq km) mining area, Concession 73 (1,551 sq km) and Concession 77 (1,355 sq km).

In Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, copper, gold, silver, chrome and basalt are the raw materials expected in Concession 22-B (1,144 sq km), Concession 22-D (790 sq km) and Concession 22-E (810 sq km). The same raw materials are expected in Concession 11-A (1,438 sq km) located in Al Buraimi Governorate.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals has stated that the projects offer significant opportunities for investors to participate in Oman’s growing mining sector and contribute to the country’s economic development.

The mining sector in Oman has a proven history of producing top-notch mineral resources. In fact, the country holds the distinction of being the first GCC producer and exporter of ferrochrome, with production reaching 210,000 metric tonnes in 2020.

Oman sees hydrogen output at 14-times domestic demand by 2050

Key goals: 15,000 sq km earmarked for clean energy projects, Project Management Office to be set up within ministry, Carbon capture not an option of first resort

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 29

Green hydrogen production in the Sultanate of Oman is projected to escalate to a world-scale 8 million tonnes by 2050 — volumes that open up huge opportunities for export, according to a high-level official of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani (pictured), Director General of Renewable Energy and Hydrogen, said the targeted output is roughly 14 times the volume that Oman is anticipated to consume internally in support of its own decarbonisation objectives, underscoring the predominantly export-oriented focus of the country’s future green hydrogen economy.

Speaking at the IEEE Power Talks forum held in Muscat last week, the official emphasised Oman’s commitment to achieving its ambitious green hydrogen capacity targets.

“Yes, we have the means to achieve much more than our requirement,” he said.

“We want to fuel the growth



of the economy as aspired by Oman Vision 2040, which calls for a tripling of the energy required to achieve this. We have the means to achieve this through the 50,000 square kilometres allocated for green hydrogen projects — which will generate almost 14 times the energy required by 2050.”

According to Al Shidhani, a task force set up by the government has also identified a further 15,000 sq km of land for non-hydrogen clean energy projects on top of the allocations earmarked for green hydrogen ventures.

“We worked on the land allocation task force, which — as mentioned — allotted 50,000 sq km exclusively for green hydrogen. On top of that, there is another 15,000 sq km that we are just putting aside for clean energy projects itself, not the

green hydrogen.”

Commenting on Oman’s energy transition goals, Al Shidhani said the strategy is underpinned by a commitment to net neutrality by 2050, while also delivering on energy security, competitive growth in a low-carbon economy, and value to society.

Other key pillars driving this strategy is the extensive adoption of renewables as a competitive energy source and the elevation of the local energy sector to the global stage, he added.

“Thus, at scale, we will start with low carbon hydrogen production leading to an export-driven hydrogen economy. Energy efficiency is key on this journey. Reliable, efficient and smart integration of the new energies will be extensive, as

A TASK FORCE SET UP BY THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO IDENTIFIED A FURTHER 15,000 SQ KM OF LAND FOR NON-HYDROGEN CLEAN ENERGY PROJECTS ON TOP OF THE ALLOCATIONS EARMARKED FOR GREEN HYDROGEN VENTURES

also the electrification of the transportation and industrial sectors as well.”

Importantly, carbon capture is another objective of Oman’s energy transition, although not an option of first resort, the official noted.

“Perhaps only when the technology devolves and evolves, we’ll look into carbon capture to help achieve net zero emissions,” he explained.

Furthermore, given the expansive and comprehensive scope of Oman’s energy transition strategy, a new Project Management Office (PMO) is being established at the ministry to oversee the delivery of the country’s ambitious decarbonisation programme.

“We are working closely with different partners within the government and the private sector to operationalise and then execute the energy transition policy and strategy, and the PMO office will play that role of orchestrating and keeping an eye on the implementation while escalating any challenges that come its way,” he added.

Asyad Express launches ‘Ship Your Cart’ service

MUSCAT: Asyad Express, part of Asyad Group, has introduced ‘Ship Your Cart’, a new e-commerce service which enables customers to ship their purchases from leading online shopping platforms in the United States and the United Kingdom with ease and at competitive prices via the online platform www.shipyourcart.com.

Shaikh Ibrahim bin Sultan al Hosni, Acting CEO of Oman Post and Asyad Express, stated, “We are committed to supporting and developing the e-commerce sector in Oman by providing integrated logistics solutions that keep pace with the latest technologies and enhance our presence on major e-commerce platforms, providing a unique customer experience characterised by speed, efficiency and competitiveness.”

The launch of ‘Ship Your Cart’ is part of Asyad’s strategy to develop the e-commerce sector and provide logistics support. The service allows all our commercial customers, entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and individuals to easily ship their purchases at competitive prices

from e-commerce platforms in the United States and the United Kingdom to Oman through a dedicated electronic platform,” Al Hosni added.

Jason Ashbrook, Vice President - Commercial at Asyad Express, explained, “Through this service, we aim to meet the changing and growing needs of our customers.

‘Ship Your Cart’ will provide customers with a seamless global shopping experience with various benefits, including free virtual addresses in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as order consolidation, shipment tracking, and doorstep delivery or to the nearest post office.

To ensure fast delivery, orders are processed within 24 hours and all fees are paid in advance, so there are no additional charges upon shipment arrival.”

‘Ship Your Cart’ is the latest addition to the growing offering of Asyad Express designed to bring its customers the latest e-commerce solutions and enhance their overall experience and convenience, supported by the integrated logistics ecosystem of Asyad Group.

NBO Muzn Islamic Banking celebrates a decade of success

MUSCAT: Muzn, the Islamic Banking window of National Bank of Oman (NBO), recently marked its 10th anniversary. Established as the first licensed Islamic banking window in Oman, Muzn has witnessed robust progress, delivered excellence, and contributed to the growth of the Islamic banking sector in Oman.

To commemorate this milestone, Muzn hosted an exclusive event dedicated to celebrating its corporate partners at NBO’s Head Office in Athaiba. During the event, Muzn showcased its journey, while reflecting upon its growth and achievements and unveiled its revamped brand identity, aligned with the NBO’s brand.

The attendees gained insights into Islamic banking sector, Muzn’s contributions towards the nation and were introduced to elevated products and services that will enhance the overall customer experience.

Abdullah Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer at NBO, said, “As we commemorate the 10-year journey of NBO Muzn Islamic Banking, we stand proud



of our achievements and look forward to the exciting prospects of the sector. We also look forward to leveraging the growth provided by Islamic banking to grow our business. Guided by our values and commitment to Shariah-compliant principles, we have relentlessly pursued excellence in our offerings.

