

■ KUWAIT

MESSAGE TO CROWN PRINCE OF KUWAIT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Deputy Amir and Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait. It deals with fraternal relations between the two countries and means of promoting them. The message was handed over by Dr Saleh bin Amir al Kharousi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait, when Shaikh Salim Abdullah Al Jaber al Sabah, Kuwait's Foreign Minister, received him in Kuwait on Wednesday. **SEE ALSO P3**

18 TEAMS FOR TOUR OF OMAN

The 12th edition of Tour of Oman 2023 will kick off on Saturday. The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Oman Cycling Association. As many as 18 global teams representing Europe, Asia, America and Australia will compete during the five-day challenge. The tour route is 830.3 km. The first stage (147.4 km) of the Tour of Oman will start on Saturday from Rustaq Castle in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, and will conclude in Muscat Governorate, in front of the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The event will give the participants an opportunity to enjoy the natural landscapes of Oman.



IN RESPONSE TO ROYAL DIRECTIVES OF HIS MAJESTY

Oman opens humanitarian bridge to Syria and Turkey



MUSCAT/ANTAKYA: In compliance with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday began operating an airbridge to transport relief aid and medical supplies to earthquake-hit areas in Syria and Turkey.

The move, which seeks to alleviate the suffering of brethren there, stems from Oman's keenness on performing its humanitarian duty.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority also dispatched a search and rescue team to participate in global operations in southern Turkey. The team left on Wednesday



onboard a Royal Air Force of Oman aircraft. Since the moment Turkish authorities declared earthquake, Oman's Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority joined hands with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group

(INSARAG), which affirmed the full mobilisation of its force to participate in rescue operations in earthquake-hit areas.

Searchers were still pulling survivors on Wednesday from the rubble of the earthquake that killed over 11,200 people in Turkey and Syria, even as rescue chances dwindled and victims clamoured for help.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited one of the hardest-hit spots, quake epicentre Kahramanmaras, and pushed back at criticism his government's response has been slow.

— ONA/AFP

SEE ALSO P6 & 7

Honour for Unesco-listed personalities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, announced that February 10 every year will be designated as an annual day to honour the memory of globally influential Omani personalities included in the Unesco's list for celebrating the 50th anniversary for major historical events and globally influential personalities.

The celebration, which marks the Sultanate of Oman's accession to the Unesco on February 10, 1972, aims to make influential Omani personalities known at the local and international levels, notably by highlighting their knowledge and scholarly accomplishments.

Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education and Chairperson of the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the allocation of an annual day to pay tribute to Unesco-listed Omani personalities fits with the global organisation's programme to celebrate the 50th anniversary of major historical events and personalities.

TURN TO P4

Luxuriate in the award-winning Golf Beach Residences at Al Mouj Muscat

Golf Beach Residences has gained global attention, with these five and six-bedroom oceanside villas winning international awards as homes that combine exceptional design with an outstanding setting and lifestyle within the stylish Shatti district, where families can enjoy easy access to the beach and Al Mouj Golf.

A very limited number are still available to buy, and with construction of 15 of these majestic family homes underway at the heart of Oman's premier lifestyle community, what can homeowners expect from Golf Beach Residences?

CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani says: "Work on the first phase of these exceptional homes has begun and the entire team is thrilled to transform the vision of Golf Beach Residences into a reality.

"We focus on every detail and the reward of our dedication will be handing the villas over to their new owners knowing that every room, every finish and every feature will surpass expectations. These will be homes where families can enjoy life at its most fulfilling."

Exclusive neighbourhood, exclusive neighbours

Set within an exclusive gated neighbourhood nestled alongside Al Mouj Golf and the 5-star St Regis Resort, this is now one of the Sultanate's most desirable addresses.

In a calm and private setting, yet superbly well-connected to Al Mouj Muscat's many world-class amenities, buyers can select three different property types - Golf Boulevard Villas, Golf Park Villas and Beach Boulevard Villas.

"Combined with the superb setting of Golf Beach Residences, we knew we had the opportunity to create exceptional family homes, with designs that incorporate elegant and airy rooms for entertaining and

Award winning



REAL ESTATE ASIA AWARDS 2022

Winner of Best Residential Development for 20 Plus Units for Oman and Arabia in the 2022 International Property Awards

intimate spaces for families to relax and unwind.

"All whilst the excitement and opportunities of life outdoors beckons, from the customisable garden suites to the enviable proximity of our award-winning golf club and pristine beaches," continues Nasser bin Masoud Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat.

Here are five factors that are appealing so strongly to buyers:

Designed for life

Golf Beach Residences are spacious and contemporary and designed to evolve with the changing needs of daily life with formal and informal areas that can be adapted as families grow. The opportunity to customise a separate garden suite appeals to owners as the space can reflect their passions whether a cinema or games space, gym or music room.

