

Ex-PM charged for Lebanon blast

The judge probing the 2020 Beirut blast has charged Lebanon's top public prosecutor, the then-premier and other senior current and former officials in connection with the devastating explosion, judicial sources said and court summons show. Judge Tarek Bitar unexpectedly resumed an inquiry on Monday after it was paralysed for more than a year by political resistance and legal complaints filed by top officials he was seeking to question. **DETAILS ON P7**



P11

OMAN, CHINA U-20S PLAY OUT DRAW IN DUBAI



P13

OMAN, GCC SET TO PLAY KEY ROLE IN GLOBAL GREEN HYDROGEN MARKET



P20

STANDING ON THE SHOULDERS OF GIANTS



MUSCAT

GUIDE ON SMES AND START-UPS LAUNCHED

The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) on Tuesday launched its first edition of “Guide for Small and Medium Enterprises and Start-ups”. The step seeks to market SMEs and introduce them to different government and private establishments, segments of society and investors. ASMED also aspires to help local SMEs and start-ups go global. The guide, which comprises 84 such nascent enterprise in its first edition, also covers trademarks specialised in industry and technology. It reflects diversity in terms of activities, products and services that the firms offer to individuals and establishments. **DETAILS ON P2**

TAB ON AVAILABILITY OF FISH IN MARKETS

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources confirmed that it is monitoring the flow of fish stocks into the markets in the governorates of Oman to ensure the availability of fish and to investigate causes of shortage in supply, if any. The ministry quoted rainy winter weather conditions as reasons for low supply of some types of fish in Omani markets, since high sea waves prevented fishermen from venturing into the sea over the past few weeks. It pointed out that there is diversity in the supply of different fish, with the exception of large pelagic fish (yellowfin tuna and longtail tuna) whose fishing was affected by the climatic conditions, the method of fishing and the fact that some target display markets are far from the coastal strip.

INSIDE



POWER RETURNS TO PAKISTAN A DAY AFTER OUTAGE

P6



'OPPORTUNITY OMAN' - LEVERAGING GEOPOLITICS

P9

HM ISSUES ROYAL DECREE

Linking GCC Systems of Payment ratified

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has issued Royal Decree No 6/2023 ratifying the “Agreement on the System of Linking Payment Systems of Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States”, endorsed in the city of Al Ula on January 5, 2021. Article (1) states that the abovementioned agreement shall be ratified in accordance with the version attached to this Decree. Article (2) instructs the departments concerned to deposit the Ratification Document for the abovementioned agreement in line with its provisions. Article (3) says that this Decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of issue. — ONA



HM greetings conveyed to Spain King

Omar bin Said al Kathiri presented his credentials as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Spain. The ambassador conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to King Felipe VI of the Kingdom of Spain. — ONA

Focus on future skills must for better jobs

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

A two-day conference on skills to build a sustainable future started as part of the GHEDEX Series under the auspices of Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour.

OITE organises the conference, and this year, the Global Higher Education Exhibition is to be held in Oman in May.

On the first day of the event, the CEO panel looked at future skills and HRD at the corporate level. The theme of session two was future skills taught at schools and colleges; panel two featured the topic of future skills start-ups — skills in demand, and panel three addressed effective job-seeking tips.

Maryam al Amri, CEO of Youth Vision, a social enterprise, said the future skills are not yet to come. Instead, she pointed out



The focus is on skills because that will make us flexible to learn anything in the world. The skills will allow us to prepare ourselves to learn anything fast

MARYAM AL AMRI
CEO of Youth Vision

that they were already here.

“We are in an era that is moving very fast and evolving. We must ask ourselves how we can learn and adapt to the new way of thinking, working and learning not the ways, but also the topics, as everything is connected now. The economy has an impact on the social aspect,” explained Maryam.

She said the focus is on skills because that will make us flexible to learn anything in the world.

“The skills will allow us to prepare ourselves to learn anything, even if it is changing very fast.”

Innovative thinking is important as it will help solve complicated problems no matter what your background is or what your major is. She noted that one must have these skills to solve problems in the future. “Sustainability, for example, needs these skills. It makes one more effective.” **SEE ALSO P2**

SNOW BLANKETS JABAL SHAMS

Jabal Shams recorded the lowest temperature of -3.6 °C on Monday. The lowest temperature recorded until 7 am on Tuesday was -2°C. The lowest recorded temperature in Jabal Shams was -9.7°C recorded in January 2015, since monitoring began in 2003. Meanwhile, Muscat recorded a maximum temperature of 21°C and a minimum of 15°C.





OMAN TO HOST IRONMAN 70.3 ON FEBRUARY 4

Represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Sultanate of Oman will host Ironman 70.3 Triathlon at Shatti Al Qurum (Qurum Beach) area on February 4. The tournament will consolidate Oman's status among leading global destinations for sports events. It includes a swim in the waters of the Sea of Oman off Qurum Beach, followed by a bike race and a run that takes the athletes through the wonderful urban areas of Muscat. **DETAILS ON P10**

Most dengue cases among women: Study

OHOOD AL JAILANIYAH
MUSCAT, JAN 24

A recently-conducted medical study found that female mosquito Aedes aegypti remained the main vector of dengue fever and that the past years saw an increase in infection rate. The majority of reported cases occurred among the over-25s, and mostly female Omanis from the Wilayat of Bausher.

The study title ‘Epidemiological and clinical characteristics of inpatients with dengue fever in Oman’ called for effective intervention to stem the mosquitoes that cause outbreak of dengue fever in the presence of integrated and flexible preventive



measures to monitor dengue fever cases.

The results of the study, which were published in Oman Medical Journal, aimed at identifying epidemiological and clinical characteristics of dengue fever inpatients at Royal Hospital.

The study found that dengue

cases reported in the Sultanate of Oman are the result of local outbreak which requires active and sustained intervention to fight disease vectors. In addition, the situation necessitates integrated, proactive and preventive measures to monitor dengue cases and the allocation of sufficient financial resources to stymie the spread of Aedes aegypti.

The study concluded that fever and thrombocytopenia are among the most common symptoms of dengue in the Sultanate of Oman.

According to the study, determining the factors associated with hospitalisation can help identify the persons in need of close monitoring and early therapeutic intervention.



Conference explores future skills for a changing labour market

Oman chairs GCC anti-corruption experts' meet



MUSCAT: A two-day conference titled “Future Skills and Human Resource Development” began on Tuesday. It is organised by Al Dar Al Arabiya for Data Analysis in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour.

The conference seeks to introduce a comprehensive and unified vision for educational institutions and employment departments through the development of an advanced educational system that keeps pace with labour market needs.

The conference studies key issues in the fields of education



and technology and the challenges facing the employment sector in Oman.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy,

Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Labour for Human Resources Development.

The chief guest stressed the importance of the conference as an opportunity to focus on future skills

and human resources development.

He noted that the conference is being attended by a large gathering of specialists and officials from government and private institutions.

The conference, constituting part of the activities of the global higher education exhibition GEDEX, includes several working papers on the challenges facing work environment. The event also underscores the significance of providing Omani youth with skills necessary for keeping abreast of current developments in the field of labour such as artificial intelligence.

Distinguished academic institutions and firms specialised in the development of future skills and human resources will be feted by awards during the conference.

— ONA

RIYADH: Represented by the State's Audit Institution (SAI), the Sultanate of Oman chaired the 26th meeting of the GCC Committee of Experts Entrusted with Corruption Control, held in Riyadh on Tuesday.

The online meeting reviewed and studied a number of proposed guides, including Financial Disclosure Guide, a guide for enhancing integrity in state-owned firms, a guide for parallel financial investigation about corruption cases and a guide on evidence of legal entities' responsibility for corruption crimes in GCC states.

The meeting also discussed areas of coordination with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the activation of mechanisms for implementing guiding principles on the exchange of expertise between the anti-corruption departments. The steps envisage the preparation of an action plan to upgrade coordination with international relations departments concerned and the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime.

— ONA

■ ENSURING SUPPLY



The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is keeping an eye on fish markets in the country to guarantee a steady supply of fish products and investigate any potential shortages. It cited winter weather conditions which prevented fishermen from going out to the sea as a reason for a recent lack of certain types of fish in the market. — ONA

Guide on SMEs, start-ups launched

MUSCAT: The Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises (ASMED) on Tuesday launched its first edition of “Guide for Small and Medium Enterprises and Start-ups”.

The step seeks to market SMEs and introduce them to different government and private establishments, segments of society and investors.

ASMED also aspires to help



local SMEs and start-ups go global.

The guide, which comprises 84 such nascent enterprise in its first edition, also covers Omani trademarks specialised

in industry and technology. It reflects diversity in terms of activities, products and services that the firms offer to individuals and establishments.

SMEs constitute 4.1 per cent of the industrial sector.

By providing SMEs and start-ups exposure, the guide offers them an optimal opportunity to expand their activities within Oman and abroad. — ONA

Women's group weaves quilt for charity

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Members of the Muscat Quilt Guild, a group of women with artistic and leadership skills, weaved a king-size quilt and donated RO 3,000 to the Omani Cancer Association (OCA) to support the voluntary association.

As many as thirty women from different backgrounds and nationalities got together and have been extending their support to various charities and noble initiatives.

“We are happy to extend support to the OCA as a token of our gratitude for their services to cancer patients, especially the children, and we assure all our support to them,” Muna Fareed, an active name in the group, told the Observer.

The large quilt and other handmade goodies were given away to the winners of the



handpicked members.

The group, led by Pam Jacobs, a good Samaritan fond of doing charity work, meets every month at the house of one of the members, a hotel, or any other place and decides upon the charity initiatives they should undertake and implement under her guidance. These women spare a significant portion of their time to come together and dedicate themselves to uplifting the

weaker segments of society.

“We are happy that our partner, Muscat Quilt Guild, has supported us with their humble efforts. I'm happy to be announcing that the group will be given a permanent place for functioning from the OCA premises which is going to be built on the land, given as a royal gesture to support the OCA, coming up in Madinat Irfan next year,” said Dr Wahid al Kharusi, Chairman of OCA.

“We urge all parents of children with cancer to bring them to the Dar Al Hanan, get the treatment and facilities free of cost, and help their children live a life of dignity. One shouldn't forget the patient's family, and it is not just their suffering but their families as well,” he added.

In the Sultanate of Oman, childhood cancers affect 6.7 per cent of those under 14, with leukaemia being the most common. Perceived unmet needs often compound the psychological distress of having a child with leukaemia by the child's primary caregiver.

According to him, between 2007 and 2011, the number of children affected by cancer rose across the world, and Oman was not any different, and Dar Al Hanan was the need of the hour, and such a service made a real difference in their lives.

SALE

20% - 70%

Terms & Conditions apply

Clarks

SHOEMAKERS SINCE 1825

Al Khamis Plaza, Qurum - Tel. 24560992 | Muscat Grand Mall - Tel. 24399930 | Al Hail South - Tel. 24558148
Al Khamis Shoes Sohar - Tel. 26841178 | Al Khamis Shoes Al Hail - Tel. 24543045 93894474



Empty Quarter Festival to attract investments

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

The Empty Quarter Festival in Dhofar will showcase elements of winter tourism, introduce them to prospective investors and create job opportunities for the youths in the Sultanate of Oman.

The festival in its second edition in the Al Khuff area in Niyabat al Shisr in the Wilayat of Thamrait will be for 10 days from January 25 to February 3.

The General Directorate of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate organised the activities of the Empty Quarter Festival. The festival is part of the ministry's efforts to achieve the vision of the tourism development plan for the Governorate of Dhofar to make it a sustainable tourism destination throughout the year.

Khalid bin Abdullah al Abri, General-Director of the General Directorate of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate, said, "During its beginning, the festival will host many heritage, tourism, entertainment and sports events, in addition to competitions, marketing exhibitions and various artistic concerts. We also point out that the period of the festival is to coincide with the influx of tourism. The Directorate seeks to place this festival within the map of regional tourism festivals, which qualifies it to host the international desert



championships and stimulates the desire of tourism partners to compete to support and sponsor the festival, which brings economic and marketing returns to the Sultanate of Oman."

The festival includes important activities, notably the children's theatre in the festival oasis, among the entertainment and family activities. Furthermore, paragliding and the sliding track between the sand dunes are set up for the first time in cooperation with one of the civil institutions in the Dhofar Governorate. This is in addition to organising a shooting competition with traditional weapons and a sand challenge competition with four-

wheel drive vehicles.

The establishment of festivals, sports and cultural events in the governorates during the winter season enhances domestic tourism and generates revenues for different segments of society. As the tourism sector is able to provide job opportunities for citizens, there are efforts to provide more jobs in the sector by linking each tourism project with the job opportunities it provides. The tourism sector also contributes to the gross domestic product by gradually reaching 3 per cent last year, and the sector has a great ability to raise the added value and provide job opportunities.

The fall of 2022 witnessed a great

demand from young people and small and medium-sized companies to take advantage of temporary job opportunities. Also, to be an active part in the organisation, promotion and marketing of the festival and its events and activities. In addition to opening the opportunity for them to stand out, and empowering the small and medium enterprises sector and entrepreneurship of its role in economic development, based on the belief in the importance of this sector, which is a tributary to the efforts of economic diversification and a major participant in providing job opportunities for national cadres.

The participation of the Small and



Medium Enterprises Development in Dhofar Governorate comes as part of its partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and civil society institutions since the first edition.

Abdul Hakim bin Amer al Hadary, Assistant Director of the Department for the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises in Dhofar Governorate, said, "In this version, our goal in participation is to highlight small- and medium-sized enterprises and craft institutions by introducing their products and finding marketing outlets for them as well. Our participation is represented in organising and supervising

the heritage Wbar Village to have products for craftsmen, productive families in it, and creating an environment commensurate with the nature of the desert in terms of activities and investment in tourism potentials such as sand dunes, for example, but not limited to, and the commission continues in such participations and always seeks to develop its participations too."

He also added that the number of participants in the village reached about 20 craft establishments and producers' families. There is, for example, a date shop in the village, an Omani Halwa shop, and a poetry tent that hosts Bedouin activities.



Workshop highlights AI's role in achieving SDG 4

MUSCAT: A regional workshop on the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in promoting fairness and progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) began at the Governorate of Muscat on Tuesday. The two-day workshop highlights pioneering experiences and practices in this field.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Muna Salim al Jardani, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Vocational Training.

The event coincides with marking the International Day of Education. It is organized by the Ministry of Education, represented by Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science in cooperation with the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

Experts from various parts of the world are taking part in the workshop. Those include experts from UNESCO, the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) and the Regional Centre for Educational Planning (RCEP) at Sharjah, among others.

The workshop aims to shed light on the efforts of Arab and Islamic countries in promoting fairness and progress towards achieving SDG 4 through AI applications. It also targets reviewing successful regional and international experiences in the field of utilizing artificial intelligence in education.

The opening ceremony included a keynote paper on the ethics of using artificial intelligence. In addition, the first day included two sessions on various topics related to AI.

— ONA

MoC to train youth inked

MUSCAT: The National Employment Programme (NEP) signed a memorandum of cooperation (MoC) with Daleel Petroleum Company to upgrade the skills of Omani nationals in the field of self-employment and entrepreneurship. The aim is to enable Omani youth to make use of the Self-Employment Initiative.

The MoC includes allocating several training and qualification programmes to youth to directly join the labour market. It provides for introducing technical, scientific and innovative disciplines that keep pace with the latest advances in technology, the information revolution and future systems.