Looking ahead, we will continue to leverage our expertise, nurture our partnerships, and

introduce solutions that meet our customers’ needs.”

Salima al Marzouqi, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, “We are thrilled to mark this significant milestone in the journey of NBO Muzn Islamic Banking. It is a testament to the trust and confidence our customers have placed in us over the years. We are excited about the future of Islamic banking

prospects in Oman and remain committed to further enhancing our offerings and continue our mission to empower individuals and businesses through Shariah-compliant banking solutions.

We would like to express our gratitude to our customers and partners for their support and contributions to our success and we will continue to unlock opportunities that drive progress for their businesses.”

KR’s IFF, EPS get ISO certifications

MUSCAT: Khimji Ramdas (KR), a leading business conglomerate in Oman, is thrilled to announce that Khimji Ramdas Interior Fit-outs and Furniture (IFF) and Engineering Products & Services (EPS) businesses have been awarded ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications.

These internationally recognised standards affirm the company’s commitment to delivering exceptional services through an effective quality management system.

The ISO certifications signify the business’s dedication to continually enhancing its services to meet and exceed customer expectations. By implementing the standard requirements of ISO, the company ensures improved efficiency, better customer satisfaction and a systematic approach to addressing customer problems with appropriate solutions.

This achievement reinforces its position as a trailblazer in the market, showcasing its ability to plan and build successful business strategies whilst



earning the trust of stakeholders and investors. ISO 9001:2015 stands for Quality Management System, ISO 14001:2015 for Environmental Management System and ISO 45001:2018 for OHSE System respectively.

“We are delighted to receive ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 45001:2018 certifications.

This achievement showcases our unwavering dedication to delivering industry-leading services, improving customer satisfaction and aligning our organisation with planned policies and goals.

These certifications reinforce our commitment to quality

and the success of our business strategies, thereby, strengthening our reputation as a trusted provider of interior fit-outs and furniture as well as engineering products and services,” said Ravi Dhulipala, COO of the KR Infrastructure cluster.

Hitesh Akarte, General Manager of IFF & EPS stated “Both these businesses have been key collaborators in delivering relevant and cutting-edge technology across Oman’s business sectors. Our aim is to be a one-stop solution for all B2B needs, including layout design, assistance in the right product selection, commissioning and complete service support.”

Ahlibank celebrates RO 2 million milestone since launching Tamkeen

MUSCAT: To celebrate the milestone of its successful crowd funding initiative “Tamkeen”, ahlibank held an open day event with the presence of many stakeholders and beneficiaries of the programme.

The event aimed to highlight the importance of supporting SMEs and their significant role in helping entrepreneurs, providing job opportunities, and overall diversifying and enhancing the economy through innovative and advanced technological means. The Tamkeen initiative garnered the attention of many SMEs and has proven successful since its inception last year.

The unique Tamkeen crowdfunding initiative is a first-of-its-kind programme that was launched in response to the Capital Market Authority’s issuance of crowd funding legislation, and aims to explore different means of funding through non-conventional ways.

The initiative received positive feedback from both borrowers and potential investors and has



closed RO 2 million worth of deals in only 9 months since its beginning.

Speaking on the impressive milestone achieved by the Tamkeen initiative, Zaliya al Balushi, General Manager – Head of Corporate Banking at ahlibank, said, “At ahlibank, we realise the pivotal role SMEs play in supporting the local market and diversifying the economy.

Therefore, the Tamkeen initiative was thoughtfully designed based on a critical understanding that SMEs may

require funding through non-conventional means. We wish to support SMEs through easy, fast and safe financing solutions.”

“The development of SMEs is crucial on a nation-wide level as they contribute to fulfilling the Oman Vision 2040. The Tamkeen initiative has been very successful and has shown impressive growth in a short span of time since its beginning. We are proud to have closed RO 2 million worth of deals and look forward to achieving greater milestones in the future,” Al Balushi added.

Ignite your passion for the road with Geely’s all-new Coolray

MUSCAT: Geely, the authorised dealer for Geely vehicles is thrilled to announce its latest offering in Oman — ‘Season to Explore’ with a range of exciting benefits. Geely has earned a reputation worldwide for producing outstanding vehicles.

Now, even the people of Oman can indulge in the same extraordinary driving experience with the recently launched all-new Coolray!

With its impressive design, cutting-edge technology, and unparalleled cockpit experience, the all-new Coolray is the perfect

vehicle for those who crave adventure, thrive on uncertainty, and demand excellence.

This season is the perfect opportunity for car enthusiasts to become proud owners of a Geely car in Oman.

The ‘Season to Explore’ offer for all-new Coolray brings in unbelievable prices and also includes a generous cash gift of RO 2301, 3 years of AAA roadside assistance, and a manufacturer’s warranty for 5 years or 150,000 kilometres. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants,



model year and manufacturing year. Conditions apply. Visit the Geely Oman showroom for exact details).

The all-new Coolray comes equipped with a range of advanced safety features, including intelligent cruise

control, blind spot detection, and lane departure warning, that work together to ensure a secure and comfortable driving experience.

Its sleek and sporty design, featuring a unique grille, spoiler, rear quad exhaust, and 1.5 turbo engine, gives the car a dynamic and energetic look.

In addition to its stylish exterior, the Coolray also offers a 540° HD panoramic view, auto parking assist, four-way DVR, unique colours, ambient lighting, and a ‘Gradient Grey’ super dynamic colour changing paint that gives different shades when

viewed in different angles.

These features make the Coolray more than just a car - it’s a lifestyle choice that empowers drivers to explore new horizons and embark on unforgettable journeys. Geely has recently introduced several new features to the Coolray, which include a BMA chassis, seats with ventilation, and a rear AC outlet.

These new additions are aimed at enhancing the car’s overall performance and comfort level, making it an even more appealing choice for drivers with busy and active lifestyles.



China urges Japan to halt export restrictions on chips

BEIJING: Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao (**pictured**) urged Japan to halt semiconductor export controls, calling it a “wrongdoing” that “seriously violated” international economic and trade rules, a statement from his ministry said on Monday.

China’s latest condemnation of the export restrictions was made during Wang’s talks with Japanese Trade Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura on May 26 at the Asia-

Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) conference in Detroit. Japan, along with the Netherlands, in January agreed to match US export controls that will limit the sale of some chipmaking tools to China, and has placed restrictions on the export of 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment to its neighbour.