Bringing the outside in

Set close to the ocean with extraordinary natural light and views, Golf Beach Residences are designed to maximise every opportunity to connect with the outside all year round. Huge floor to ceiling windows and architectural features invites gentle sea breezes and sunlight in, filtering them where needed and through free-flowing

Unique features

- Customisable garden suite
- Complimentary golf cart and electric charging point
- Dedicated informal and formal family areas
- Built-in Smart home technology
- Energy efficient
- Balconies, landscaped gardens and private pools
- Garage and ample covered parking and staff accommodation
- Discounted membership of Al Mouj Golf

Talent and Impact

- Golf Beach Residents are at the heart of the multi-award-winning Al Mouj Muscat success story
- The stunning villas are some of the 2,500 homes delivered to date
- The premium lifestyle destination employs Omani architects, designers and engineers
- Supporting 2,821 construction jobs and 1,787 jobs across its supply chain
- Al Mouj Muscat is an engine for diversified growth with 150 SMEs providing goods and services to its 8,000 residents and 4m annual visitors



layouts, each floor seamlessly connects to the surrounding gardens, exquisitely landscaped with private pools and terraces.

A smarter way to live

An electric car charging point and smart home technology add to a sense of ease, convenience and luxury and smart energy management systems lower CO2 emissions supporting healthier living.

A golf lover's paradise

Every villa comes with its own golf cart and charging point making it easy for golfers to head to neighbouring Al Mouj Golf, 2022 winner of Best Global Course in the World Luxury Travel Awards, either to play or for the whole family to enjoy the club's superb restaurant. What is more, golf lovers can enjoy preferential club membership rates and discounts exclusive to Golf Beach Residences owners.

The perfect balance

From the versatility of the internal space to the beauty of the external surroundings and the playground of leisure and lifestyle opportunities on the

doorstep, life at Golf Beach Residences is all about freedom of choice and balance.

Every day, residents can decide whether to savour in the peace and tranquillity of their private retreat, luxuriating in stylish interiors and spending time with family and friends. Or they can immerse themselves in Al Mouj Muscat's warm and thriving community of 8,000 people from 85 countries who call this exclusive environment home.

Al Mouj is Oman's first integrated Tourism Complex (ITC) and today more than 4.9 million annual visitors and its residents enjoy boulevard style, world-class retail, culinary and leisure experiences as well as daily conveniences and services.

As to embracing nature and the great outdoors, along with the ocean and 6km of pristine sandy beach, there are tree lined walkways, beautifully landscaped parks and 1.5km of cycle trails.

Al Mouj Muscat – a destination without an equal

Al Mouj Muscat is Oman's premier lifestyle community offers a thriving shopping and dining scene with a choice of 85 outlets, and a host of year-round arts and entertainment events.

Alongside the permanent fixtures of an elegant 400-berth marina complete with sea tour operators, a championship golf course and 5-star hotels, it is known as a place where residents from all over the globe enjoy a true sense of belonging.

Al Mouj Muscat believes in creating great moments, every day. From hosting sporting events such as the annual Oman Marathon, to a monthly farmers' market, and staging colourful national holiday celebrations that honour Oman's culture and heritage, Al Mouj Muscat attracts people from across the country to flock to its lively oceanfront setting.

To discover more about Golf Beach Residents, visit [www.almouj.com](#)



Sohar Aluminium and all its employees are honoured to extend their warmest felicitations to **His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik**, and the industry community, on the occasion of Oman's Industry Day.



We are proud to be one of the key contributors to realising the aspiring targets of **Oman 2040 Vision** in the industrial sector under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik



In realisation of its aspiration to be a world-class and a pioneer industrial company, Sohar Aluminium has and will always pursue industrial excellence through adopting global practices.

It acts in favour of protecting the environment, implementing high working standards, maintaining excellent relations with stakeholders, and committing to transparent policies and moral responsibilities, all of which are summarised under the ESG standards.



www.sohar-aluminium.com





Follow us on **facebook**
omanobserver

Ambassadors submit copies of credentials



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday received copies of credentials of Muhammet Hekimoglu, appointed ambassador of the Republic of

Turkey to the Sultanate of Oman, and Pierluigi D’Elia, appointed ambassador of the Italian Republic to the Sultanate of Oman. Sayyid Badr welcomed the ambassadors,



wishing then success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the relations between Oman and their respective countries further progress. — ONA

Oman records temperatures above average in January

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Several weather monitoring stations in the Sultanate of Oman recorded temperatures that were above the monthly average in January, according to Oman Meteorology.