It also included the importance of promoting the culture of personal enterprises and educating youth to explore this area of business. — ONA

Sufi Music fest begins as a mark of tribute to Rumi

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As a mark of tribute to Sufi poet Jalaluddeen Rumi, the 2nd edition of Bait al Zubair Sufi Music Festival began at the Shangri-La Barr al Jissah Resort on Monday.

Syria's Shaikh Hamed Dawood Group paid tribute to the legend with dulcet Sufi vocal and instrumental performances as the dancers danced with expressive gestures and actions on the first day.

The performers mesmerised the audience with smooth rendition of the Sufi spiritual music and singing. The performances took the audience to different feeling levels.

The works of Dawood are basically related to classical Sufi poets, especially inspired by the famous Sufi poets and the group contains artists with repute who have performed several performances across the world.

Two more national and international bands are all set to present poems of great poets like Ibn al Farid, Rabia al Adawiya and Shaikh Jaed al Kharousi, accompanied by a professional performance individually and collectively at the theatre of Shangri-La till January 25.

OMANI BAND

On Tuesday, the second day, Zawiyia, an Omani band concerned with mystical and humanistic music, performed to the hearts' content and elevated the emotions to spiritual well-being.

The Zawiyia band was founded in 2015 and has local and Arab participation, including the Fez International Festival of Spiritual



Music in Morocco. The well-known Tanzanian artist Yahya Baihaqi Hussain is participating with the band, where he is one of the performers of supplications known for their many participants at the Arab and international levels.

On the third night, the concluding evening, the Egyptian band, Al Hadrah for Sufi music will mesmerise the audience with their performance. It is a singing group that aims to transfer the heritage of Egyptian Sufi societies to theatres, in an artistic manner preserving the most significant components of the Egyptian popular religious heritage.

The second edition of the festival comes after the success

of the first edition of the Festival of Sufi Music, which hosted Ibn Arabi Band from Morocco, Farid Ayaz Band from Pakistan, Salar Aqli Band from Iran and Al Zawiya Band from the Sultanate of Oman. The first edition of the Sufi Music Festival received wide praise from fans of Sufi music across the country and the region.

Entry to the festival is free of charge, and a number of supporters have joined hands with the Shangri-La Barr al Jissah Resort. They include Oman Air, Zubair Automotive, Zeenah, Photo Centre and Oman Oasis. This partnership comes to emphasise the role played by various parties for the vitality of Oman's cultural scenario.



CAIRO: The joint cooperation committee between the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs and Al Azhar Al Sharif held its 9th meeting here on Tuesday. The meeting discussed several issues regarding joint cooperation and international issues of concern to Muslims. The meeting came within the framework of exchanging scholarly and cultural expertise. The Ministry was represented during the meeting by Ahmed bin Saud al Siyabi, Secretary-General at the Office of the Grand Mufti of the Sultanate of Oman, while Al Azhar Al Sharif was represented by Dr Mohammed Abdulrahman al Dhawini, Vice-Dean. — ONA

GLOBAL ISSUES OF CONCERN TO MUSLIMS DISCUSSED



ALL ABOUT BONDING IN PLEASANT WEATHER



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Whether expectations are met or not, Muscat Nights certainly has given an opportunity for the residents and citizens in the Sultanate of Oman to spend time on an outing.

An official of the Muscat Municipality said, "We would have certainly liked to organise all events at one unique destination so that visitors could experience everything, choose and ignore what they want, but still, Muscat Nights has become a 'must-visit' place for each and everyone in the city, including tourists."

"We have been missing something like this for the last three years, and hopefully, it will only get bigger in the coming days. I was apprehensive over parking facilities at Qurum Park, but it has been managed well so far, and smart tickets really reflect things to come."

The Heritage Village has been reinvented from previous years with the use of technology by an Omani company, reflecting the favour of all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

The Heritage Village is top on the priority list for visitors yet to visit the Nights.

Muscat Nights also has performances by artists from Italy, France and Britain, which everyone has liked."

Older generations in Muscat are thrilled that Qurum Natural Park is back as a venue, and highlights include the drone and water laser shows, carnivals and plenty of time for lakeside bondings.

Muscat Nights 2023 has activities dedicated to various groups, including children and youth, such as stand-up comedies.

Rajat Shah, a visitor to the Oman Automobile Association, said, "The Fifa 2023 game, which started on Tuesday, is interesting. Importantly, we have been told of the cash prizes for the winners of the competition."

Visitors can also enjoy a paddle game, which is a racket sport but different from the normal tennis game. Creators Village, located at the Oman Automobile Association, can be visited for free and offers children the chance to use their artistic skills using colours and pencils.

Events at the Qurum Natural Park include laser and drone shows apart from carnivals, horse shows, jumping competitions, light and sound shows, and games for children. ROP has said parking arrangements have been made for Qurum Park visitors, which has been a concern for everyone.



Oman, Luxembourg discuss economic cooperation

LUXEMBOURG: A session of talks was held here between the Sultanate of Oman and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. The talks touched on means of promoting the economic relations between the two countries and encouraging SMEs to invest in Oman. It also covered the cooperation in a set of areas including tourism, ports



and green hydrogen. The Omani side was represented in the meeting by Shaikh Dr Abdullah bin Salim Al Harthy, Oman's Ambassador to Luxembourg, while Luxembourg was represented by Carlo Thelen, CEO of the Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce. — **ONA**

AGREEMENT SIGNED TO SUPPORT SMES

MUSCAT: To empower small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and support the development of their businesses, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between Sharakah and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (ASMED). The MoU aims to support entrepreneurship, empower SMEs and enhance the sustainability of their business. The MoU was inked by Halima bint Rashid al Zari'ee, Chairperson of ASMED, and Ali bin Ahmed Muqailab, CEO of Sharakah. Al Zari'ee said: "This agreement comes to enhance the existing cooperation and partnership with Sharakah, as we seek to enhance the Authority's role in empowering SMEs. We are committed to consolidate the presence of SMEs in all fields to increase their contribution to the GDP and the development of the national economy." Ali bin Ahmed Muqailab, CEO of Sharakah, said, "The objective of this collaboration is to expand and boost the support extended to SMEs. The MoU will contribute to the advancement of entrepreneurship in Oman, boost the SME sector's contribution to the economy and make small businesses more active." — **ONA**

Kuwaiti navy chief received



MUSCAT: Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za'abi, Secretary-General at the Ministry of Defence, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Tuesday Commodore Hazza Mutlaq al Alati, Commander of Kuwait's Naval Force, and his delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed several matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO),

and several senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF). Later, the Kuwaiti guests visited the National Defence College (NDC), Maritime Security Centre (MSC) and the Military Technological College (MTC). — **ONA**



Tender Number

T-49-2022

Tender Announcement

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tender:

Tender Name	Supply & Install of an CCTV Solution for Public Transport Fleet.		
Project Summary	Mwasalat is looking for a qualified bidder for the supply, install, commissioning and implement an integrated CCTV System solution with continuing support services to MWASALAT buses. Complete system will include all hardware and software, proven integration with (Open API), software implementation services, system training and continuing support as stipulated in Tender Documents.		
Tender Fee	NIL	Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Start date for tender document distribution	Wednesday 25 January 2023	Last date for tender document distribution	Wednesday 01 February 2023
		Last date for submission	Wednesday 15 February 2023
The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.			
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.			
The submission Date / Time shall be on or before the deadline specified in the above table.			
Participants should submit their offers in the tender box located in the head- quarter National Ferries Company LLC (MWASALAT) at Ghalia, Muscat (Jabal Shams Building 5th floor), Any proposal submitted after the given Date & Time shall be rejected.			
"Mwasalat" Head Quarter, Ghalia P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman			
For more information please send to: tenders@mwasalat.om			

Condolences

The Chairman and members of the Board of Directors of Vodafone Oman and all employees

Extend their deepest condolences and sympathy to

Eng. Bader bin Saud Al Zidi
CEO of Vodafone

On the passing of his mother

May Allah grant peace and mercy on the deceased and give the family strength and patience to bear this irreparable loss

PM APOLOGIZES FOR POWER BREAKDOWN, ORDERS INQUIRY

Power returns to Pakistan a day after massive outage

ISLAMABAD: The national power grid was restored in Pakistan, the energy minister said on Tuesday, a day after a nationwide breakdown left most of the country's 220 million people without electricity and caused tens of millions of dollars in industry losses.

The outage started around 7:30 am (02:30 GMT) on Monday, a failure linked to a cost-cutting measure as Pakistan grapples with an economic crisis.

Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan said the grid was repaired at around 5:15 am (0015 GMT) but load-shedding would continue over the next two days as coal and nuclear plants were brought back online.

"There is a need to invest in the energy sector, especially to improve the distribution system, which has long been neglected," he told reporters in Islamabad.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed "sincere regrets for the inconvenience our citizens suffered".

An inquiry is under way and "responsibility will be fixed", he said on Twitter.

Electricity returned to urban centres overnight, including the mega cities of Karachi and Lahore.

Secretary general of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association Shahid Sattar estimated losses of \$70 million to the sector, Pakistan's largest exporter and a crucial booster of foreign exchange reserves.

Around 90 per cent of factories were shut down on Monday, with natural gas supplies too "patchy"



People walk across a bridge during a nationwide power outage in Islamabad on Tuesday. — AFP

to stand in, he said. "Each time there is a power cut the mill has to be restarted from scratch, which takes up a lot of time and resources," he said.

"We can't pick up from where we stopped. All that thread that's in the middle of being dyed and treated, etc, cannot be used again. So we face massive losses that way," Khan pledged that industries would be guarded from the load-shedding anticipated in the coming days.

The economy is already hobbled by rampant inflation, a falling rupee and severely low foreign exchange reserves, with the power cut piling extra pressure on small businesses.

Pakistan's power system is complex and precarious, and

The economy is already hobbled by inflation, a falling rupee and severely low foreign exchange reserves, with the power cut piling extra pressure on small businesses

problems can quickly cascade.

Khan earlier said a variation in frequency on the national grid caused the initial breakdown, as power generation units were turned on early on Monday morning.

The units are temporarily switched off on winter nights to save fuel, he had told reporters.

Localised power cuts and load-shedding are daily occurrences in Pakistan, and hospitals, factories and government institutions are often kept running by private generators. But the machines are beyond the means of most citizens and small businesses.

In Karachi, hundreds of water pumps were also offline during the power cut, heaping more problems on the more than 15 million residents of Pakistan's largest city.

Schools mostly continued either in the dark or using battery-powered lighting.

A similar breakdown in January 2021 affected the entire country, after a fault occurred in southern Pakistan, tripping the national transmission system.

— AFP

5.6 quake strikes Nepal, tremors felt in New Delhi

KATHMANDU: An earthquake of magnitude 5.6 struck Nepal on Tuesday, damaging some houses and sending tremors out as far as India's capital, New Delhi.

The US Geological Survey said the quake was at a depth of 25 km, about 63 km to the northwest of Nepal's Jumla district, more than 300 km from the capital, Kathmandu.

"It was quite a big tremor. There were people all gathered on the streets.

There was terror for some time," said Nain Rawal, an official in Bajura district near Jumla. There were no immediate reports of any casualties.

Three houses in Bajura were damaged, according to Surya Thapa, a district police official.

The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre said earlier that the magnitude of the quake was 5.4.

Social media users in India said they felt strong tremors that shook ceiling fans and other fixtures.

A 7.8 magnitude quake killed almost 9,000 people in Nepal in 2015. — AFP

■ RIDING IN WUHAN!



Visitors ride down a water chute at an amusement park in Wuhan, in China's central Hubei province on Tuesday, during the holidays of the Lunar New Year. — AFP

With music and gifts, Philippines welcomes Chinese tourists

MANILA: Filipinos in traditional attire on Tuesday played bamboo marimbas and handed out necklaces and gifts to their first Chinese visitors since before the pandemic, seeking to lure back tourists after China's scrapping of its Covid-19 curbs.

Chinese travellers no longer need to quarantine on return home and holiday bookings have surged from what was the world's largest outbound travel market in 2019. "After three years I got to visit Manila again from China. It feels great, so many happy places," said Anthony Lee, a 38-year-old Chinese businessman who was



Visitors from China arrive at Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Paranaque, Metro Manila on Tuesday. — AFP

among about 200 passengers who arrived on the Xiamen Airlines flight to Manila, the first since 2020.

China was the Philippines' second-largest tourism market, with 1.7 million visitors in 2019, government data showed.

Only 39,627 people from China visited last year, when the Philippines started relaxing its restrictions.

"I have not gone to any countries. I am very happy now," said Atsushih Amemye, 28, after he passed through immigration.

The once \$255 billion annual global spending by Chinese

tourists ground to a virtual halt during the pandemic and left a hole in the Asian market.

The Philippines, known for its powdery white sand beaches and lush marine life, is targeting 4.8 million foreign tourists this year, after 2.6 million in 2022.

"We anticipate even more Chinese tourists to arrive, which will greatly help us in our effort to transform and recover the tourism industry," Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco told reporters.

"Our intention is not only to regain our pre-pandemic numbers but to exceed it." — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

KHOST

Afghans protest Sweden incident

Hundreds of Afghan men staged a protest in the eastern city of Khost on Tuesday to express anger at the burning of the religious book in the Swedish capital over the weekend.

Protests have been held since then in some Muslim countries, and on Tuesday crowds of Afghan men condemned the incident in Khost, a city bordering Pakistan.

Images posted on social media showed the protesters standing in the square, some holding the flag of the Taliban, as security

personnel stood guard nearby.

"The people condemned the burning of the holy book and called on Muslim countries to raise their voices against this evil," a protester said.

GENEVA

UN Palestinian refugee agency seeks \$1.6 bn

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, appealed on Tuesday for \$1.6 billion for its work in 2023, as it struggles to overcome chronic budget shortfalls.

UNRWA — warned that "compounding challenges" had placed it under "immense strain".

The agency, which counts nearly 30,000 staff — most of them Palestinian refugees — runs more than 700 schools that offer education to half a million children, and provides

health, sanitation and social services, including food and cash assistance. Out of the \$1.6 billion requested, UNRWA said \$848 million was needed for such core services.

COLOMBO

China offers Lanka debt moratorium

The Export-Import Bank of China has offered Sri Lanka a two-year moratorium on its debt and said it will support the country's efforts to secure a \$2.9-billion loan from the IMF, according to a letter.

India wrote to the IMF earlier this month, saying it would commit to supporting Sri Lanka with financing and debt relief, but the island nation also needs the backing of China in order to reach a final agreement with the global lender. China's January 19

letter, sent to the finance ministry, however, may not be enough for Sri Lanka to immediately gain the IMF's approval for the critical loan, a Sri Lankan source with knowledge of the matter said.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 25 | 2023

7

In brief

■ DAKAR



WHO DOCTOR KIDNAPPED IN EASTERN MALI

Unidentified assailants in eastern Mali have abducted a doctor working for the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN agency said in a statement on Tuesday.

Dr Mahamadou Diawara was taken from his car on Monday in the town of Menaka, located in an eastern region where groups linked to Al Qaeda and IS are active. Assailants also attacked his driver but left him behind.

WHO “is working with local authorities to investigate the abduction and ensure our colleague’s quick return to his family,” the statement said. Diawara was sent to Menaka at the start of 2020.

■ TEHRAN



IRAN TO SEND MORE MILITARY AID TO SYRIA

Iran has announced new military aid to the Syrian government as Damascus tries to win a civil war that is nearly 12 years old.

“We are ready to help the Syrian armed forces,” the Tasnim news agency quoted Hossein Salami, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), as saying.

Salami said the IRGC would help “to the required extent” in areas where support is needed.

The force pledged support especially in the field of cyberwarfare. The general made the pledges during a visit by Syrian Defence Minister Ali Mahmoud Abbas to IRGC headquarters.