The US imposed the restrictions last year aiming to slow China’s work on supercomputers that



can be used to develop nuclear weapons systems and artificial intelligence systems.

Japan has not singled out China in its statements about the export controls, saying only that it is fulfilling its duty to contribute to international peace and stability.

Monday’s statement from the Chinese commerce ministry also said, however, that China “is willing to work with Japan to promote practical cooperation in

key economic and trade areas.”

On Friday, Nishimura met with US Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and the two agreed to deepen cooperation in the research and development of advanced chips and technologies such as quantum computing and artificial intelligence.

Wang also met Raimondo and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai while at the summit, criticising US economic and trade

policies towards China, including the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework that excludes China and aims to provide a US-centred alternative to its influence.

The members of the Group of Seven (G7) advanced nations this month agreed to “de-risk” but not decouple from China, reducing their exposure to the world’s second-largest economy in everything from chips to minerals. — **Reuters**

India’s electricity supply improves in cooler pre-monsoon



Workers of Torrent Power Limited install cables on electric pylon on the outskirts Ahmedabad, India. — **Reuters**

LONDON: India’s electricity transmission network supplied a near-record amount of power in April but the system was much more stable than the year before thanks to lower temperatures and the return of some gas-fired generation.

Total electricity supplied was almost 131 billion kilowatt-hours (kWh), the fourth-highest monthly amount on record, based on data from the Grid Controller of India’s National Load Despatch Centre.

But the total was down by more than 2.3 billion kWh (-1.8%) compared with the same month a year earlier when much of the country was sweltering in an early heatwave.

On the densely populated northern plain, temperatures in New Delhi’s Palam suburb averaged 28.2 degrees Celsius (82.8 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with 33.0 Celsius in the same month a year ago, cutting peak electrical loads for refrigeration and air-conditioning.

At the same time, extra generation was provided by solar farms (+1.8 billion kWh, or +23%) and coal-fired generators (+0.3 billion kWh, or +0.2%).

These increases helped offset some of the reduced output from hydroelectric generators (-3.0 billion kWh, or -25%) and gas-fired units (-0.3 billion kWh, or -10%). The combination of lower temperatures and increased solar generation significantly reduced stress on the transmission system, especially during the afternoon peak.

System frequency fell below the minimum acceptable threshold of 49.9 cycles per second (Hertz)

only 11% of the time in April 2023 compared with a record 32% in April 2022.

Although gas-fired generation was down slightly compared with the previous year, it rose by more than 0.5 billion kWh compared with March, to the highest level for 12 months, as the cost of imported liquefied natural gas fell.

But despite lower average temperatures, peak demand increased by 4.2% compared with the year before, reflecting underlying load growth from the growing number of appliances connected to the system.

Rapid underlying load growth will continue to make the system vulnerable in future heatwaves.

Coal-fired power generators held stocks equivalent to 12.8 days of consumption at the end of April, up from just 8.0 days at the end of the same month in 2022, reducing the risk of generator outages as a result of fuel shortages.

Domestic coal production increased by 35 million tonnes (+10%) in the first four months of 2023 versus the same period in 2022 as the government pressed for more output to avert a repeat of the previous year’s blackouts.

The volume despatched to power producers via the railroads was up by a more modest 12 million tonnes (+5%) reflecting congestion on the network.

Combined with lower temperatures and lower generation, the increase in coal deliveries was sufficient to rebuild generator inventories to a more comfortable level and avoid previous fuel problems.

— **Reuters**

ODP to provide cloud, cyber security services to Al Dakhiliyah Governorate

MUSCAT: The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah signed an agreement with Oman Data Park (ODP) for the provision of cloud services, hosting e-mail, monitoring, follow-up services and cyber security services to the governorate, within the framework of the digital transformation process and in line with efforts to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The agreement also includes the pursuit to find new opportunities for cooperation between the two sides, providing modern systems and technologies and communication solutions to meet the requirements of the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, in addition to encouraging the exchange of experiences in various fields.

In accordance with this agreement, Oman Data Park will create and host the domain name (domain) and e-mail IDs for the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, where an official electronic address for the governorate will be provided to be used by visitors and beneficiaries of electronic services, while an e-mail ID will also be available for each, in addition to providing secure hosting, cyber security services and technical support and to raise



the effectiveness of government work and ensuring the smooth flowing of work.

The agreement was signed by Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah and Khalid bin Nasser al Abri, General Manager Corporate Services of Oman Data Park.

Commenting on this subject, Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, the Governor of the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah said: “This agreement comes within the keenness of the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah in creating an integrated infrastructure for the provision of e-government services and in a manner that achieves the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik

towards achieving administrative decentralisation as well as simplifying and facilitating procedures of services provided to citizens”.

For his part, Khalid bin Nasser al Abri, General Manager Corporate Services in Oman Data Park, said: “This agreement comes within the exerted efforts of ODP in enhancing the digital transformation process in Oman and utilising the modern advanced technologies, within the framework of the company’s commitment to keep pace with the latest technologies and practices in the field of digitisation, in order to achieve the highest efficiency in providing highest standards of hyper security services”.

Oman extends bid deadline for various mining projects

FROM PAGE 13

This has contributed significantly to Oman’s GDP, accounting for 1.4% of the country’s total output, a marked improvement from 0.6% in 2019. Oman has also exported minerals and mineral products worth over \$1.5 billion, and the government aims to increase this figure to 10% by 2040.

In 2017, Oman became the world’s top gypsum exporter, surpassing Thailand.

The country supplied major global markets with 7.4 million tonnes of gypsum. However, in 2020-2021, the situation changed significantly, with Oman now accounting for 44.4% of the world’s gypsum supply, which equates to roughly 17.5 million tonnes annually.

The ministry is committed to promoting the mining sector in Oman and creating a conducive environment for investors. The government has implemented several measures to support the development of the mining sector, including the establishment of a dedicated mining authority and the introduction of new mining laws and regulations.

Indonesia seeks \$700 million to install 200 MW of solar power



JAKARTA: Indonesian state utility Perusahaan Listrik Negara seeks a \$700-million investment to install a 200-megawatt (MW) solar panel that will replace diesel power generators in a bid to reduce carbon emission, the company said

The plan is part of its target to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2060. PLN has planned to have 4.68 gigawatt (GW) of solar panels installed between 2021 and 2030.

The company’s director Evy Haryadi said the 200 MW solar panel is the first phase of a longer term plan to replace 1 GW of diesel power plants with solar power. He didn’t provide details on the timeline for the initial phase. — **Reuters**

Oil slips as economic jitters offset US debt deal

NEW YORK: Oil prices slipped on Monday as economic worries over further interest rate hikes trumped a tentative debt ceiling deal reached in the US, possibly averting a default in the world’s largest economy and oil consumer.

Brent crude futures slipped 68 cents, or 0.8%, to \$77.72 a barrel by 1350 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$73.44 a barrel, down 56 cents or 0.7%. Trade is expected to be subdued on Monday because of UK and US public holidays.

US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy over the weekend forged an agreement to suspend the \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling and cap government spending for the next two years. Both leaders expressed confidence that members of the Democratic and Republican parties will vote to support the deal.

Still, analysts saw any boost in oil prices from the debt deal as short lived.



A 3D-printed oil pumpjack is placed on dollar banknotes in this illustration picture. — **Reuters**

The US Federal Reserve may still raise interest rates in June, IG’s Sydney-based analyst Tony Sycamore said. “Higher US rates are a headwind for crude oil demand,” he added. Markets are leaning towards expecting the Fed to raise rates by 25 basis points next month, then keep rates steady for the rest of the year.

Chinese stocks fell after data showed profits slumping at

China’s industrial firms.

Meanwhile, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) and allies including Russia, known as Opec+, is due to meet on June 4.

Saudi energy minister Abdulaziz bin Salman warned short-sellers betting that oil prices will fall to “watch out”, in a possible signal that Opec+ may further cut output. — **Reuters**

Biden gives little, gets less in debt ceiling deal



BEN WINCK

The author is a columnist who covers the US economy, the Federal Reserve, economic policy, and related topics from Washington.

For President Joe Biden, a debt-ceiling victory comes with a bittersweet taste. The White House and top congressional Republican Kevin McCarthy reached a tentative deal for lifting the government's borrowing limit on Saturday night.

Each party championed the deal as a crucial step toward avoiding a sovereign default. But between broad spending caps and stricter rules for food stamps, Republicans have more to celebrate than their Democratic peers. America and its creditors,

generally, have even less to be happy about.

After months of negotiation, Biden and McCarthy reached an agreement just nine days before US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said the country was expected to run out of cash.

The deal lifts the debt ceiling about \$4 trillion from its current level of \$31.4 trillion, extending the government's borrowing power for two more years. It conveniently allows Biden to avoid a similar standoff before the 2024 presidential election.

Biden has a few wins, but mostly he gets to keep spending

he had already pushed through, including money dedicated to clean energy projects through the Inflation Reduction Act.

Student loan relief will also remain in place. Republicans had looked to roll those back.

The actual changes made to the budget swing in conservatives' favour. It redirects \$10 billion of funding away from the Internal Revenue Service that was meant to modernise the system.

In effect that might have helped the government collect more in taxes – the revenue side of the budget equation that was woefully missing from the current

deal.

The White House also caved to Republicans' push for work requirements for federal aid programmes. If passed in the coming days by Democratic and Republican lawmakers, who still need to vote, low-income Americans up to age 54 will need to work in order to receive federal food support, up from the previous 49-year-old limit.

Meantime, Biden appears to be hoping that American voters have short-term memories. Cutting sacred entitlements is unnerving for Democrats. But 2024 is far away, and for the next two years,

America's spending habits can hum along without congressional disruption.

In the end, though, US finances may be worse off. The net result of this bill is that spending levels stay the same in 2024 and increase by roughly 1% in 2025, which will likely add to the \$925 billion deficit.

While investors seem to be as eager as ever to buy US debt, having the world's largest creditor play chicken with its finances – all while living paycheck-to-paycheck – is a reminder that at some point, patience somewhere will run out. — Reuters

Central bankers face a balance sheet reckoning

Central banks' balance sheets have exploded in size since 2008. After interest rates started rising last year, several of those institutions have reported losses.

That's not a problem, we're told, since central banks are not bound by ordinary accounting rules. Recent research, however, finds that financial crises are more likely to occur after periods when their balance sheets have massively expanded. Besides, losses erode both the credibility and independence of monetary authorities, making it harder for them to fulfil their inflation-fighting mandate.

In recent years, the typical central bank has combined the asset growth and asset-liability mismatches of the Silicon Valley Bank with the leverage of Lehman Brothers and the balance-sheet opacity of Enron.

The expansion of balance sheets is unprecedented.

According to a new paper by Niall Ferguson and colleagues, published by Stanford University's Hoover Institution, central bank assets relative to GDP are at multiples of their historic average and nearly twice the previous peak reached during World War Two. The Federal Reserve's assets of \$8.5 trillion sit on a mere \$42 billion of capital.

Last year, the Fed reported its first loss since 1915. A number of other central banks from Australia to Sweden are in the red.

Central bank accounts are the stuff of headaches. Some use fair-value accounting, with changes in the market value of their securities reported in the profit and loss account.

Others don't mark their assets to market, even for securities that they aren't intending to hold indefinitely.

The Bank of England uses conventional financial reporting standards, but holds securities it acquired through quantitative easing in a special purpose vehicle, The Bank of England Asset Purchase Facility Fund. Central bank profits are usually distributed to the government – the Fed has handed more than a trillion dollars to the US Treasury since 2000 – but losses are retained on the balance sheet.

The Fed actually records its losses as "deferred assets," which means that however much it loses it can't slip into negative

equity.

Central banks are not like ordinary banks, we are told. They don't exist to make profits or avoid losses, but to conduct monetary policy.

Their earnings are immaterial. Solvency in the conventional sense doesn't apply to them. Since they have no depositors, they can never suffer from bank runs.

Since they create their own liabilities — in the form of money — they can never run short of funding. Several central banks, including those of Israel and Mexico, have in the recent past successfully operated despite having negative equity.

Whether it's good practice for central banks to inhabit this Alice-in-Wonderland world is another matter. In "The Reckoning: Financial Accountability and the Rise and Fall of Nations", the economic historian Jacob Soll suggests that the rise and fall of nations and empires is reflected by their changing attitudes to accounting.

Poor book-keeping, he says, leads to "financial chaos, economic crises, civil unrest and worse."

The Medici family in Renaissance Florence thrived when their bank's books were kept in good order, but the family's power collapsed when they neglected the accounts and took undue risks.