■ TEL AVIV



ISRAELI HIGH-TECH WORKERS PROTEST GOVT PLANS

Hundreds of Israeli high-tech workers protested on Tuesday against a proposed judicial overhaul, claiming the government’s controversial plans will hurt the flourishing sector by undermining the rule of law.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government says judges have too much power over elected officials, arguing the proposed reforms — such as allowing parliament to overrule Supreme Court decisions through a majority vote — are essential to correct the imbalance. But critics and protesters, who turned out in Tel Aviv and other cities, say the plans threaten democracy.

Lebanon blast investigator charges ex-PM, top official



A view shows the justice symbol monument placed near the grain silo damaged during the 2020 port blast, in Beirut, Lebanon, on Tuesday. — Reuters

BEIRUT: The judge probing the 2020 Beirut blast has charged Lebanon’s top public prosecutor, the then-premier and other senior current and former officials in connection with the devastating explosion, judicial sources said and court summons show.

Judge Tarek Bitar unexpectedly resumed an inquiry on Monday after it was paralysed for more than a year by political resistance and legal complaints filed by top officials he was seeking to question. The explosion on August 4, 2020 was caused by hundreds of tonnes of ammonium nitrate that had been stored at the port in poor conditions since it was unloaded in 2013.

So far, no senior official has been held to account.

Bitar has charged prime minister Hassan Diab and former ministers with homicide with probable intent, according to court summons seen by Reuters on Tuesday.

He also charged Prosecutor General Ghassan Oweidat, the head of Lebanon’s domestic intelligence agency Major General Abbas Ibrahim, former army commander Jean Kahwaji and other current and former security and judicial officials, court sources said.

It was not immediately clear what they had been charged with, but one judicial source said Bitar had found Oweidat had not acted responsibly with regards to the ammonium nitrate.

Reuters could not immediately reach Diab or Oweidat for comment. Ibrahim declined to comment on reports he had been charged when contacted by Reuters on Monday. Kahwaji declined to comment.

All those previously charged by Bitar have denied wrongdoing.

Oweidat on Tuesday sent Bitar an official letter saying that Bitar’s probe remained suspended and that no official decision had been taken on whether he could continue investigating, according to a copy of the correspondence seen by Reuters.

Bitar’s previous efforts to interrogate top officials over the explosion that killed 220 people and shattered parts of Beirut have been hindered by factions including the Hezbollah.

The group has campaigned against Bitar as he sought to question its allies and it also accused Washington of meddling in the probe. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah repeatedly called for him to be replaced in 2021.

The investigation was paralysed in early 2022 by the retirement of judges from a court that must rule on several such complaints against Bitar before he can continue.

The court has been awaiting the appointment of new judges to resume its work, a step authorities have not taken.

Bitar met French judges visiting Beirut last week as part of a French investigation into the explosion, whose victims included two French nationals.

He was unable to share documents with them at the time because the investigation was frozen. Bitar resumed work on the basis of a legal interpretation challenging the reasons for its suspension, the judicial sources said. Diab, an academic, became prime minister in January 2020 and resigned less than a week after the blast.

Bitar’s predecessor swiftly charged him and several former officials with negligence over the chemicals, but that judge was removed in 2021 following political interference in the file.

Diab said in a statement in 2020 that he was confident his hands were clean and that he had dealt transparently with the file of the explosion. — Reuters

Ukraine purges officials and governors in major shakeup

KYIV: Ukraine dismissed the governors of five battlefield provinces and an array of other senior officials on Tuesday in the biggest shakeup of its wartime leadership since Russia’s war last year.

Separately on Tuesday, a long-awaited decision on whether allies could send German-made heavy tanks to Ukraine finally reached Berlin, after Poland said it had formally sent its request.

Among more than a dozen senior Ukrainian officials who resigned or were dismissed on Tuesday were the governors of the Kyiv, Sumy, Dnipropetrovsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions. All five regions have been major battlefields over the past year, giving their governors an unusually high national profile. A deputy defence minister, a deputy prosecutor, a deputy head of President Volodymyr Zelensky’s office and two deputy ministers responsible for regional development were among the others who left.

Some, though not all, had been linked with corruption allegations. Ukraine has a history of graft and shaky governance, and is under international pressure to show it can be a reliable steward of billions of dollars in Western aid. “There are already personnel decisions — some today, some tomorrow — regarding officials at various

levels in ministries and other central government structures, as well as in the regions and in law enforcement,” President Volodymyr Zelensky said in an overnight video address.

Zelensky aide Mykhailo Podolyak tweeted: “The president sees and hears society. And he directly responds to a key public demand — justice for all.”

The purge came two days after a deputy infrastructure minister was arrested and accused of siphoning off \$400,000 from contracts to buy generators in one of the first big corruption scandals to become public since the war began 11 months ago.

Poland’s announcement that it had officially asked for Berlin’s permission to export German-made tanks to Ukraine appears to leave German Chancellor Olaf Scholz little room to continue putting off a decision in what has become the main debate among allies over how best to support Ukraine.

“I hope that this answer from Germany will come quickly, because the Germans are delaying, dodging, acting in a way that is difficult to understand,” Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki told a news conference.

“We can see that they do not want to help Ukraine defend itself in a wider way.”

— Reuters



Finnish President Sauli Niinisto (L) and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during their press conference in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. — AFP

California staggered by back-to-back shootings

MONTEREY PARK: Just two days after a gunman killed 11 people at a Los Angeles-area dance studio, seven more victims were shot dead in an agricultural area near San Francisco, as California suffered one of its bloodiest spates of mass gun violence in decades.

Authorities said they had not identified the motive for either of the rampages. The attacks seemed especially baffling in part because the suspects in each were men of retirement age, much older than is typical for perpetrators of deadly mass shootings that have become numbingly routine in the United States.

California Governor Gavin Newsom said he was visiting wounded survivors from Saturday night’s massacre in the Los Angeles suburb of Monterey Park when he was informed of Monday’s killings in northern California.

“Tragedy upon tragedy,” Newsom wrote on Twitter.



People attend a candle light vigil for victims of a mass shooting outside the City Hall in Monterey Park, California, on Monday. — AFP

Otherwise, the back-to-back shootings appeared to have little in common. The latest gun carnage struck the coastal town of Half Moon Bay, about 30 miles south of San Francisco, where a gunman

opened fire on groups of farm workers at two locations about a mile apart, leaving a total of seven dead and one badly wounded, then fled.

The accused gunman, identified

as Chunli Zhao, 67, was taken into custody a short time later after he was found sitting in his vehicle, parked outside a sheriff’s station, where authorities said they believe he had come to turn himself in.

A semi-automatic handgun was found in his car, San Mateo County Sheriff Christina Corpus told an evening news conference.

Corpus said the suspect, who was “fully cooperating” with investigators following his arrest, had worked at one of the two crime scenes. She described the sites as agricultural “nurseries,” where some of the workers also lived. Local media reported one site was a mushroom farm.

President Joe Biden said in a statement on Tuesday that he was briefed by his homeland security team on the shooting in Half Moon Bay and has directed his administration to ensure local authorities have support from the federal government.

“Even as we await further details on these shootings, we know the scourge of gun violence across America requires stronger action,” he said, calling on Congress to reintroduce a federal assault weapons ban.

In a separate Bay-area incident on Monday evening that drew far less attention, one person was killed and seven wounded in a “shooting between several individuals” in Oakland, police reported, in circumstances suggesting a case of gang violence. Police gave few details, but said the surviving victims had all gotten themselves to area hospitals.

News of the massacre in Half Moon Bay surfaced as police worked through a second full day of their investigation into the shooting at the Star Ballroom Dance Studio in Monterey Park, just east of downtown Los Angeles, where a gunman shot 11 people to death. — Reuters

Resilience in the age of polycrisis



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

It seems as if by the time we memorise a new global term, another newer term enters the scene. For example, we recently learned about frontier technologies, then pandemic terminologies and now we are starting to hear a new term echoed several times in the World Economic Forum (WEF) Annual Meeting in Davos 2023- “Polycrisis”. While WEF is sometimes perceived as an elitist forum, the fact that it shares its insights of 1,200 experts from around the world in its Global Risks Perception Survey Report (GRPS) is impressive, and worth paying attention to by all stakeholders; public, private, civil society and media. The term polycrisis refers to the fact that humanity for the first time since World War II is facing a crisis in five categories- Societal,

Technological, Environmental, Economic, and Geopolitical/ economic crises. What is interesting about this discussion is that it invites us to think beyond what polycrisis means: How can we as societies develop our resilience through this convergence of the said polycrisis five categories of crisis? Here are five thoughts: SOCIETAL RESILIENCE Societal polarisation and cyber insecurity are spreading due to the global reach of the internet. Cultural misunderstandings, such as arguments during the FIFA World Cup, and cyber bullying tell us that the internet can be used for interactive people-to-people connections. Interactive people-to-people connections and education could better serve the purpose of

WE ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY BETTER AT BUILDING COMPUTER SYSTEMS, WITH BASIC COGNITIVE SKILLS. THIS MEANS WE NEED TO INNOVATE WAYS WHERE BASIC WORKERS FIND MEANINGFUL SOURCES OF INCOME IN THIS AGE OF DIGITAL DISRUPTION current and future generations sharing intercultural positive thoughts and vibes. TECHNOLOGICAL RESILIENCE We are becoming increasingly better at building computer systems, with basic cognitive skills. This means we need to innovate ways where basic workers find meaningful

sources of income in this age of digital disruption. Environmental resilience Irrefutable science proves that around 8 billion human beings live only on one planet, this earth, and we share it with billions of animals and plants. Building a resilient society entails demonstrating our appreciation with all creatures that share the air we breathe and the soil that feeds us. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE Supply chain disruptions are still affecting the world two years into the pandemic, and some aspects of it seem to be here to stay. On a positive note, the challenges we faced due to mandatory lockdowns in China, the manufacturing powerhouse of

the world, has taught many markets about in-country value and local content development. GEOPOLITICAL-ECONOMIC RESILIENCE The very power that keeps cool in the summer and warm in the winter became right, front and centre because of the Russian war on Ukraine. The repercussions of what started as Russian-EU Military conflict escalated to a worldwide scramble for basic human needs, shelter, food and energy security. Stable and prosperous regions such as the GCC could benefit greatly from actively contributing towards a just, peaceful, and sustainable conflict resolution, because conflicts in Europe do not stay in Europe, as the whole world learned in WW I and WW II.

Cryptoverse: Bitcoin investors take control

LISA PAULINE MATTACKAL & MEDHA SINGH

Paranoid? The domino downfall of FTX and other crypto custodians is enough to make the most trusting investor grab their bitcoin and shove it under the mattress. Indeed, holders big and small are taking “self-custody” of their funds, moving them from crypto exchanges and trading platforms to personal digital wallets. In a sign of this shift among retail investors, the number of bitcoin held in smaller wallets - those with under 10 bitcoin - rose to 3.35 million as of Jan 11, up 23 per cent from the 2.72 million held a year ago, according to data from CoinMetrics. As a percentage of total bitcoin supply, wallet addresses holding under 10 bitcoin now own 17.4 per cent, up from 14.4 per cent a year ago. “A lot of this really depends on how frequently you’re trading,” said Joshua Peck, founder of hedge fund TrueCode Capital. “If you’re just going buy and hold for the next 10 years, then it’s probably worth making the investment and learning how to custody your assets really, really well.” The stampede has been turbocharged by the FTX scandal and other crypto collapses, with large investors leading the way. The 7-day average of daily movement of funds from centralised exchanges to personal wallets jumped to a six-month high of \$1.3 billion in mid-November, at the time of FTX collapse, according to data from Chainalysis. Big investors with transfers of above \$100,000 were responsible for those flows, the data showed.

WHERE ARE MY KEYS? Not your keys, not your coins. This mantra among early crypto enthusiasts, cautioning that access to your funds is paramount, regularly trended online last year as finance platforms dropped like flies. Self-custody’s no walk in the park, though. Wallets can range from “hot” ones connected to the internet or “cold” ones in offline hardware devices, although the latter typically don’t appeal to first-time investors, who often buy crypto on big exchanges. The multi-level security can often be cumbersome and expensive process for a small-time investor, and there’s always the challenge of guarding keeping your encryption key - a string of data similar to a password - without losing or forgetting it. Meanwhile, hardware wallets can fail, or be stolen. “It’s very challenging, because you have to keep track of your keys, you have to back those keys up,” said Peck at TrueCode Capital, adding: “I’ll tell you it’s a very challenging prospect of doing self custody for a multi-million-dollar portfolio of crypto.” — Reuters

The post Gulf Cup Arab world



Badr al Abri

The writer is interested in rapprochement and understanding. He is the author of *The Jurisprudence of Terrorism*

The selection of Basra to host the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup marked a wise gesture that carries broader vision than merely a biennial football event. Talking about Basra means talking about Iraq with its people who for decades suffered from the bitterness of war, deprivation and homelessness. Before the war, Iraq was among the best countries in education, healthcare and robust economy at a time when some Gulf countries were at the onset of their renaissance while others were lagging behind their peers in terms of development. I was born in the early years of the Iraq-Iran War. I still remember the people’s talk about the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait when I was in my early 20s and the scenes of children dying due to the famine caused by the boycott imposed on Iraq and the speeches of George W Bush and most recently the acts of Daesh. Then came the US invasion of Iraq. My point is: since I was born until the present-day I have never heard the word Iraq unless it is linked to war, famine, explosions and displacement. On the other side, at school we studied the Iraqi civilisation that dates back more than 6,000 years, we learned about Sumer, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian, among other civilisations. Iraq established links with the post-Islam Arab civilisations particularly the Abbasid Caliphate that made Baghdad its capital, which was the birthplace of the Arab civilisation, renaissance, philosophy, literature and sciences. The arts and sciences of the Abbasid mingled with those of the Andalusian Umayyads and before migrating to Europe. Upon contemplating the present-day Iraq to see what was left of that rich history, I find a unique diversity. In Iraq you can find the Sunni Islam and Shiism with their many offshoots. Alongside Muslims, there are Christians, Jews, Yazidis, Baha’is and other historic tenants. This is in addition to the political and intellectual doctrines such as secularism, liberalism, realism, modernism, Ba’athism, Quranism, Muslim brotherhood, among others. For all that I love Iraq even though I have not visited it yet. My love for Iraq is not stemming from a football



A giant installation of the mascot of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup football championship is seen along the waterfront of the Shatt al Arab waterway in Basra. — AFP

THE 25TH ARABIAN GULF CUP IN BASRA MANAGED TO CONVEY MESSAGES OF LOVE AND HOPE THAT THE POLITICIANS, PHILOSOPHERS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS COULD NOT DO

tournament but it has something to do with its history, civilisation and diversification. When Pope Francis visited Iraq on March 5, 2021 he was received with genuine Iraqi arts and folklore and the doves of peace. That visit revived hopes of peace that would end the nation’s suffering and restore the voice of reason to replace the voice of war and destruction. The opening ceremony of the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup at the Palm Trunk Stadium in the city of Basra on January 6 was an amazing event that summed up a long history of successive civilisations. It began with arts, the essence of beauty, to divert our thoughts to the language of beauty instead of the language of strive and hatred.