Likewise, the failure of the French House of Bourbon to maintain proper accounts contributed to their eventual overthrow, says Soll.

Accounting is not just an essential feature of capitalism. It also ensures that governments are held accountable as far back as the Dutch Republic of the seventeenth century. According to Adam Smith the Bank of Amsterdam – the world's first central bank, founded in 1609 – ran smoothly because its books were balanced.

The fact that central banks until the twentieth century were required to redeem their notes in gold forced them to keep orderly accounts.

As Anne Murphy writes in "Virtuous Bankers: A Day in the Life of the Eighteenth-Century Bank of England", the zero balance produced by double-entry book-keeping conveyed a sort of virtue.

There's something inherently troubling about the modern central bank's cavalier attitude towards accounting. — Reuters

Australia breaks its dependence on China for lithium mining



NATASHA FROST

The author writes the Europe Morning Briefing and reports on Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific from Melbourne, Australia.

Deep in rural Western Australia, Pilbara Minerals' vast processing plant looms above the red dirt, quivering as tons of a lithium ore slurry move through its pipes.

The plant turns the ore from a nearby quarry into spodumene, a greenish crystalline powder that is about 6% lithium and sells for about \$5,700 a ton. From there, the spodumene is shipped to China, where it is further refined so it can be used in the batteries that power goods like cellphones and electric cars.

Australia mines about 53% of the world's supply of lithium, and virtually all of it is sold to China. But now the Australian government wants to break the world's dependence on China for processing the minerals driving the green revolution.

Pilbara Minerals, the country's largest independent lithium miner, is among the companies exploring a new model for producing battery chemicals — done closer to where the lithium is mined and sold to allies like the United States and South Korea.

The challenges of getting such an industry underway are daunting. China has an enormous head start, with years of experience and hundreds of lithium refining plants, and a steadily tightening grip on the world's battery-making facilities. Australia's more rigorous workplace standards will also make it harder to compete with China on price, analysts said, even as some in Australia have argued that they will result in a more trustworthy, premium product.

"Consumers will vote using their feet, and they will buy electric vehicles, or even solar panels at home, based on the costs," said Marina Zhang, a researcher at the Australia-



A man inspects processing at the Pilbara Minerals plant, at the Pilbara Minerals lithium mine in Western Australia. — NYT

AUSTRALIA MINES ABOUT 53% OF THE WORLD'S SUPPLY OF LITHIUM, AND VIRTUALLY ALL OF IT IS SOLD TO CHINA. BUT NOW THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WANTS TO BREAK THE WORLD'S DEPENDENCE ON CHINA FOR PROCESSING THE MINERALS DRIVING THE GREEN REVOLUTION.

China Relations Institute at the University of Technology Sydney.

Pilbara Minerals is working with the Australian tech company Calix on a project to refine spodumene to a lithium phosphate salt — a key step in readying the material used in batteries. The companies are expected to make a final decision by the end of the year whether to invest up to 70 million Australian dollars, or around \$47 million, to build a demonstration plant.

Dale Henderson, the CEO of Pilbara Minerals, and other proponents have argued that refining lithium at home would create jobs, reduce the impact of shipping — 94% of shipped spodumene is thrown out as waste — and secure supply chains for battery chemicals amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Refining lithium would also allow Australia to tap into the Inflation Reduction Act, the Biden administration policy enacted last year. The law aims to cut into China's green energy dominance by offering loans or subsidies to companies in countries, like Australia, that have free trade agreements with the United States.

At the Group of 7 summit last weekend, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Anthony Albanese of Australia jointly announced projects intended to

strengthen the supply chain for "critical minerals" used in clean energy.

The Australian government has already put hundreds of millions of dollars toward supporting the lithium refining industry, betting that customers will seek out lithium supply from a country that is more environmentally friendly and has a strong rule of law.

"If you have more of the supply chain in a country which has very strong governance, and a very, very safe and trustworthy business environment, then consumers can have more confidence in the products that they buy," said Allison Britt, a director at Geoscience Australia, a government agency.

A government report last year forecast that 20% of global lithium refining could take place in Australia by 2027, up from less than 1%. In some cases, top officials have set even loftier goals.

"I want to make sure that we use the lithium and nickel and other products that we have to make batteries here," Albanese said in a speech. "That's part of the vision of protecting our national economy going forward."

But Australia would have to make significant strides to get closer to China in refining. Australia has just two facilities

to produce battery-grade lithium hydroxide, used to make cathodes, with a third under construction. All have suffered from major construction delays related to labour shortages, as well as cost overruns.

The largest facility, co-owned by the American chemical maker Albemarle and Australian miner Mineral Resources, is being expanded with the goal of becoming "one of the world's largest lithium production facilities," according to a statement from Albemarle. Last year it produced its first battery-grade lithium hydroxide — more than a year behind schedule.

A big challenge facing Australia is cost. The investment needed to establish a lithium hydroxide plant is roughly 2 1/2 times higher in Australia than in China, said John Stover, a portfolio manager at Tribeca Investment Partners, citing data from the bank UBS.

"Historically, Australia has shipped unprocessed ore to other countries to process," he said. "That change in mindset, I think, is going to be tricky."

Chris Ellison, the owner of Mineral Resources, said the government must make it easier for foreign companies to invest in Australian lithium refining through incentives like funding and tax breaks.

"They are being offered grants to build in Europe, the US and places like Vietnam from the American government," he said in a presentation to investors.

— The New York Times

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Observer Classified Section

TUESDAY

MAY 30, 2023 DHUL QA'ADA 10, 1444 AH

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almaashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595



النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO



INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP **96353654**
TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**
Follow us: f i n t www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

FOR RENT

IN Darsait, 3 bedrooms, hall, 4 bathrooms, kitchen, with small sea view, near the Indian School. RO 240 monthly. T: 99315986

FOR RENT, an apartment in Barawi Al-Mutaz, 3 rooms, a hall, a boardroom and its accessories. 96408425

FLATS 2BHK and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact: 79256679.

SIT. WANTED

I AM Muhammed Manaser from Sri Lanka, looking for job. I can read, write, speak Arabic, English and Hindi. I have experience as PRO/ Requirement Officer/ Logistics helper. 78793877.

INDIAN male civil engineer, 22 years experience, 18 years work in Gulf, Oman and 4 years work in India Pune. Work within various client OAMC, OMRAN, Oman Air, Haya and Be'ah. Having D/L. Contact: 71666379, email: sadasarteumesh@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT and audit assistant, Indian male, 27 years, M. Com and competed 3 years of CA articleship, have more than 5 years of experience in this fields in India. Seeking a position in accounts/ audit fields. Contact Mobile: 78052900, email: ranjithdevan24@gmail.com

YOUNG and honest, looking for a suitable job. Experience in factory operation, training, HR and administration. Language — English, Arabic, Hindi. Driving licence and own car. Mobile: 92459703.

FOR RENT

Flat for rent

- 1) Darsait, near Indian School: Two bedroom flat, bath attached. Hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat, hall, kitchen and toilet.
- 2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco: One bedroom, bath, kitchen, AC, curtains.
- 3) Al Ghubrah near Mars Hypermarket: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.
- 4) Al Ghubrah near Indian School: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

*All flats provided with airconditioners, contact GSM: 91473374/97886085.

Urgent Requirement for Sohar Production Company

- Mechanical Site Supervisor
- Maintenance Planning Engineer

Graduate Engineer with minimum 10 to 12 years experience required in supervision of mechanical work with coordination of engineering team onsite basis in Steel Plant, Oil & Gas and Refineries, Aluminium Industries preferred

Send CV to: vap1oman@gmail.com / hr@alraioaman.com

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Aluminium Fabricator looking for

SALES EXECUTIVES (With own car)

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Candidates with releavant experience only can apply

Email: aluminium@shanfari.com
Whatsapp Number: 99256757 / 99422814

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SERVICES

BUILDING of 1.500 sqm 3 stories, accommodation, store and office at Misfa. ☎99432177, 99010964.

RENT A CAR

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually, Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om

@omanobserver



OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 18, 1441 AH

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Observer

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHIBLI VOL. 39 NO. 233 / PAGES 18

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before the Deputy Sultan, Sultan bin Turki, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Khalfan al-Busaidi, and Chairman of the Supreme Court, Saad bin Khalfan al-Busaidi, His Majesty Sultan bin Turki, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, has administered the oath of office to the new Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr. Saad bin Khalfan al-Busaidi, on Thursday. The ceremony took place at the Sultan's Palace in Muscat.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

RAMADAN REMINDER: The frequent gathering of people in public places and crowded areas is not recommended. People are advised to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel. The Ministry of Health has issued a reminder to the public to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel. The Ministry of Health has issued a reminder to the public to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel.

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 100th anniversary of the Omani Rial, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has issued a new 50 Omani Rial banknote. The new banknote features a design that is both modern and traditional, reflecting the rich heritage of Oman. The CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. YOM 10/20

Be Careful, Be Responsible

COVID-19 REMINDER: The Ministry of Health has issued a reminder to the public to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel. The Ministry of Health has issued a reminder to the public to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel.

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om



@omanobserver
www.omanobserver.om



ENTERTAINMENT
Bollywood actor Ritesh Deshmukh (L) and his wife actress Genelia Deshmukh arrive for the 23rd edition of the International Indian Film Academy (IIFA) Awards in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

FASHION
Models present creations by Pakistani designer Ali Xeeshan during a fashion show organised by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) in Karachi. — AFP



FESTIVAL
Revellers take part in the annual "Karneval der Kulturen" (carnival of cultures) street parade in Berlin, on May 28, 2023. The annual festival celebrates the German capital's ethnic and cultural diversity.



FILM
A life-size transformer robot character named Mirage stands at red carpet photo calls during world premier "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" at Marina Bay Sands ArtScience Museum in Singapore. — AFP

CULTURE
Competitors scramble up a bamboo tower to collect imitation steam buns during Cheung Chau Bun Festival in Hong Kong. — AFP



art & life

TUESDAY | MAY 30, 2023 | DHUL QA'ADA 10, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [www.omanobserver.om](#) [features@omanobserver.om](#)

Qalhat - A commercial hub and trade gateway

Scholars have delved into Qalhat's economic, cultural, and political history by examining accounts left by Arab and Persian voyagers who visited this ancient city



ENTERTAINMENT

Justine Triet: French director takes top prize at Cannes

French director Justine Triet became the third woman to win the top prize Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival on Saturday with her gripping and icy "Anatomy of a Fall".
Victory for the tense courtroom drama about a writer accused of her husband's murder capped a strong year for women directors at the French Riviera festival.
"I have always made films about women and here, I went even further in the idea of show-

ing a woman character who is not easy to understand in the first instance," Triet said ahead of Cannes.
The 44-year-old follows two previous women winners of the prestigious Palme d'Or — Jane Campion for "The Piano" (1993) and Julia Ducournau for "Titane" (2021).
Born on July 17, 1978, Triet grew up in Paris and studied arts in the French capital.
"My mother had a fairly complex life, worked and raised three



children, two of whom were not her own. My father was very absent", she said.
She ditched her studies after a few years to devote herself to film and made her first documentary in 2007 about student protests that were taking place at the time.
"Anatomy of a Fall" is her fourth feature.
Her debut "Age of Panic" was set around the presidential elections in France in 2012 and caused a sensation when it premiered at Cannes the following year.
Her next movie, the romcom "In Bed With Victoria" (2016) was nominated for multiple Cesars, France's equivalent of the Oscars.
ACTIVIST DIRECTOR
Triet hit a stridently militant note in her acceptance speech for the Palme on Saturday.
"The country suffered from historic protests over the reform of the pension system. These protests were denied... repressed in a shocking way," she said.
She also criticised the "commercialisation of culture" by

President Emmanuel Macron's government.
Her speech provoked a swift response from Culture Minister Rima Abdul Malak, who said she was "gobsmacked" by Triet's "unfair" comments.
Triet co-wrote her Palme-winning film with her partner Arthur Harari, an actor and director.
"For a very long time when I watched films, I took myself for the boy, I identified with the male role", she said, referring to the lack of options for women in the industry when she was young.
"Anatomy of a Fall" features a show-stopping performance from German actress Sandra Hüller. Hüller also had a brief and comical role in Triet's previous movie "Sibyl", which competed at Cannes in 2019.
"Everything that comes out of her is 100 per cent strong," Triet said of Hüller, who also starred in the runner-up at this year's Cannes, Grand Prix-winner "The Zone of Interest".
"She is an actress who has a real point of view on her character, there is a real exchange." —AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



YAHYA ALSALMANI

The coastal city of Qalhat in South Al Sharqiyah holds the distinction of being the oldest Omani city and the first capital of the Sultanate of Oman prior to the advent of Islam. With its strategic location overlooking the sea, Qalhat's port used to attract ships from all most parts of the world. Vessels from India, Yemen, and those traversing the vital Strait of Hormuz would dock at its port. Scholars have delved into Qalhat's economic, cultural, and political history by examining accounts left by Arab and Persian voyagers who visited this ancient city. Historical evidence and rock inscriptions have also been documented. For instance, the European traveller Marco Polo wrote in 1292: "This city has an exceptional location, and its port is vast, attracting numerous ships laden with goods. The port is renowned for exporting Arabian horses to India."