The selection of Basra for hosting the 25th Arabian Gulf Cup was a challenge in itself especially at this tough time. However, the Iraqi government and people and the organisers of the event, sent a message to their Arab brothers saying that they are alive and need their brothers in the revival and reconstruction. In a nutshell, the tournament was associated with some negatives in terms of management and organisation but that is normal because the Iraqi fans who adore football have been deprived of such an event for forty years. However, the tournament saw fierce competition especially in the final match between the Sultanate of Oman and Iraq who played beautiful football. The championship managed to convey messages of love and hope that the politicians, philosophers and religious leaders could not do. I yearn to see the day when the Arab nation has got rid of war, hatred, poverty and disintegration and to live in a world where construction rules over destruction, unity overtakes disunity and love defeats hatred, a world where knowledge prevails instead of ignorance and justice instead of injustice. I might not live to see that day but our grandchildren may see it, so let us contribute to building a brighter future for them and perhaps the post-Arabian Gulf Cup would open new horizons if we construed its message rightly.

Cultivating a reading habit

In the last few weeks, I have had amazing conversations with my friends and fellow book lovers. Some of them revealed that they have made it a rule to read at least a few pages of a book everyday. When it comes to weekends and travelling, it is a lot more, said one of them with a remark, “I always feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment when I complete reading a book”.

History has shown that many successful people on the planet are those who devoted time to reading and learning.

No doubt, reading makes our life worthwhile whatever the variety of books it may be — science, history, philosophy, fiction or biography.

One of the main reasons we love reading is because we enjoy it. But we also read because we need to broaden our minds.

We want to learn new things and we want to succeed in life.

Author and motivator Chonce Maddox says, “It’s no secret that successful people read. The average millionaire is said to read two or more books per month.”

Greater leaders like John F Kennedy, Winston Churchill, F D Roosevelt, Mahatma Gandhi, and Jawaharlal Nehru, to mention a few, were all voracious readers.

They acquired their formidable knowledge and view of the world thanks to their habit of reading books!

When it comes to contemporary leaders like Barack Obama or millionaires like Bill Gates or Warren Buffett, they too were avid readers.

No matter how busy they were, they always found time to spend time reading!

Thus wrote American entrepreneur, author, and motivational speaker Jim Rohn, “Reading is essential for those who seek to rise above the ordinary.”

Reading cultivates our minds and gives us immense knowledge and lessons in life.

By reading motivational stories, we will gain more self-confidence with a positive vibe which makes us get rid of



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a freelance journalist and author who has worked in India and Gulf countries

NO DOUBT, READING IMPROVES LITERACY, SOCIAL SKILLS, HEALTH, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES. MANY OF US THINK THAT WE LIVE IN A FAST-PACED WORLD, BUT THE ACTUAL THING IS THAT WE LIVE IN A DISTRACTED AND DISRUPTIVE WORLD WHERE EVERYTHING IS FAST BUT MESSY

all our struggles. According to a study published by the National Library of Medicine, people who read books for 30 minutes daily lived an average of 23 months longer than non-readers or magazine readers. Apparently, the practice of reading books creates cognitive engagement that improves lots of things, including vocabulary, thinking skills, and concentration. A study conducted by the University of Liverpool’s Centre for Research into Reading, Literature and Society, found that reading has many more benefits than simply being good entertainment, with those who read reporting better connections with others and greater feelings of happiness within themselves and with their life overall. No doubt, reading improves literacy, social skills, health, and learning outcomes. Many of us think that we live in a fast-paced world, but the actual thing is that we live in a distracted and disruptive world where everything is fast but messy. As children, we were taught by our parents and teachers that we should read outside of class to get smarter. And so, we read to enhance not only our linguistic skill, stimulate our imagination and increase our general knowhow. In this tech-savvy world where children are more attracted to electronic devices rather than engaging in physical activity, teachers and parents together should ensure that children are exposed to books in the house. Reading is a very important skill that parents should encourage in their children. When we read, we are exercising our brains. Time spent on reading a book is well spent! It is good therapy for a happier and healthier life. There are many people who self-medicate with great books and add this painless habit to their daily list of activities!

A FULL-DRESS REHEARSAL



A Mumbai police personnel helps her colleague to adjust the uniform during a rehearsal ahead of the upcoming Republic Day celebrations at Shivaji Park, in Mumbai, on Tuesday. – AFP

‘Opportunity Oman’ — Leveraging Oman’s geopolitics

Over the past few decades, the Sultanate of Oman has managed to build political capital leveraging its geopolitical position in a turbulent region. This political capital draws on solid internal stability and national unity, and a win-win approach to a balanced foreign policy.

Additionally, it will grow further as the Oman Vision 2040 gets implemented. In both regional and international settings, Oman is a trusted source of stability and consistency in the entire Gulf region, and it enjoys longstanding bilateral relations with many leading nations around the world.

These bilateral relations made it possible for Oman to mediate between conflicting parties. Therefore, Oman stands a great chance to utilise its “political assets” to actively attract foreign investment to accompany the growing local investments.

To achieve this objective, Oman would need to engage with diplomatic delegations present in Oman and beyond to showcase Oman specific characteristics to existing and potential political and economic partners. Oman’s geopolitical success factors ought to build on existing trade and political relations to enhance



Dr Yousuf bin Hamed al Balushi
yousufh@maninvestgateway.com

OMAN IN BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT AND COMPLEMENTARY HUB FOR THE REGION. THE VISION OF OMAN IS TO DEVELOP LOGISTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE THAT CATERS TO THE NEEDS OF OTHER POTENTIAL GROWTH REGIONS

logistical partnerships such as with Shanghai, Singapore and Argentina and many other places, that may ultimately serve Oman in becoming an independent and complementary hub for the region. The vision of Oman is to develop logistical infrastructure that caters to the needs of other potential growth regions. Oman’s moderate and inclusive foreign policy has given it a reputation as the “Switzerland of the Middle East.” The Sultanate of Oman’s geopolitical stance is precise and sensitive, aiming to carefully balance the interests of conflicting parties and avoids aligning with

any one geopolitical bloc against another, tends to stay neutral in most international conflicts, pursuing a balanced approach.

Acknowledging the above, to anticipate the future which is characterised by substantial uncertainties around the outlook we can confidently answer the following investors questions: What’s most probable to happen, What’s Probable to happen and What’s less probable to happen?

With regards to international economic setting, for small oil-dependent economy like the Sultanate of Oman, which also operates with a fixed peg to

dollar, international economic developments could have a significant influence on the performance and prospects of the domestic economy.

The current international economic environment is dominated by concerns associated with distribution caused by Covid-19, Global Conflicts (Russia-Ukraine and China-USA) in terms of increased uncertainty due to a slowdown in global economic activities that weaken global demand conditions and global energy crisis (oil prices), the fourth industrial revolution, and other factors. Oman is not

independent from the regional and global macroeconomic environment. The proposed development concept suggests prioritising countries Oman is working with for further development of Oman in the immediate next steps in a complementary rather than competitive manner. Globally, these are the US, China, and India, with the US and China having special significance. Regionally, these are the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Iran, with the UAE and Saudi Arabia having special significance.

In the the long run, other countries relations with countries can be developed. Both, geographical position, and historical legacy, make Oman a key partner for international trade and diplomacy. Oman’s balanced approach has worked in the past and it should grow further. Rather than “the enemy of my enemy seems to be my friend”, this view considers “the friend of my enemy can still be my friend”. It has yielded Oman a unique position as a trusted, neutral mediator in international conflicts and negotiations.



Oman’s balanced approach has worked in the past and it should grow further.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



IRONMAN OMAN TO KICK-START TRIATHLON SEASON

OMAN TO HOST **IRONMAN 70.3** ON
FEBRUARY 4; MUSCAT EVENT TO OFFER
45 SLOTS FOR VINFAST IRONMAN 70.3
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP 2023

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 24

The fourth edition of annual Ironman Oman 70.3 will kick-start the international triathlon season with more than 800 triathletes from across the world set for the competition, according to Race Director Mohammed al Obaidani.

The iconic event will be organised by the Triathlon Middle East (TRI.ME) in association with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism at Shatti Al Qurum (Qurum Beach) area on February 4.

The 2023 Ironman 70.3 Oman offers 45 age group qualifying slots to the 2023 VinFast Ironman 70.3 World Championship to be held on August 26-27, 2023 in Lahti, Finland.

Al Obaidani, also Chief Executive Officer and founder of Triathlon Middle East, said: “The Ironman 70.3 Oman has a substantial following throughout the world, and we are extremely excited to welcome all regional and international athletes into the Sultanate of Oman for what will be the first and biggest event of its kind in the Middle East for the 2023 season.”

“The GCC especially has a passionate endurance sport following and is also home to large number of elite-level triathletes, so we are confident that the 2023 event in Muscat will be a truly spectacular and memorable event,” he added.

The event will welcome athletes of all experience levels including some of the world’s elite men and women triathletes to race against the clock on a route that includes the series’ standard 1.9 km swim, 90 km road bike, and final 21.1 km run – for a total race distance of 113 km.

The title sponsor of the 2023 Ironman 70.3 Oman is the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, while Sohar International is the official sponsor. Co-sponsors include Oman’s Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Muscat Municipality and the Oman Triathlon Committee.

Asma al Hajri, Deputy Director-General, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: “The Muscat

Municipality’s hosting of this 2023 Ironman 70.3 Oman triathlon is another step in the right direction for Oman’s growth as a premier destination in the GCC and Middle East region for hosting international sports events, and adventure tourism activities. Furthermore, along with the direct impact that the Ironman Oman will have on the local tourism economy and related sectors, it will also serve to highlight the extensive value and beauty that the Sultanate of Oman can provide the global triathlon community, and by extension, the global tourism industry.”

ROUTE MAP

The 2023 Ironman 70.3 Oman route will entail a swim in the Sea of Oman waters off Shatti Al Qurum, followed by a bike and run route that will take athletes through Muscat’s magnificent urban settings and historic Old Quarter, as well as through the spectacular mountain and desert terrain surrounding the capital. The route will track its way past many of the capital’s tourism highlights – including the Muttrah Sea Road and Souq, Al Alam Palace, Royal Opera House Muscat and the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque.

With the race’s start, transition zone and finish line all situated at the same location at Shatti Al Qurum, the triathletes, their support crews, and the large number of spectators expected to turn out to watch the event can look forward to an action-packed race atmosphere in one central ‘stadium’ style location.

While the flagship 2023 Ironman 70.3 contest will take place on February 4, the event also include an Ironkids Muscat Run on February 3 for boys and girls aged 3 to 13.

The Ironman Race Village, which will run from February 2 to 4, also promises to provide an action-packed hub of entertainment for competitors and endurance sport fans in Oman.

In the third edition in 2022, Olivier Godart of Luxembourg emerged the men’s champion while Lizi Brooke of Great Britain bagged the honours in the women’s section.



Oman, China U-20s play out draw in Dubai



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 24

Oman U-20 football team ended their first preparatory match against China in a 1-1 draw in Dubai on Monday night. Salah al Jadidi scored for Oman in the 50th minute before the opponents equalised in the 77th minute.

Oman head coach David Gordo started the match with a 4-1-3-2 formation.

Mazin Saleh was the goalkeeper while Musab al Shamsi was the left back in defence accompanied by Ayman al Nabhani, Abdullah al Afifi and Salim al Abdali. The

centre line was monitored by Ahed al Mushekhi, Abdulmajeed al Balushi, Al Moutasim Ghanim and Mohammed AbdulHakeem. The attacking side featured Ali al Balushi and Qusai al Mamari.

The friendly game against China was crucial for the coaching staff to stand on the team's readiness ahead of the Asian Cup start. Oman team players reported back to their daily training sessions after the warm-up match completion.

The match was part for both teams to gear up for the forthcoming edition of the AFC U-23 Asian Cup in Uzbekistan which is scheduled to take place

in Tashkent from March 1 to 18. Oman are grouped in Group C in the Asian Cup with South Korea, Tajikistan and Jordan while China will play against Saudi Arabia, Japan and Kyrgyzstan.

Oman team began their actual warm-up for the Asian assignment in January through a domestic camp in Muscat from January 12. Before that the team was in another 10-day camp in Muscat as well.

The previous domestic camp of the national team featured two strong friendly matches against the Iran team. The hosts lost the opening preparatory match 1-0

and Iran prevailed in the next match 2-1 at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. Both matches showed different technical readings for the coaching staff on the player's performance and fitness ahead of finalising the squad.

The hosts of Asian U-20 Cup Uzbekistan will vie for the title with Indonesia, Iraq and Syria in Group A while Qatar will play against Australia, Vietnam and Iran in Group B. The top four teams in the Asian finals will confirm their presence in the Fifa U-20 World Cup 2023, which will return to Asia in Indonesia from May 20 to June 11.

Darsait Titans, Qurum Thunders in final

MUSCAT: Darsait Titans beat Ruwi Rangers by 51 runs while Qurum Thunders dominates Amerat Royals to claim victory by 4 wickets in the semifinals of the Oman D20 at the Oman Cricket Academy Ground in Al Amerat.

Batting first, Darsait Titans got off to a steady start courtesy of their top-order. The Titans' most prolific batmen Zeeshan Maqsood (73 off 42b;3x4,3x6) turned up to the occasion to bolster a magnificent half century well supported by the young Sahil Shaik (37 off 19b;3x4,3x6) to take them to 171 in 20 overs. Mohammad Nadeem (2-27) was the pick of the bowlers for the Rangers.

In reply, the Rangers started off



Zeeshan Maqsood - Darsait Titans

well to chase down the total but lost wickets in the middle overs.

Mohammad Yousuf (4-20), Zeeshan Maqsood (2-21) and Jan Shafiq (2-21) bundled the defending champions to just 120.



Ayaan Khan - Qurum Thunders

Ruwi Rangers were unbeaten in the league stage of the Oman D20.

Zeeshan Maqsood was awarded man of the match for his all-round display and taking the Titans through to the final.

QURUM THUNDERS PREVAIL

Qurum Thunders put the Amerat Royals to bat first. The Royals started off well but kept loosing wickets at regular intervals making Amerat's batsmen count each run in their innings. Amerat Royals could only manage 89 runs bundling down in 17 overs. Munis Ansari (3-9) was the pick of the bowlers along with Samay Shrivastav (2-16) and Akash Mohite (2-32).

In response, Qurum Thunders easily chase down the target confirming their berth in the final. Ayaan Khan (26 off 20b) was awarded the man of the match for scoring crucial runs and picking a wicket.

'Zafarana' claims main qualifying race in Barka



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JAN 24

Under the support of the Royal Camels Corps and organised by Oman Camel Racing Federation, the third qualifying race competitions started at early morning on Tuesday at Al Fulajj Camel Racing Track in the Wilayat of Barka. The races will continue until January 26.

This is the third and last qualifying race to allow the participants to take part at the final race festival in March, as part of the 20th edition of annual camel races for the season 2022-23.

The first day included 21 rounds for 3 km allocated to the 'hagayeg' category, 2 years old, while 14 rounds for females and 7 rounds for male camels.

As many as 21 camels will qualify from this category from 21 rounds. The top three winners from the first to the fifth rounds, and the top two from the sixth to eighth rounds will make the mark.

The first round was snatched by 'Zafarana' owned by Hamid bin Mohammed al Jahafi, followed by 'Maskhora' owned by Talib bin Ali al Maharbi, and in third was 'Shawahin' owned by Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Daree.

In the second round, 'Corner', owned by Saeed bin Mohammed al Harthy, took the top prize. 'Hamloula', owned by Ali bin Rashid al Omari, came in second and 'Mahaba' finished third, owned by Abdullah bin Saeed al Ghufaili.

'Al Sultanah' claimed the third round, owned by Mubarak bin

Amer al Habsi, and in the second place was 'Al Dana' owned by Saeed bin Nasser al Zaree, while the third place was won by 'Mayassa' Nasser bin Ali al Ghufaili.