Qalhat conceals buried cities beneath the earth's surface, remnants of a devastating earthquake that razed many of its ancient structures. The remaining evidence you may find represents only a fraction of what the earth engulfed centuries ago.

One of the city's most renowned monuments is the shrine of Bibi Maryam, which is shrouded in numerous historical tales. According to a traditional story passed down by historians, the enigmatic mausoleum dates back to a ruler of Qalhat who purportedly built it for his wife in 1311 BC. While the builders' identities have not been documented, the shrine's architectural style captivates tourists, enticing them to spend more time exploring and experiencing its ancient stones.

Constructed from a blend of mud, stone, and coral reefs, the shrine's unique building materials reflect the geographical environment surrounding it. The shrine also encompasses an underground crypt, showcasing a remarkable engineering design.

Encompassing an area of 35 hectares, this coastal city is surrounded by mountains on its western side. Remnants of extensive walls stretch to the eastern shore. Historical studies indicate that commercial ships from Hormuz, India, Africa, and China used to dock at Qalhat's port before returning laden with purebred Arabian horses bred in the plains of Qurayat. These horses were highly sought after by the kings of southern India, the sultans of Delhi, and the rulers of Persia, populating their royal stables from antiquity to the Middle Ages.

The ruins of this ancient city are still visible, serving as archaeological evidence affirming its historical significance. The



city's strategic location played a pivotal role in establishing its commercial and political prominence in the region. Tombs, walls, and towers constructed from stone and mud constitute the remnants of this historical legacy.

The hills and mountain slopes surrounding this historic city display traces of burials, graves, and fortifications. To preserve what remains of these tombs and walls, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has installed regulations boards emphasising that tampering with these ancient graves is strictly prohibited, and violators will be prosecuted by law.

"Many tourists visit these tombs and touch the ancient walls of the city. Upon arrival, they exhibit expressions of surprise and amazement on their faces. Some find it difficult to believe that they are standing on the remains of an ancient city ravaged by earthquakes. The city's exceptional aesthetic appeal, extending from the lofty mountain heights to the coastline, captivates all tourists," shared a resident of Qalhat with the Observer.

"This ancient city holds numerous secrets and treasures yet to be discovered. However, our concern lies with the urban expansion that has been taking place for years. Currently, there are numerous residential buildings and houses built just a few meters away from the archaeological sites, particularly those situated on the northern hill. We sincerely hope that the competent authorities will assess the current situation and carefully evaluate the anticipated impact of this urban expansion on this unique site," he added.

"At a time when the number of tourists visiting this region is increasing, we kindly request the competent authorities to fence off the archaeological site, which encompasses tombs, towers, and ancient walls, in order to prevent any interference with these burials that authenticate the historical value of this region," he requested.

The ministry is currently undertaking maintenance operations at the archaeological site of "Bibi Maryam," located on one of the city's highest mountain plateaus. Once this operation is completed, it is expected that the site will witness a significant influx of tourists, which will undoubtedly contribute to supporting plans and national strategies for sustainable tourism in the Sultanate of Oman.

In 2018, Unesco included the ancient city of Qalhat in the World Heritage List, marking it as the fifth Omani site to receive this distinction. This announcement further underscores the historical significance and honor bestowed upon this ancient city.

LIFESTYLE

Secretive Dutchman's classic car collection goes up for auction

MORE THAN 230 DUSTY old cars, including some classics worth several hundred thousand euros each, are being auctioned in the Netherlands after being stored for decades by a secretive collector, known only as Mr Palmen.

Dealer Gallery Aaldering became the owner of the collection a few months ago after Palmen, who doesn't have any heirs, was forced to sell it due to his age and medical reasons.

He never showed off his cars but rather kept them a secret, scared people might steal them, Nico Aaldering from Gallery Aaldering said. He described Palmen as "a hermit who enjoyed his cars every day", starting them regularly to keep the engines healthy.



Palmen could afford to buy the cars thanks to smart investments, including in real estate, said Hans van der Pluijm from Classic Car Auctions, which is running the auction.

The collection, which Palmen used to store in a disused church and in two dusty warehouses, contains cars from brands including Alfa Romeo, Lancia, Maserati, Ferrari, Facel Vega, Aston Martin, Jaguar and many others.

"It's a collection you will probably never find in this condition, in this quantity again," said Hans van der Pluijm from Classic Car Auctions.

He estimated most cars will be sold on average for between 25,000

(\$27,520) and 75,000 euros, but added that some are worth hundreds of thousands of euros each and one of them, a right-hand drive Lancia Aurelia B24 Spider America, could fetch as much as 2.5 million euros.

Only 240 cars were built of this model, and only 57 of them were right-hand drive.

"It also has a very special design. It's special in every shape and it's wanted in every collection," Van der Pluijm said.

The cars can be previewed after registration on May 26-28. The online auction has already started and ends on June 7. — Reuters

SCIENCE

Dangerous slowing of Antarctic ocean circulation sooner than expected

CLIMATE CHANGE-DRIVEN shifts in the circulation of waters to the deepest reaches of the ocean around Antarctica, which could reverberate across the planet and intensify global warming, are happening decades "ahead of schedule", according to new research.

Scientists have said that an acceleration of melting Antarctic ice and rising temperatures, driven by the emission of planet-warming gases, is expected to have a significant effect on the global network of ocean currents that carry nutrients, oxygen and carbon.

This could not only threaten marine life, but it also risks changing the ocean's crucial role in absorbing carbon dioxide and heat.

An earlier study using computer models suggested "overturning circu-



lation" of waters in the deepest reaches of the oceans would slow by 40 per cent by 2050 if emissions remain high.

But new research released on Thursday – based on observational data – found that this process had already slowed 30 per cent between the 1990s and 2010s.

"Our data show the impacts of climate change are running ahead of schedule," said lead author Kathryn Gunn, of the Australian Science agency CSIRO and Britain's Southampton University.

The implications could be significant, with Antarctica's deep ocean acting as a key "pump" for the global network of ocean currents.

"As the ocean circulation slows,

more carbon dioxide and heat are left in the atmosphere, a feedback that accelerates global warming," Gunn said.

"In some ways, the fact that this is happening isn't surprising. But the timing is."

Gunn said previously it had been difficult to understand the changes happening in the remote region because of a lack of data and a host of challenges for scientific research, from getting funding to facing extreme conditions at sea.

The authors used observational data gathered by hundreds of scientists over decades and then "filled in the gaps" with computer modelling

— AFP



CULTURE

Egypt unveils ancient mummification workshops and tombs

ARCHAEOLOGISTS IN EGYPT have unearthed two human and animal embalming workshops, as well as two tombs, discovered in the Saqqara necropolis south of Cairo, the government said on Saturday.

The vast burial site, at the ancient Egyptian capital Memphis, is a Unesco World Heritage site and home to more than a dozen pyramids, animal graves and old Coptic Christian monasteries.

Mostafa Waziri, head of Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, told reporters the embalming workshops, where humans and animals were mummified, "date back to the 30th dynasty" which reigned around 2,400 years ago.

Researchers "found several rooms equipped with stony beds where the deceased lay down for mummification", Egypt's tourism and antiquities ministry said.

Each bed ended in gutters to facilitate the mummification process, with a collection of clay pots nearby to hold entrails and organs, as well as a collection of instruments and ritual vessels.

Early studies of the other workshop suggest it was used for the "mummification of sacred animals".

The discovery also includes the tombs of two priests dating back to the 24th and 14th centuries BC, respectively.

The first belonged to Ne Hesut Ba, who served the fifth dynasty as the head of scribes and priest of the gods Horus and Maat.

The tomb walls are decorated with depictions of "daily life, agriculture and hunting scenes", said Mohamed Youssef, director of the Saqqara archaeological site.

The second tomb, that of a priest named Men Kheber, was carved in rock and features depictions of the deceased himself on the tomb walls, as well as in a one-metre-long (three foot) alabaster statue, Youssef told reporters.

Egypt has unveiled a string of major archaeological discoveries in recent years.

Critics say the flurry of excavations has prioritised finds shown to grab media attention over hard academic research.

The discoveries have been a key component of Egypt's attempts to revive its vital tourism industry amid a severe economic crisis.

The government recently launched a strategy "aiming for a rapid increase in inbound tourism" at a rate of 25-30 per cent a year, Tourism and Antiquities Minister Ahmed Issa said at the site on Saturday. Egypt aims to draw in 30 million tourists a year by 2028, up from 13 million before the Covid pandemic.

The crowning jewel of the government's strategy is the long-delayed inauguration of the Grand Egyptian Museum at the foot of the pyramids in Giza. — AFP



CHANGING WORLD



Meet the scientist (sort of) spending a year on Mars

LIVING ON MARS wasn't exactly a childhood dream for Canadian biologist Kelly Haston, though she'll soon spend a year preparing for just that.

"We are just going to pretend that we're there," the 52-year-old said, summing up her participation in an exercise simulating a long stay on the Red Planet.

At the end of June, she will be one of the four volunteers stepping into a Martian habitat in Houston, Texas that will be their home for the next 12 months.

"It still sometimes seems a bit unreal to me," she laughs.

For NASA, which has carefully selected the participants, these long-term experiments make it possible to evaluate the behaviour of a crew in an isolated and confined environment, ahead of a real mission in future.

Participants will face equipment failures and water limitations, the space agency has warned — as well as some "surprises," according to Haston.

Their communications with the outside world will suffer from the delays that exist between Earth and Mars — up to 20 minutes one-way, depending on the planets' positions — and 40 minutes two ways.



"I'm very excited about this, but I'm also realistic for what the challenge is," says the research scientist, whose status as a permanent resident of the United States made her eligible for the programme.

The habitat, dubbed Mars Dune Alpha, is a 3D printed 1,700 square-foot (160 square-meter) facility, complete with bedrooms, a gym, common areas, and a vertical farm to grow food.

"It's actually surprisingly spacious feeling when you go inside it," said Haston, who visited last year before her participation was confirmed.

"And we do have an outdoor area as well where we will mimic spacewalks or Mars walks."

This area, which is separated by an airlock, is filled with red sand, though it is still covered rather than being open air.

The crew will have to don their suits to do "spacewalks" — "probably one of the things that I'm looking forward to the most," says Haston, a registered member of the Mohawk Nation.

CLOSE KNIT

Haston wasted no time in filling out her application when her partner told her about the opportunity.

"It's aligned with many of my goals in life to explore different avenues of research and science, and then also to be a test subject, and to give to a study that will hopefully further space exploration."

The four members of the mission — herself, an engineer, an emergency doctor and a nurse — did not know each other before the selection process, but have since met.

"We really are close-knit already," says Haston, who has been named commander of the group, adding she looks forward to seeing these relationships grow even stronger.

They might be simulating an important exploratory mission for humanity, but how the housemates get along as they share mundane chores including cleaning and meal preparation will be crucial.

A month of training is planned in Houston before entering the habitat.

A teammate could leave in case of injury or medical emergency.

But a whole series of procedures have been drawn up for situations that can be handled by the crew themselves — including on how to tell them about a family problem that has arisen outside.

ISOLATION

What worries the Canadian most is how she will manage being away from family. She'll only be able to keep in regular touch through email, and only rarely via videos, but never live.

She'll miss being outside and getting to see mountains and the sea, she says.

To cope, she plans to draw on her past experiences, such as a research expedition in Africa where she studied the genetic characteristics of frogs around Lake Victoria.

She spent several months sleeping in cars and tents, with four people, without reliable cell phone coverage.

Feelings of isolation "are things that I think feel very familiar to me."

A specialist in the field of developing stem cell treatments for certain diseases, she has worked in recent years for start ups in California, where she also studied.

This mission is the first of a series of three planned by NASA, grouped under the title CHAPEA (Crew Health and Performance Exploration Analog).

A year-long mission simulating life on Mars took place in 2015-2016 in a habitat in Hawaii, but although NASA participated in it, it was not at the helm.

Under its Artemis programme, America plans to send humans back to the Moon in order to learn how to live there long-term to help prepare a trip to Mars, sometime towards the end of the 2030s. — AFP