In the fourth round, 'Mugamara' was ranked first, owned by Ghosn bin Saeed al Musallami, 'Takreem' took the second place, owned by Dawood bin Ali al Hedawi. 'Shawahin' finished third, owned by Khamis bin Mohammed al Mukhaibi.

'Nujood' won the fifth round, owned by Rashid bin Obaid al Wahibi, while 'Humlola' won the second place, owned by Hamid bin Abdullah al Omari and third-placed 'Dhagt' belonged to Salem bin Saeed al Muharbi.

The sixth round was claimed by 'Ariaf' owned by Saeed bin Hamid al Jahafi, where second-placed 'Menwh' belonged to Hamad al Zaree.

In the seventh round, 'Gazer' came on top, owned by Rushoud bin Khuwaiter al Malki, and 'Mawaseel' achieved the second place, owned by Nayef bin Salem al Wahibi.

'Wasayef' was top ranked the eighth round, owned by Hamoud bin Hamad al Amri, followed by 'Marasil' for its owner Hamoud bin Abdullah al Maharbi.

The competition continues for the second day with 20 rounds on Wednesday, 13 rounds will be for 'lagaya' category (3 years old for 4 km), while seven rounds will be for 'Yathaa' category (4 years old for 5 km).

As many as 39 camels out of more than 500 camels will qualify for final race from both the categories.

Poland appoint Santos as head coach

WARSAW: Poland appointed Fernando Santos as their new coach based on his experience managing a national team and his track record of success, Polish FA president Cezary Kulesza said on Tuesday.

Santos, who led Portugal to success at Euro 2016 and the 2018-19 Nations League with Cristiano Ronaldo as captain, was unofficially announced on Monday.

"We wanted a coach who already had experience in leading a national team, so that he would not have to learn on the job," Kulesza told a news conference.

"But above all, we wanted a successful coach. Such a coach was appointed today."

Santos is only the second Poland coach this century with prior international experience following Leo Beenhakker who managed the team in 2006-2009.

Before becoming Portugal manager in 2014, Santos had a four-year spell in Greece. At club



Fernando Santos (L) and Polish Football Association president Cezary Kulesza during his presentation in Warsaw. — AFP

level he has managed Porto, AEK Athens, Panathinaikos, Sporting and Benfica, among others.

"I pay great attention to two words — 'us' and 'win,'" Santos said as he was presented at the national stadium in Warsaw. "We will have to get used to winning, because I think this national team has what it takes to be able to compete with any big team."

The Polish FA decided not to renew the contract of former coach Czeslaw Michniewicz after he guided the team to their first World Cup knockout stage appearance in 36 years at the Qatar 2022. — Reuters



Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas celebrates winning the second set of his quarterfinal match against Czech Republic's Jiri Lehecka. – Reuters



Belarus' Victoria Azarenka celebrates winning her quarterfinal match against Jessica Pegula of the US in the Australian Open. – Reuters

IMPRESSIVE TSITSIPAS AND VINTAGE AZARENKA IN SEMIS

MELBOURNE: Stefanos Tsitsipas closed on a first Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open semifinals on Tuesday in impressive fashion, as Victoria Azarenka also powered into the last four.

Tsitsipas was a convincing 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 winner over unseeded Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic and faces Karen Khachanov next.

The 24-year-old Tsitsipas is the highest remaining seed left at three and with Melbourne's large Greek community roaring him on, his title charge is gathering pace. "It felt different this time from any other match and the most important thing in the end is that I found a solution," said Tsitsipas, after making the Australian semifinals for a fourth time.

"It was a very difficult three-setter, one of the most difficult

so far in the competition," said the Greek, who will become world number one should he win the title.

The other quarterfinal at Rod Laver Arena between Russia's Khachanov and Sebastian Korda had been warming up nicely until the American hurt his wrist.

The 18th seed went through when Korda retired in the third set, down 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 3-0. The 22-year-old Korda, who had been attempting to emulate his father Petr's Australian Open victory in 1998, said afterwards that he could barely hold the racquet.

"Volleying was almost impossible for me, so it was a little tough."

For Khachanov it is a second consecutive Grand Slam semifinal, having reached the last four at the 2022 US Open.

Nine-time Melbourne

AUSTRALIAN OPEN RESULTS

MEN (QUARTERFINALS):
Karen Khachanov (RUS x18) bt Sebastian Korda (USA x29) 7-6 (7/5), 6-3, 3-0 ret; Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE x3) bt Jiri Lehecka (CZE) 6-3, 7-6 (7/2), 6-4

WOMEN (QUARTERFINALS):
Elena Rybakina (KAZ x22) bt Jelena Ostapenko (LAT x17) 6-2, 6-4; Victoria Azarenka (BLR x24) bt Jessica Pegula (USA x3) 6-4, 6-1

champion Djokovic is still on the scene, with a quarterfinal against Russian fifth seed Andrey Rublev on Wednesday. The other quarterfinal is an all-American clash between Ben Shelton and Tommy Paul.

'IT'S MY WEAPON'

Azarenka is back in the last four in Melbourne for the first time since she won the tournament in 2013 and will face big-serving Elena

Rybakina.

The Belarusian Azarenka, who also triumphed in 2012, secured an impressive straight-set victory over Jessica Pegula. Third seed Pegula was hotly tipped to win the title but the American simply had no answers to Azarenka's pounding forehand groundstrokes.

The 33-year-old Azarenka rolled back the years in a surprisingly one-sided

quarterfinal to triumph 6-4, 6-1. "Well, it hurts to beat her because I always want her to do well," the 24th seed said of Pegula, a close friend and practice partner.

Azarenka faces Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina on Thursday for a place in the final. Rybakina blasted her way into the semifinals with a ruthless 6-2, 6-4 win over Jelena Ostapenko.

The 23-year-old Rybakina sent down 11 aces to blow former French Open champion Ostapenko off court in 79 minutes. The 22nd seed has blasted 35 aces so far, more than any other woman at the tournament.

Ominously, she said her serve is better now than when she won Wimbledon last year. "I gained even more power. It's my weapon on the court and of course we are trying to work on it," she said. — AFP

Kane equals Greaves record to seal Spurs win

LONDON: Harry Kane became Tottenham Hotspur's joint all-time record goalscorer with the winner in his side's 1-0 victory at Fulham in the Premier League on Monday.

Tottenham had been second-best in the first half at Craven Cottage but Kane produced a trademark finish on the stroke of halftime to notch his 266th goal for the Londoners.

Kane's effort drew him level with the late Jimmy Greaves whose 266 goals came in 379 games. England skipper Kane reached the total in 415 appearances.

Fulham were the better side until Kane's right-footed finish with Harrison Reed, Aleksandar Mitrovic and Willian all going close to giving the hosts the lead.

Kane even had the chance to break the record after halftime but headed straight at Fulham keeper Bernd Leno.

Victory revived Tottenham's top-four hopes, leaving them in fifth place with 36 points, three behind Newcastle United and Manchester United who have both played a game less.

Fulham remain in seventh place with 31 points.

As well as being one goal away from surpassing Greaves, he needs just one more in the league to become only the third player to register 200 goals in the Premier League — joining Alan Shearer and Wayne Rooney.

"It was a tough game, a really important three points for us today after the last two results," Kane told Sky Sports. — Reuters



Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane celebrates scoring their first goal. – Reuters

Rohit, Gill power India to ODI series sweep of NZ

INDORE, India: Skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill hit century centuries to help India sweep the one-day international series against New Zealand with a 90-run victory in the third match on Tuesday.

Rohit (101) and Gill (112) put on 212 for the opening wicket in Indore to guide the hosts to 385-9 after being invited to bat first in Indore.

In reply, Devon Conway's 138 was in vain as India bowled out New Zealand for 295 in 41.2 overs for their second successive 3-0 whitewash and go top of the ODI rankings.

Rohit, who recorded his first ODI century since January 2020, and Gill stood out in the highest opening partnership by any team against the Kiwis in the 50-over format, surpassing the 201-run stand of Virender Sehwag and Gautam Gambhir in 2009.



New Zealand's bowlers hit back after the pair's departure as India slipped to 293-5 before Hardik Pandya took charge, boosting the

total with a 38-ball 54.

But it all started with Gill smashing Lockie Ferguson for four fours and a six in a 22-run eighth

over and Rohit joined the party with a few big hits over the fence.

Gill recorded his third 100-plus score in his last four ODI innings,

taking off his helmet and basking in applause from the stands when he reached the milestone.

Michael Bracewell bowled Rohit

and Blair Tickner sent back Gill in the next over and India soon lost regular wickets, despite a brisk 36 from Virat Kohli.

Pandya put on 54 for the seventh wicket with Shardul Thakur, who hit 25.

In reply, New Zealand lost Finn Allen on the second delivery of their chase after Pandya bowled the opener for nought.

Conway stood firm to add 106 for the second wicket with Henry Nicholls, who hit 42, and 78 for the third with Daryl Mitchell (24).

The left-handed Conway fought hard as wickets fell at the other end as he raised his third ODI hundred with a six off leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal.

Thakur dented New Zealand's chase when he struck twice with successive deliveries, Mitchell caught behind and then skipper Tom Latham caught at mid-off.

— AFP





Open a High Yield Account today!

2477 5777 | www.maisarah-oman.com

/MaisarahOman @MaisarahIslamic @MaisarahIslamic

To know more

MAISARAH

Oman, GCC set to play key role in global green hydrogen market

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JAN 24

The Sultanate of Oman, along with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, are set to strongly position the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) bloc as a leading exporter of clean energy – green hydrogen in particular – to the global market, according to a new report released against the backdrop of the World Future Energy Summit (WFES) last week.

The report, titled ‘Green Energy – Going Beyond the Grid’, is based on a white paper put together by well-known business consulting firm Frost & Sullivan. It notes that the GCC region is on the cusp on a major green energy revolution as member states explore energy sustainability through a combination of renewable energy integration, energy-efficiency implementations and hydrogen production and transport.

“Hydrogen has gained increasing recognition as a key contributor to the evolution of the energy sector and is expected to play a key role in decarbonising the economy across end-use sectors in the GCC,” says the report.

It adds: “GCC countries, especially the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman, are working on national strategies aimed at developing the hydrogen market in the region and positioning themselves as future hydrogen exporters.”



GCC countries currently use large quantities of natural gas-based grey hydrogen, and the availability of low-cost natural gas coupled with the ease of carbon capture, utilisation and storage allows for the cost-competitive production of blue hydrogen though the GCC has several competitive advantages to play a key role in the global green hydrogen economy.

These advantages include solar and wind resources, financial capabilities, and export potential. “Not only does the region have strong connectivity with developed economies in Europe, but a network of ports and pipeline infrastructure provides the region access to fast-growing markets in Asia and Africa.

These trade routes and connectivity are expected to

play a key role in hydrogen transportation, which would prove critical in meeting end-user demand for the fuel as future large demand markets such as Europe and Japan could face challenges in ramping up hydrogen production to meet demand requirements,” says the report.

The report recommends the region acts quickly to leverage a first-mover advantage and commit investments to achieve future cost competitiveness in the wake of rising competition from regions in North Africa, Europe, and Australia.

“Working cohesively and orchestrating efforts between the government and industry is the best way for the region to achieve an energy transition while yielding the highest

impacts and optimising efforts and investments.

There is a wide range of opportunities available through business models and technologies that can meet the bespoke needs of all of the stakeholders in the GCC.

All of the building blocks are now available in the form of enabling technologies, abundant solutions, finance availability and a need for change. The region is well poised to go beyond investing in grid-specific renewables and contribute to a sustainable future,” the report added in conclusion.

The World Future Energy Summit was hosted by Masdar as part of Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, a global platform for accelerating the world’s sustainable development.

Shareholders of Oman’s oldest port operator to discuss liquidation report

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 24

Shareholders of Port Services Corporation SAOC (under liquidation) will meet later this month to review a report on the liquidation of the roughly 35-year-old company, established in the mid-1970s to operate and manage Muscat’s Port Sultan Qaboos – the nation’s first maritime gateway.

The Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), marking one of the final chapters in the eventual dissolution of the company, comes just over five years after Port Services Corporation (PSC) adopted a decision to wind down operations and go into liquidation – a process that began in earnest on January 1, 2018.

That move stemmed from a decision by the Omani government to transform Port Sultan Qaboos, a multipurpose commercial port, into a full-fledged tourism hub port, anchored by an upmarket waterfront featuring residential and retail developments. Overseeing the latter goal is Omran Group – the government’s tourism development executive arm.

Well-known chartered accountancy firm Moore Stephens, appointed by PSC to oversee the liquidation, will present its report at the EGM, along with the financial account



for fiscal 2022.

Shareholders will also discuss the distribution of the second interim payout from the liquidation proceeds (after providing for all outstanding claims) at the rate of 0.045 baisas per share from a total amount of RO 4.276 million available for distribution.

Registered as a public joint stock company, PSC was established via Royal Decree issued on November 17, 1976. Its primary mandate was to operate and manage Port Sultan Qaboos, which was opened two years earlier as the main gateway for commercial imports and exports.

Wholly state-owned Asyad Ports – part of Asyad Group – assumed operation and management of Port Sultan Qaboos with effect from January 1, 2018. With most commercial cargo operations having since been relocated to Sohar Port, operations at the Muscat facility are currently limited to the handling of liquid bulk, bulk grain, dhows and cruise and naval vessels.

MENA’s first Climate Change Readiness Index launched

KEY CRITERIA: Oman’s National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change by 2040 and diversification agenda to spur climate action

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 24

Leading professional services firm EY has announced the launch of its Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Climate Change Readiness Index (CCRI), a pioneering tool designed to help countries in the region assess and improve their resilience to the impacts of climate change.

The Index measures the readiness of the six members of the GCC as well as Egypt and Jordan across several areas such as the effectiveness of their adaptation and mitigation strategies and their

ability to finance and implement these strategies.

It provides scorecards that can assist governments, investors, and citizens in tracking the performance of the included countries compared to global benchmarks on 37 quantitative and qualitative indicators of climate change readiness.

The Index also offers a comprehensive overview of the regional and global context in which these countries operate, including the economic, political, and social factors that can influence their outcomes.

The EY MENA CCRI highlights Oman’s National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation to Climate Change by 2040 and its exclusive support for sustainability focused startups in the Vision 2040 plan.

It is intended to be a catalyst to spur local climate action and



facilitate Oman’s shift from a fossil-fuel based economy.

The strategy is focused on short and long-term development and a combination of public-private support for project investments in both scopes.

The vision lays out the main directions for both parts of the climate change response with three areas of focus: regional

climate change, vulnerability of key sectors and systems, and increase of GHG emissions.

Yasir Ahmad, EY MENA Climate Change and Sustainability Services Leader, says: “Climate change is a global challenge and addressing it requires collective action. To support these efforts, we are delighted to launch the MENA region’s first Climate

Change Readiness Index that will serve as a valuable tool for governments, businesses, and civil society organisations as they work to evaluate and enhance their readiness to tackle environmental challenges and impacts.

The index is designed to be flexible, responsive, and personalised, allowing countries to monitor their progress over time and identify areas for improvement.”

The CCRI is based on two pillars:

Adaptation: Adjustments made in response to existing climate change impacts; for example, building environments that are flood-resistant or can withstand higher temperatures.

Mitigation: Steps taken to curb future emissions; for example, reducing energy consumption and adopting renewables. The CCRI shows that almost

all participating countries have substantially reduced their per capita emissions from 2015 levels as they continue to fulfill their ambitions to diversify their economies away from fossil fuels through large capital investment.

The carbon capture and renewables revolution has complemented this trend, with nearly every country in the region introducing a long-term net-zero strategy.

Richard Paton, EY-Parthenon MENA Leader, says: “The MENA region is already a global leader in carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) and planning for the future of circular economies.

Together, with the leadership the region is taking in Energy Transition, the use of renewables, and development of hydrogen, MENA is on track to become a forerunner in the development of a low carbon economy.”

Bank Nizwa named ‘Strongest Islamic Retail Bank in Oman’ at IRBA



MUSCAT: The fastest-growing Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa has been awarded ‘The Strongest Islamic Retail Bank in Oman 2022’ conferred by UK-based Cambridge International Financial Advisory (IFA) at the 8th Islamic Retail Banking Awards (IRBA) Ceremony 2022.

The award demonstrates Bank Nizwa’s commitment to providing consumers with tailored banking experiences that meet their changing needs through Shariah-compliant, cutting-edge financial solutions.

The IRBA analyses global Islamic banking efficiency performance using the most rigorous academic analysis. The prestigious awards recognise individuals and institutions that have demonstrated a solid commitment to Islamic retail banking and contributed significantly to its growth and success.

“Our pursuit of becoming the global leader in Islamic finance has been acknowledged

with these wins by Bank Nizwa. Beyond growing our assets, we strive to provide Shariah-compliant products and solutions of the highest quality. The award motivates us to keep offering sustainable financial solutions to the community and provide the most exceptional customer service. With our solid footprint, as Oman’s leading Islamic bank, we are well positioned to promote Islamic banking,” said Arif al Zaabi, Assistant General Manager - Retail Banking.

“Our retail banking business has made remarkable achievements over the past few years. We have also expanded our customer base significantly by responding quickly and efficiently to emerging market trends and accelerating the shift to digital banking. Taking advantage of technological evolution, we are Oman’s first bank to open a digital-only branch to motivate those who still use conventional banking methods to adopt digital banking.”

Tethys Oil produces 868,589 barrels of oil in Q4 2022

MUSCAT: Tethys Oil said its share of production from Blocks 3&4 during the fourth quarter 2022, before government take, amounted to 868,589 barrels of oil, corresponding to 9,441 barrels of oil per day.

The net entitlement, Tethys Oil’s share of production after government take, amounted to 467,564 barrels of oil, corresponding to 54 per cent of the total production.

A total of 424,444 barrels of oil were sold in the quarter with an achieved oil price of \$93.3 per barrel.

Net entitlement is the share of production available for sale by Tethys Oil and is calculated monthly in accordance with the terms of the Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA) for Blocks 3&4.

The net entitlement will vary depending upon the level of production, oil price and recoverable costs incurred during the period.

The oil sales of 424,444 barrels in the fourth quarter 2022 reflects the October, November and December lifting nominations. Consequently, the fourth quarter 2022 achieved oil price reflects the Official Selling Price (OSP) of October to December 2022. The average official selling price in that same period was \$92.90/barrel.

Tethys Oil is an oil exploration and production company with focus on onshore areas with known oil discoveries. The company’s core area is the Sultanate of Oman, where it holds interests in Blocks 3&4, Block 49, Block 56 and Block 58.

Venture debt funding in MENA crosses \$260 million in 2022

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 24

SHUAA Capital, the region’s leading asset management and investment banking platform, and MAGNiTT, the largest verified data platform tracking venture capital investments across emerging markets, has released the 2022 MENA Venture Debt Investment Report.

The report maps the evolution of venture debt funding in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region over the past five years along with its target countries and industries, along with funding and deal activity.

Topline data from the report shows that venture debt funding grew 18x between 2020 and 2021, revealing a growing appetite for the funding tool to support startup growth.

The number of venture debt deals almost doubled between 2021 and 2022 as the ecosystem started regaining momentum following the pandemic.

However, further analysis shows a slight decline in funding in 2022 – in line with a global contraction in venture investing – falling \$6 million short of the \$266 million total raised in 2021.

For comparison, in 2022 to date, the venture capital (VC) market deployed \$3.1 billion in funding across 575 deals, compared with \$2.9 billion across



675 deals in 2021.

Venture debt aggregated \$260 million across 18 deals in 2022, despite a backdrop of increasing global macroeconomic headwinds and caution by VCs in a climate of general uncertainty.

Average deal size in 2022 declined to \$14.4 million, from \$26.6 million in 2021, however, 2022 saw the first mega-deal for venture debt in the MENA region closed by UAE-based fintech start-up Tabby, contributing 39 per cent to the total venture debt funding reported in 2022.

The top five venture debt deals, closed by Tabby, TruKker, Pure Harvest and STARZPLAY accounted for \$275 million, which is half of the venture debt reported between 2018 and 2022 across

only 15 per cent of the total deals.

Venture debt funding was concentrated in four countries of the MENA region, namely UAE, KSA, Egypt and Jordan. The UAE was the most funded market through venture debt taking over 50 per cent of the number of deals and value of funding reported for the MENA region between 2018 and 2022.

Saudi Arabia ranked second in funding, accounting for a share of 29 per cent of total funding.

Mirroring the venture capital trend in the MENA region, fintech captured the highest share of venture debt deals between 2018 and 2022, raising 61 per cent of total venture debt funding over the same period.

While fintech, transport and

ACFE Oman announces new president

MUSCAT: The Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) Oman Chapter announced that Khalil bin Nabhan al Rawahi (pictured) has taken over as the president of ACFE Oman Chapter.

Khalil al Rawahi has been nominated as the president after serving ACFE Oman as the vice-president and other capacities over the years. Khalil said, “Our association objective is to develop the young Omani resources to contribute in achieving development goals and advancing sustainable economic growth and contribute to nation building of



Sultanate of Oman.”

The newly elected officer bearers took over from the present board from January 18, 2023. The ACFE Oman Chapter is run by a Board of Directors consists of 9 elected Board members. The

new Board members met recently and decided its office-bearers for 2023.

Khalil bin Nabhan al Rawahi, took over as President and other office bearers are Murad al Balushi as Vice-President, Prashant Bafna as Secretary, CA Ramananda Prabhu as Treasurer and Director-International Relations, Jose Chacko, as Past President, Fathiya al Maskari as Director-Training, Haitham bin Humaid al Raisi as Director-Membership, Hassan Ahmed as Director-Media and Technology, and Salim al Mushaifri as Director-at-large.

Milano holds annual dealers’ meet for Oman

MUSCAT: Milano, a brand born in Italy, wholly owned by the Danube Group known for the finest bath and home solutions across the middle-east, held its annual Dealers’ Meet for Oman on January 13, 2023 at the extravagant Grand Hyatt Hotel.

The event witnessed a turnout of more than 250 dealers.

Among other things, Milano undoubtedly views its expanding dealer network as a crucial component of its business. This is demonstrated by the innovative programme the company launched, which involved flying their top-performing Middle Eastern dealers to luxurious vacation spots to celebrate their success while enjoying a break from work.

The brand’s initiative, which was introduced in 2017, has

already given committed dealers a vacation to Switzerland in its first year and an Italian cruise in its second.

The highly anticipated and planned vacation to London had to be postponed in 2019 because to the pandemic, which had played spoilsport.

After a three-year break, the brand with its headquarters in Dubai resumed the programme in 2022, taking the traders to London and Georgia. The brand announced that it will be taking the dealers to Singapore on a captivating cruise in 2023.

The dealers did not want to miss the exclusive one-day discounts that were only available to event guests during the glitzy evening that was jam-packed with world-class entertainment and some of the best artists from



around the world. The brand also provided strategic insights into its business, discussed its expectations for the future of

the market with the dealers, and underlined its commitment to being at the forefront.

Another key highlight

of the event was the formal announcement of Milano’s partnership with leading global bath solutions brand Ideal Standard.

Commenting on the brand’s presence in Oman, Anis Sajjan, Vice-Chairman of Danube group, said, “Oman is a key market for our brand and the current development projects by the government are leading to a growth in the construction and FM sector, giving us an opportunity to reach out to a wider target market.”

Sajjan gave an insight into strategies adopted that led to the growth of Milano. “Our main aim is to cater to the customers’ needs and to fulfil that we ensure that we expand our product lines with the relevant products, to make Milano a one stop shop for all

home improvement solutions.”

With its basket of high quality and affordable products, Milano has become a household name in the urban and suburban areas of Oman not only for sanitaryware but also doors, electrical and hardware products.

Not restricting its customer base to these areas, the brand is also reaching out to traders from the interiors like Ibri, Ibra, Duqm, Nizwa, Sinaw, Al Ashkhara, Izki, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Kamil, Sur, Qurayat, Shinas and Liwa.

As a part of brand strategy, Milano aims to achieve a higher growth in the year 2023. The brand also has been intensifying its efforts in research and development to launch new products in the future and also reach out to more customers worldwide.

Police service overwhelmed by digital crime



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com
The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

For all the lack of progress on regulation, there is no getting away from the fact that crypto is increasingly used in illicit activities and even scammers are constantly attempting to extract payment in cryptocurrency from public.

The situation is now bad enough that Britain's top police organisation, the National Crime Agency (NCA), has felt the need to create a new team to crack down on the problem.

It is seeking officers with specialist experience in the sector to join the "new project that will form a specialised cryptocurrency and virtual assets team." The NCA will initially place five officers on a "proactive cryptocurrency remit".

A spokesperson said the move signalled an "increased

focus" on crypto assets. Current and former police detectives have said that crypto police face an uphill struggle due to a lack of funding and resources.

Mark Jervis, a former cybercrime investigator with the Metropolitan Police, said there was "too much work" for law enforcement agencies, while most do not pay officers enough to stop them from moving to more lucrative private firms.

Digital assets crime rate climbed to a record high in 2022, with total illicit transactions reaching \$20 billion, according to research by Chainalysis.

However, the actual total is likely to be even higher – it was initially estimated there was \$14 billion-worth of crypto crime in 2021, but the final amount was found to be \$18 billion after more scams were

found.

The NCA, the UK's top police organisation, is setting up a new crypto unit to help tackle the problem. The unit will initially have five officers dedicated to digital assets crime as part of an "increased focus" on the sector.

However, experts said five officers was not enough, and the £42,000 salary per annum advertised for one of the new team's positions was too low. "If the NCA and (the) government want the best investigators, they need to put their hands in their coffers and pay the staff proper rates," added Jervis, who took a job with crypto exchange Kraken in 2022.

David Hale, a detective sergeant with Merseyside Police, in northern England, handling financial crime said: "Private industry often

seek out our best and brightest, which leads to us needing to recruit and train further staff to meet the demand. The challenge for law enforcement is to make ourselves an employer of choice for professionals by developing them further and offering opportunities to progress."

He added: "It's a hard task, though, when private industry can offer greater salary packages that (the public sector) cannot compete with." Last year's surge in digital assets crime happened despite cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin and ether plummeting in value.

It was partly fuelled by sanctions imposed on Russian firms such as crypto exchange Garantex, following the country's war on Ukraine. Transactions involving sanctioned firms made up 44 per cent of the

total. Levels of more conventional types of crime, such as fraud and terrorist financing fell slightly, except for stolen funds.

Alice Kemp, a barrister and senior associate at law firm RPC specialising in criminal tax cases, said: "Criminals are increasingly being paid in cryptocurrencies and using cryptos to launder the profits they are making from everything from drug dealing to sophisticated white collar crime."

Last year, the Home Office said it would give police more powers to clamp down on crypto crime, estimating that they could seize as much as £200 million a year in digital assets as a result of the changes.

The powers include removing the need, in certain circumstances, for a person to be arrested before crypto assets can be confiscated.

EU debt fears hinder US green subsidies riposte

REBECCA CHRISTIE

The European Union is under enormous pressure to push back against the US Inflation Reduction Act and its vast array of clean technology subsidies. Politically, there's strong desire to act. Unfortunately, green financing doesn't grow on trees. If the EU wanted to maximise its bottom line, it could transform its temporary pandemic borrowing programme into a long-term resource.

Financial markets love the 750 billion euro NextGenerationEU programme and its sister funds. They rewarded expanded joint EU borrowing with high credit ratings and low borrowing costs, and they would welcome a long-term, liquid, safe asset with open arms.

The hitch is, permanent EU debt is a highly electrified third rail. Only the historic shock of Covid-19 made the current programme possible, and fiscal hawks like Germany and the Netherlands insist that the fund has to wind down on schedule.

That ties von der Leyen's hands. Before she can loosen state aid rules, she needs to make sure smaller member states won't be put at a competitive disadvantage to larger ones. But she can't help anyone play catch-up without new income. Since September, von der Leyen has been pushing a "solidarity fund" to offset the imbalances that could arise out of freer-flowing EU subsidies.

France is the fund's only vocal supporter. The EU may fudge the issue by repurposing money in the existing seven-year budget plan.

But this would likely require cutting back on other commitments and could only happen in the context of a broader spending debate. It also wouldn't come close to the 350 billion euros that Single Market Commissioner Thierry Breton suggested might be needed as an effective US riposte.

European Council President Charles Michel has suggested reviving an expired 100 billion euro pandemic unemployment plan as a bridge fund. But Germany staunchly opposes any more EU debt. Von der Leyen's remaining options are modest.

Politically, she's likely to trumpet faster regulatory timelines and other state-aid rule changes that do not unlock much new money. Practically, her commission can quietly finesse EU budget rules to help countries funnel more investment into solar panels, wind farms, hydrogen and heat pumps.

Financially, the EU can search its metaphorical couch cushions to repurpose a few billions here and there to help out where it can. The EU got caught by surprise at how much the US was prepared to pour into climate-forward industries. Bond investors could help, but the politics won't allow them to step in at scale. To move ahead, von der Leyen will just have to scatter some seeds and see what grows. — Reuters

Why this debt-ceiling fight is different



JEFFREY FRANKEL

The author, Professor of Capital Formation and Growth at Harvard University, previously served as a member of President Bill Clinton's Council of Economic Advisers.

The United States has reached its statutory debt limit of \$31.4 trillion. As Washington gears up for yet another partisan showdown over whether to raise the debt ceiling, with congressional Republicans seeking concessions from Democrats in exchange for their votes, many are understandably nonchalant about it.

Americans feel they have seen this movie before, and the story usually ends with the bickering politicians reaching a last-minute compromise. So, no need to ring the alarm bells.

But this reboot could have a different, tragic ending. In the 1955 movie Rebel Without a Cause, James Dean's character survives a deadly game of "chicken" by jumping out of his car at the last moment while his rival miscalculates and drives off a California cliff. With the US economy barreling toward the cliff's edge, it is clear that intransigent Republicans have no intention of hitting the brakes. This could mean a once-unthinkable US government default.

Unfortunately, letting Republicans drive the US economy off a cliff may be President Joe Biden's best option right now. But the US still has at least five months to jump out of the car. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said last week that she will pursue a set of "extraordinary measures" (all of which have become rather ordinary in recent decades) to postpone America's day of reckoning until early June.

Raising the US debt ceiling does not mean that the government has decided to increase spending. It means only that the government will honor the debt it assumed due to spending and tax decisions that Congress has already made.

If Congress wants to reduce the budget deficit – a worthy aim – it should cut spending, raise taxes, or both. How should the Biden

administration respond in the likely event that Republicans refuse to back down?

Several untested (and imperfect) creative solutions that have been proposed during previous debt-ceiling standoffs could enable policymakers to stave off the threat of an imminent Treasury default.

First, Biden could invoke the Fourteenth Amendment, as former President Bill Clinton suggested during the debt-ceiling standoff of 2011. Adopted in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War and ratified in 1868, the amendment states that the "validity of the public debt of the United States ... shall not be questioned."

The argument in favour of invoking the Fourteenth Amendment is that the debt limit and the spending and tax bills included in the budget clearly contradict each other.

When forced to choose between these conflicting laws, the argument goes, the executive branch should opt to fulfil the US government's financial obligations and let the courts decide the legality at a later date.

The counterargument is that Republicans would accuse Biden of flouting the law in an effort to increase federal spending, the confrontation would trigger a constitutional crisis, and it is unclear how the conservative-dominated Supreme Court would rule.

The most outlandish-sounding proposal is for the Treasury to mint a trillion-dollar platinum coin. The Federal Reserve could then buy the coin in exchange for conventional money, which the Treasury could use to pay its bills.

Proponents of this idea argue that as crazy as it sounds, it could actually work.

The counterargument is that it would compromise the Fed's independence and that the legality of this gimmick is unclear.

Meanwhile, the Treasury will likely have enough tax revenues to meet at least 80 per cent of already-legislated outlays without borrowing. But which 80 per cent would it cover?

Some suggest that prioritising interest payments to bondholders over other expenses would prevent a default and a rating downgrade, thereby avoiding higher interest rates on future debt.

But even if bondholders continue to be paid, failing to pay other bills on time (for example, to federal contractors and salaried government workers) could be viewed as the US government dodging its legal obligations.

Moreover, to keep paying creditors, the government would have to cut politically sensitive big-ticket budget items such as payments to Social Security recipients, Medicare providers, and active soldiers. Biden's political opponents could then use that to stir up populist outrage.

While the Treasury claims that it could not prioritise payments even if it wanted to because its computer systems and administrative apparatus are not set up that way, several House members have been trying to develop plans for giving precedence to interest payments, mandatory spending (such as Social Security, Medicare, and veterans' benefits), and military spending (such as soldiers' salaries).

But even if the Treasury could prioritise certain payments over others, these three categories account for at least 85 per cent of federal spending. There would not be enough incoming revenue to pay for all of them.

Hypothetically, even if diehard

fiscal hawks managed to eliminate all non-military discretionary spending, including the budgets of vital agencies such as the Federal Aviation Administration and the Food Safety and Inspection Service, the gap between spending and revenue could not be closed without cutting one of the three protected categories.

Do the consequences of a government default outweigh the drawbacks of these gimmick solutions?

Ten or 20 years ago, the answer might have been yes. After the 2011 debt standoff provoked S&P to downgrade the US credit rating for the first time, some argued that a default would be so disastrous that avoiding it was worth the political embarrassment of minting a trillion-dollar coin or invoking the Fourteenth Amendment.

But the world has changed since then. Even if technically workable, these creative solutions would obscure who is to blame.

Worse, they would not prevent global markets from doubting the reliability of the US government's commitment to meeting its financial obligations. Ultimately, Republicans would have to back down.

Because the GOP's rebels without a cause have become even more intransigent over the last decade, the standoff will probably go down to the wire, and the government may be forced to shirk some obligations for a few days, or even weeks.

By then, hopefully, crashing securities markets, outraged beneficiaries, and shifting voter attitudes would finally persuade enough holdouts to raise the debt ceiling. In the meantime, we have no choice but to let this game of chicken play out. © Project Syndicate, 2023



A security man walks past US Federal Reserve logo in Washington. – AFP

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

WEDNESDAY

JANUARY 25, 2023 RAJAB 3, 1444 AH

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrashdi86@yahoo.com

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

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

AUTOCAD Draftsman, Interior fitout joinery/Civil Employee visa, 8 years experience in Oman. Mob: +968 93319082. Email: rashidabdu786@gmail.com

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة SAMÁ AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

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

URGENT HIRING FOR WATER QUALITY EQUIPMENT TECHNICIANS

◆ More than 2-year work experience in same field Oman/GCC

◆ Driving License Oman

Suitable candidate can send CV to: **recruitment74@gmail.com**

SIT. WANTED

STORE manager/In Charge, Indian, above 18 years experience in Supermarket and leading retail chain in Oman and India, on visit visa, seeks immediate placement. 99697179 E-mail: mailshaijuvarghese@gmail.com

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

GENERAL manager with 16+ years experience in Oman, MBA — BE, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 94008034.

LOGISTICS/ Finance/Operations/ Warehousing. Male with 21 years of experience in Oman in the field of Finance & Reporting, Warehouse Operation and Logistics with valid Oman D/L. Working experience in Orion/ Dolphin/E-Promise ERP. Contact: 97037055. Email: cptmelsal@gmail.com

MANAGER marketing, 36 years professional experience in marketing in GCC/ Oman in building materials/ innovative products. Contact: 92284066.

BUSINESS PARTNER

Needs Investor for Oil Fields Supply / Building Materials

Contact: 92284066

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

SIT. WANTED

PLANNING engineer, INDIAN female (M Tech Civil Structural Engineering) having 7 years experience as Quantity Surveyor cum Quality Control Engineer, looking for suitable position. Contact: 96154505.

PMP. Indian male Civil Eng. Around 10 years experience in construction projects. Softwares: Primavera P6, MS Office, ERP, having Oman driving licence. Ready to join, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com, Call: 78002582.

CIVIL engineer experience with Auto CAD or interior fit out experience with Oman driving licence. Require civil engineer experience. Call: 97702696/ 99437086.

SENIOR accountant, Indian male, 39 years, 15 years experience in accounts in Oman. Oman D/L. Seeking a senior position in accounts & finance. Experience in Oil & gas, construction, FMCG, F & B sector etc. Join immediately. Contact No: +968 97921596.

FOR RENT

FLAT For Rent: In Darsait, 4 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, kitchen, with small sea view, near the Indian School RO 240 monthly. There is also a room with a bathroom and a kitchen for rent, at a value of RO 100 per month, with electricity and water. T: 99315986

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 (crocroaches), 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

SITUATION VACANT

Required for Ras Al Hamra Recreation Centre (PDO Club)

PURCHASER - RESTAURANT REQUIREMENTS

Qualification: Diploma or Bachelor Degree in Commerce or Business Management (with Knowledge of Accounts)

Skills:

- Sound Knowledge of Purchasing Food Stuff
- Computer skills in MS Excel and/or Accounting Software
- Strong Negotiating and Communication Skills
- Must be fluent in written & spoken English

Experience: 5-2 years working as Purchaser of Food & Beverage for a reputed Restaurant

Job Responsibilities:

- Obtaining Competitive Price Bids from Vendors
- Placing Orders and Arranging Timely Deliveries.
- Maintaining Stock Inventory and Storekeeping
- Preparing Monthly Reports of Purchases

Please email CV to: **oceanint@omantel.net.om**

RENT A CAR

Buttercup Rent A Car AMAZING OFFERS

○ Rent a car for 10 days and get an extra free day.

○ Rent for one month and get 5 days free.

All the cars are 2016 brand new special prices for public departments, companies and long-term contracts. ☎972494490.

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

SERVICES

Autocad/revit arch MEP, part/full- time. Contact WhatsApp: 97103168.

MIDAWA TRADING & CONT. EST. Plumping, painting & Maintenance. Contact: 96191837.

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

OMAN OBSERVER

Now get news on the go



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
<your name> to
96473232

ADVERTISEMENT

Sealed bids invited from interested parties to collect waste materials periodically from a large Automotive dealership at Qurum, Sohar, Haima and Salalah for following:

Mixed Metal Scrap | Empty Oil Drums
Used Oil | Used Battery Big and Small
Expired and Damaged Spare Parts (Mix of Steel, Rubber, Plastics & Aluminum)
Expired Tires | Wooden Pallets
Used Cartons of Various Sizes

Interested parties having required licenses and complying with various local authority regulation for waste management, hazardous materials, used oil, collection handling transportation, storage and disposal can submit their sealed bids within 15 days to below mentioned email address **scrapcenter2022@gmail.com**.

Selected Vendor will also be responsible for disposal of damaged / used tires as per local regulations.

For any clarifications, please call 93384598

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om

f t i y l y @omanobserver



Standing on the shoulder of giants

The “Standing on the shoulders of giants” exhibition explores portraiture through iconography. It portrays six individuals, from different walks of life. Alongside them are portraits of their heroes. Those who have inspired and influenced them to follow their dreams... **P20**

Amr Diab enthralls Oman fans

By Kabeer Yousuf

FANS OF AMR DIAB, the Guinness World Record holder for his soul rendering music, had a musical extravaganza when their favourite singer transcended them on a journey comprising a medley of his songs and made them tap to his

tunes last Thursday.

The seven-times winner of World Music Awards and five-times winner of Platinum Records rendered all his class numbers to the people who crooned and wanted more at the Dunes Beach Club of Jebel Sifah, a hospitality project of Oman Tourism Development Company OMRAN and



Orascom Development Holding, thanks to the Venture Lifestyle, organiser of the event.

Known as the 'King of Arab Pop', Amr Diab is a best-selling Egyptian singer who has created his own style of music, a blend of Western and Egyptian rhythms. His 1996 signature song "Nour El Ain" gained the groundbreaking artist recognition inside and outside the Arab world. A report published by the BBC suggests that he has ruled the Arab music world, specially Egypt and the Middle East, since the mid 80s, continually breaking sales records. Adding a rare recognition, his songs have been translated to more than seven different

languages.

Amr Diab, who is considered to be the founder of Mediterranean Music and earned international recognition throughout his career including six African Music Awards, went on to heed to his fans in Oman comprising people of various nationalities and age groups, and went on to sing Noor al Ain, Lealy Nahary, Aks Baad, Tamally Ma'ak, Alby Etmannah, Qusad Einy, Al Leila, Ne'oul Aih, and Amarain, among other top of the charts.

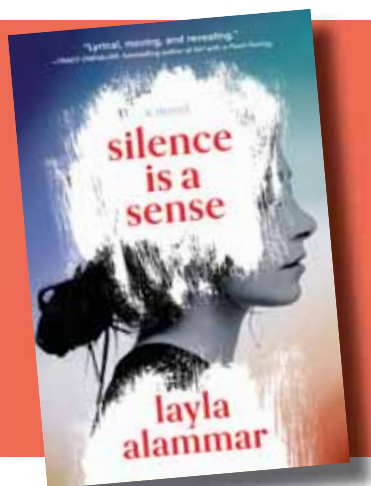
"Situated between the sea of Oman and Al Hajar Mountains, what better location to hold a performance by the world-famous Amr Diab than at Jebel Sifah," said Karim Boushra, Area Destinations Director at Muriya, adding, "The Dunes Beach Club, one of the newest hotspots at Jebel Sifah has been serving up not just the finest food but also the finest entertainment including a stellar line-up that so far consisted of DJ Rodge and Tamer Hosny to name a few."

READ

SILENCE IS A SENSE

BY LAYLA ALAMMAR

Journeying from her war-torn Syrian homeland to this unnamed British city has traumatised her into silence, the writer tries to explain the refugee experience without sensationalising it—or revealing...



LIFESTYLE

Taxidermist Brian Aiello works on the skin of a bear called Caramelles in the taxidermy laboratory of the Toulouse Museum, southwestern France. Under the skilful fingers of Brian Aiello and Adam Huyet, Caramelles' silhouette, reconstituted in polyethylene - a light material that is easily sculpted - regains its rounded shape before being covered with the skin of the bear. — AFP



FASHION

This combination of pictures shows models presenting creations from Chanel Haute-Couture Spring-Summer 2023-2024 collection during Paris Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP





Destination Phuket

By Lakshmi Kothaneth

Known as the pearl of Andaman, Phuket in Thailand has been growing as a destination because of its natural attractions. With Oman Air operating five direct flights to Phuket, the destination has become popular with tourists from Oman. "Especially after the pandemic we have noticed that the destination continues to grow. According to reliable sources, the statistics show that there is a daily average of 50 to 60,000 visitors per day to Bangkok. Phuket has become second to Bangkok especially with its iconic islands and beaches. Looking at the demand for Phuket as a destination, we increased flights to Phuket five times a week," explained Tariq al Balushi, Country Manager - Thailand, Commercial Sales Department, Oman Air.

Phuket is Thailand's largest island and is internationally renowned for its picturesque landscapes, fresh seafood, architecture and pleasant climate.

"Thailand as a destination is very popular among Omanis. A high percentage of them would have already been to this destination. The Phuket Package was launched to cater to the local market and to support the airline route," said Munthir bin Yaqoub al Shaikhani, Senior Manager Oman Holidays looking at the promotion of overseas routes to the global market.

"We act on our client's behalf to get the right price, the right product and the right exposure within the destination. We do that by partnering with the right suppliers in the market dealing with airfare, hotel stay, tours, guides in addition to providing tailor made packages based on their budget, requirements and preferences. This has been very popular initiative," explained Al Shaikhani.

Patong Beach is a resort town with lines of cafes, restaurants and street food besides shops. Sunsets are popular and marine sports are popular features.

Once upon a time Phuket was bustling for another reason - tin mining which had attracted various nationalities. Remnants of that era can still be seen and experienced through the Sino-Portuguese architecture and unique local cuisine. The place to experience the bygone days is the old town zone, which had once flourished during the time of tin mining industry.

Today Phuket is a dream holiday and has become a premier destination in the Andaman Sea equipped with an international airport, hotels, accommodation, hospitals and restaurants of international standard alongside some of the best scenic spots - turquoise seas, white beaches, crescent bays, reefs and not to forget fascinating islets. All this makes adventure sports a delight in Phuket. But most importantly what makes a difference is the people.

In fact, Bang Thao Beach has been developed from a deserted tin mine into a luxury five-star resort. The beach being a secluded gateway is perfect for swimming, surfing and sailing.

Laem Promthep is just 19 km from the city and is referred to as the island's iconic image as it is one of the favourite spots to watch the sunset. The cape is also where the Meteorological Department standardized Thailand's sunset time.

Thailand has spectacular places like Phuket, Bangkok, which is bustling with activities and malls, safaris and waterparks.

The natural attractions are many but fascinating are also the cultural aspects. For instance, Hat Rawai is another popular beach, but it is also home to sea gypsies who once wandered around the Andaman Sea. Phuket's beaches are numerous but some are natural assets such as Mai Khao, located to the north of Sirinat National Park headquarters it is the island's longest beach, but Mai Khao is not recommended for swimming because it is home to sea cicadas and is a beach where sea turtles come to lay their eggs. As a measure against the decline in sea turtle population and a step toward preservation project the Turtle Releasing Festival is held during Songkran, which is Thai's New Year.

Kamala Beach is where Phuket Fantasea, a cultural theme park is located. It is inspired by Thailand's rich and exotic heritage. The show is a combination of high-technology, pyrotechnics and tales of yester years - a mixture of myths, legends and history, depicted through song, dance and aerial ballet. If it is forests that intrigue, then a place in Phuket that ought not to be missed is Khai Phra Thaeo Wildlife Sanctuary to enjoy natural trails and Ton Sai and Bang Pae Waterfalls.

The island is also a place for festivals such as the Chinese New Year, Chao Le (Sea Gypsy) Festival, Chinese Vegetarian Festival, Laguna Phuket Triathlon, Phuket King's Cup Regatta and Phuket Carnival.

Architecture too is a fascination as can be experienced at Wat Chalong, especially for historians as it is a tribute to Luang Pho Chaem, a highly revered leader. Another place tourists love is the Big Buddha. The wide long steps in white lead you to the top providing one with beautiful views looking down at the sea and greenery. The 148 ft meditating Buddha, Ming Mongkol Eknakri, is popular with tourists and here they can also try their hand in meditation. The structure can be seen from other parts too.

What is enjoyable is also the monsoon rains and the way they pour down suddenly. All one has to do is grab the colourful raincoats. The pleasant weather in the island makes you want to walk. While there is normal transport available it is fun to experiment with Tuk Tuk, Songtaew and some prefer motorcycle taxi.





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

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 25 | 2023

art&life

19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



marathonoman
Bidiyah, Oman

Follow

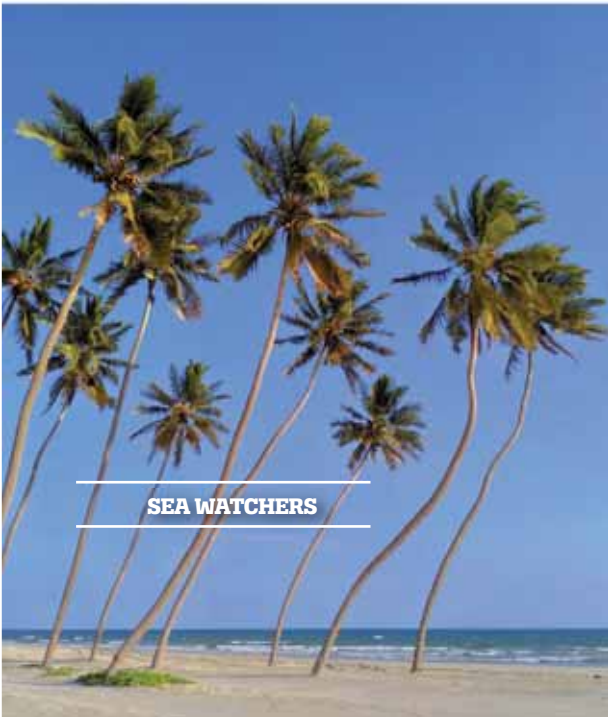


THE DESERT MARATHON



suneesh_n_m
Salalah, Oman

Follow



SEA WATCHERS



mj_photographer
Salalah, Oman

Follow



VEILED

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

Sea spiders can regrow body parts, not just limbs: Study



SEA SPIDERS CAN regrow body parts after amputation and not just limbs, according to a study released on Monday that may pave the way for further scientific research into regeneration.

"Nobody had expected this," said Gerhard Scholtz of Humboldt University in Berlin, senior author of the study published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. "We were the first to show that this is possible."

It is well documented that many different types of arthropods such as centipedes, spiders, and other insects can regrow limbs after a loss.

"Crabs can even automatically get rid of their limbs if they are attacked," Scholtz said. "They replace it by a new limb."

What the researchers discovered with their experiments with the tiny eight-legged sea spiders is that they are able to regenerate body parts other than limbs.

For the study, they amputated different hind limbs and posterior parts of 23 immature and adult sea spiders and monitored the results.

There was no regeneration of body parts in the adult sea spiders but some of them are still alive two years later.

The juvenile specimens, on the other hand, experienced a complete or a near-complete regeneration of the missing body parts including the hindgut, anus, musculature, and parts of reproductive organs.

Ninety percent of the sea spiders survived long-term and 16 of the young ones went on to molt at least once.

Regrowth of the posterior was observed in 14 of the young spiders while none of the adult specimens molted or regenerated.

Regeneration capabilities vary throughout the animal kingdom. Flatworms, for example, can regrow their body just from a few cells.

Vertebrates, which include humans, have virtually no regeneration capability with some exceptions such as lizards which can regrow tails.

Scholtz said the findings could pave the way for further research in the field.

"There's a wealth of different species that can be tested in this way," he said.

The next step may be to try to discover the mechanism behind the regrowth.

"We can try to find out on the cellular level and the molecular level what indicates the regeneration," he said.

"Perhaps there are stem cells involved which are undifferentiated cells that can assume new shape and fate?"

"In the end, maybe the mechanisms we detect in arthropods may help medical treatments of limb loss or finger loss and so on in humans," Scholtz said. "This is always the hope."

— AFP

FASHION

The women who dress men



WOMEN ARE INCREASINGLY making their mark in men's fashion, breaking through the "fabric ceiling" that has seen the industry dominated by men, and attracted by a sector where some of the most radical changes are taking place.

Fashion has long been an industry focused predominantly on women but run by men, with a 2019 study by Price WaterhouseCooper showing just 12.5 per cent of fashion houses had female bosses.

While change is slow at the top, the latest men's fashion week in Paris that wrapped up on Sunday highlighted the number of exciting women designers choosing to focus on menswear.

Grace Wales Bonner's opening night show in a Place Vendome hotel — her first physical event in Paris — was one of the hottest tickets.

Known for literary references and highlighting black and minority artists, it was clear why she is considered a frontrunner to replace the late Virgil Abloh at Louis Vuitton.

"I went into menswear because I thought there's a lot more room for expression," she said.

"It feels like it's not overdeveloped — (menswear) can be quite conservative at times."

It was well-received, with Bloomingdale's men's director Justin Berkowitz praising her "sharp tailoring... with charming details for a spot-on, personal collection".

Bode, meanwhile, returned to Paris for the first time since the pandemic, with a vintage collection inspired by rural America and her mother's family.

Known for handcrafted clothes, often made from recycled materials, she was named menswear designer of the year at the CFDA Awards in 2022.



FEWER CLICHES

There were also shows from France's Marine Serre, who has disrupted the industry with her determined adherence to sustainability, and Britain's Bianca Saunders, who said she was attracted to menswear because it offered "a different canvas where I could be very explorative".

Wales Bonner, Bode, Serre and Saunders are all in their early thirties, but more experienced designers like Gabriela Hearst and Isabel Marant have also launched menswear lines in recent years as the sector heats up.

"Men chase an ideal — today I want to feel like Marlon Brando so I throw on a leather jacket," said Hermes shoe designer Pierre Hardy, a longtime collaborator of Veronique Nichanian, who has headed menswear at the label for 35 years.

"Women come with fewer cliches, with an external and more neutral perspective," he said.

"They have an eye that is more centred on reality, with a bit of distance and less fantasy," agreed Alice Feillard, menswear buying director at Paris department store Galeries Lafayette.

A new crop is hot on their heels — among them France's Jeanne Friot, who presented a flamboyant, bright-red collection as part of a newcomer's showcase in Paris.

"As a woman designer and a lesbian, I have a different perspective on men and fashion," said Friot, whose most popular piece is an upcycled pair of jeans made from feathers.

"Men need to have more options in their wardrobe than just black, white and grey — why not some pieces that are more feminine and fun," she said. — AFP

CINEMA

Sean Penn Ukraine doc to premiere at Berlin film fest



US ACTOR AND DIRECTOR Sean Penn will premiere a documentary he filmed in Kyiv featuring Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky at next month's Berlin film festival, organisers said when they unveiled the full programme on Monday.

The Berlinale, as the February 16-26 event is known, will shine a spotlight on the Russian war of Ukraine as it passes its first anniversary.

Penn's "Superpower" is billed as "the chronicle of a film project that reality forced to change into something less controllable but more meaningful".

It will be the most prominent among several Ukraine-themed entries at the 73rd annual festival.

Berlinale co-director Carlo Chatrion told reporters the film was shot under "very difficult circumstances".

Penn was in Kyiv to shoot a documentary in late February 2022 when the Russian onslaught began.

The two-time Oscar winner was photographed attending a government news conference in Kyiv, and could be seen meeting Zelensky in a video posted to the Ukrainian president's Instagram account.

The 62-year-old actor shot the documentary for Vice Studios with directing partner Aaron Kaufman.

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINIANS, IRANIANS

Penn has previously attracted controversy as a result of his forays into current affairs, especially after he and Mexican-American actress Kate del Castillo interviewed Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman while the Mexican drug lord was on the run.

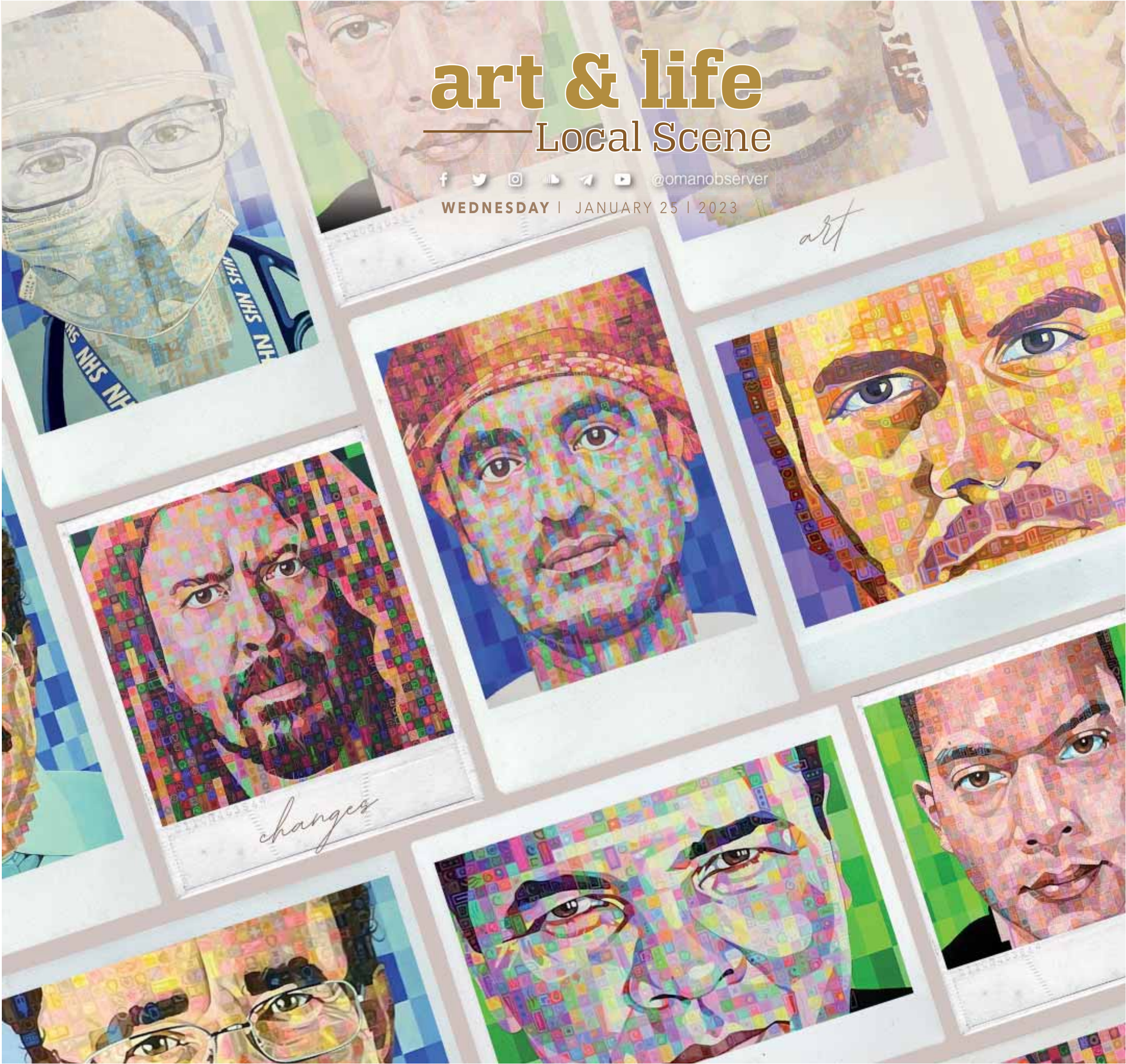
In 2018, Penn was reported to be in Turkey making an as-yet-unreleased documentary about the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Istanbul.

"Superpower" will screen in the Berlinale Special section of the festival, out of competition. Chatrion said the event, Europe's first major cinema showcase of the year, would spotlight several documentaries and feature films from Ukrainian directors, in addition to works from dissident Iranian film-makers, in a sign of "solidarity".

It will also provide free exhibition space to Ukrainian industry representatives at the festival's sprawling European Film Market, and highlight co-production possibilities with Ukraine's embattled directors, the Berlinale said.

A handful of Russian directors living in exile will also be in attendance but the festival has barred delegations and reporters with direct ties to the Russian or Iranian governments.

Chatrion unveiled the 18 films vying for the festival's prestigious Golden and Silver Bear prizes — an "eclectic" slate of feature films and documentaries from around the world. — AFP



art & life

Local Scene

f t i y @omanobserver
WEDNESDAY | JANUARY 25 | 2023

Standing on the shoulders of giants

BY MAI AL ABRI

In every walk of life our dreams and innovative ideas have to come from somewhere. Where does our inspiration come from? Who inspires us to be the best we can be? What makes us who we are? Standing on the shoulders of giants' exhibition explores portraiture through iconography. It portrays six individuals, from different walks of life. Alongside them are portraits of their heroes. Those who have inspired and influenced them to follow their dreams. Heather Ford, is a portray artist who instilled the love of arts to her students at Sultan Private School. Her goal is to teach her students all about the Omani artists who were working to establish an artistic foundation in the Sultanate of Oman at the time. Sadly, she had to leave the country in 2018 but one thought overwhelmed her mind and she constantly dreamed about having

her own exhibition. Four and a half years later, she came back exhibiting her works. Her exhibition features six young men who have big dreams and have chosen their careers. They are in their position now because of the people who inspired them; One is standing on the shoulders of his father, another one standing on the shoulders of the artist who he loves. "I am standing on the shoulders of Oman. I wouldn't be here if I wouldn't been inspired by this country's people, culture and beautiful nature. I feel that I belong here and blessed to be back", explained Heather. Heather adds "Those six young men are really important in my life. My son, my student, my nephew, my son's friend who I have known forever, my best friends' adopted son, and the scuba diver who I have known him since I was a baby. All of them chose different careers and they all live in different countries." Amjad is Heather's students and he is the son of the Omani artist



Hassan Meer. "My role model has to be my father", says Amjad. "For the past three years I have been studying at Florida International University, and as I reflect, and look back on my childhood, I feel a deep sense of gratitude and love. I was brought up with my brothers and sisters in a lively and vibrant home that centred around my immediate and extended family. It's an Omani tradition that everyone gets together, often at mealtimes, and my fondest memories are those that usually come from these special gatherings and the sharing of food. However, my father is not my chosen role

model for this reason alone - he is much, much more. My father, Hassan Meer, is a highly acclaimed Omani artist, mentor and curator who is at the forefront of Oman's contemporary art scene and I am continually inspired by his innovative ways of working, all of which revolves around Oman's rich culture and heritage. His paintings, photography and installations are often linked to his spiritual beliefs, his childhood memories and those of my great grandfather's house where he was raised. When my father was growing up, art was not considered important in schools, but art was his passion

and in his heart. He worked really hard to get an art scholarship". Jordan Ford, the featured doctor, said "I completed my medical degree in 2014 and started my training in General Practice four years later, I was in the midst of my GP training when the pandemic hit - overnight we were switched from face to face appointments to a telephone system with little access to personal protective equipment (PPE). I feel honoured to do this demanding job which continues to surprise and fascinate me on a daily basis.



I am therefore very grateful to Lord Robert Winston, professor, medical doctor, pioneer in fertility studies, author and TV presenter, for providing the inspiration that I was longing for as a 10 year old boy." While the diver stands on the shoulders of his twin brother "Stamatis". "We were born on 12th October 1987, early in the morning, I am told, and we were both big or small enough to fit in the palms of our father's hands. I was luckier than most; I knew that from a very early age. I had, and still have, amazing siblings, but in Sam I have my other half, my sounding board, my rock and inspiration. Why is he my inspiration? Because he is Sam. He's younger but wiser, grounded and calmer. We now run a successful diving academy, for locals and tourists, and I couldn't be more proud. He's simply Sam." The exhibition runs at Stal Gallery. You can follow the artist at her Instagram @heatheraford1