The monitoring station in Masirah Island recorded a cumulative 51 mm of rain during January 2023, which is the highest for January since 1992, when it recorded cumulative amounts of 60 mm.

Oman Meteorology said Thamrait recorded the highest temperature of 20.2°C, which was +1.18 above the monthly average, and Al Buraimi at 19.4°C (+1), Salalah at 24.3°C (+0.9) and Masirah at 23°C (+0.4).

Muscat recorded the highest temperature of 32.9°C, Qurayat 32.5°C, Al Amerat 32.4°C, Qalhat 32.3°C and Al Mazyouna 32°C.

The Khasab station recorded a decrease of -3°C compared to the average.

It may be noted that in Muscat



January is the coldest month of the year with daytime maximum temperatures at 25°C and night temperatures at 17°C.

It may be noted that the World Bank Group’s Roadmap for Climate Action focuses on climate action and green recovery in the region.

The Sultanate of Oman’s

National Strategy for Adaptation and Mitigation for Climate Change (2020-2040) focuses on the use of advanced tools to establish historical climate trends to better understand future climate change.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources,

and the Environment Authority (EA) have supported the measures needed to reduce the adverse impact of climate change, especially limiting the annual temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius by the end of this century from current predictions of over 2.5 degrees Celsius.

Arab film personalities honoured

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Acclaimed Arab film personalities Akef Najm, Ghazi Hussein, Dr Habib Ghuloom and Mansour al Faii were honoured along with several local and regional personalities for their contribution to the regional cinema at the glittering concluding ceremony of the Fourth International Arab Film Festival, Cinemana, in Musandam on Wednesday.

The Omani personalities from the cinema and theatre who were honoured for excellence in arts included Dr Abdul Karim bin Ali Jawad, Zakaria bin Yahya al Zadjali, Dr Khadija bint Suleiman al Shehiyah, Salem bin Ahmed al Khanzouri, Abdul Rahman bin Ahmed al Mulla, Dr Ahmed bin Murad al Balushi, Auf bin Abdullah al Shehi, Fatima bint Ali al Salmiyah, and Dr Wafa bint Salem al Shamsiyah.

The chairman and members of the jury in the short film competition, Tariq Abdulaziz, director and producer Mamdouh Salem, Zakaria al Zadjali, professor Rasha Barakat, actress Amal Muhammad, and the chairman and members of the jury in the Feature Narrative Film Competition, Akef Najm, Dr Abdul Karim Jawad, Prof Dr Mohammed Mohsen al Zarai, Mervat Omar and actress Gouri Nair were some of the eminent personalities who received the honour in front of a packed audience at the festival.

Oman hosted the Film Fest, Cinemana,

for the second time in a row at two locations, Muscat and Musandam, from February 3 to 8, where 121 films (43 short and long films) from Oman, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Algeria, UAE, Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Bahrain, Iran, Serbia, Portugal, India, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan and Tunisia were screened at the two venues, Lunar Cinema in Al Muzn Mall in the Wilayat of Seeb and Musandam sports club in Khasab.

10 films (Jordanian “Al Kamin” directed by Ashraf al Abadi, Syrian “Al Hakim” directed by Basil al Khatib, Kuwaiti “Oscar” directed by Mohammed al Hamli, Indian “Ayisha” directed by Aamir Pallikkal, Algerian movie “Halim al Ra’ad” directed by Bin Abdullah Mohammed, Serbian movie “A Cross in the Desert” directed by Hadzi-Aleksandar Djurovic, Iraqi movie “The Last Messengers” directed by Saad al Assami, Egyptian movie “ Wesh al Qafs” by director Dina Abdel Salam, Saudi Arabian movie “Hayat a Woman” by Samir Aref, and Emirati movie “218 Behind the Wall of Silence” by Nahla al Fahd made it to the feature film section.

The number of short films participated in the competition were 33 films, including fiction, animation and documentaries. From the Sultanate of Oman, the movie “Al Drooj” by Dr Hamid al Amri and the movie “Pitacarotene” by Mohammed al Darushi, and from Egypt the movie “Rainy Spring” by Ahmed Khalil Ali and the movie “Phase” by the director Engy Hossam, “Sarah” by Abdullah Adel, “The Voice of God”

by Shadi al Masoudi, “What We Cannot See” by Adham Yahya, “Maktoub” by Mohamed Rabie, “Two Rooms and a Hall” by Mina Maher Milad, “The Last Message” by Walid Sari, “To Live in Another Place” by Safaa al Sayed and “The Road to Ramallah” by director Mohammed Issa, and from Palestine the movie “My Crutch” by Ahmed Tariq Hamad, “Crowned with Laurel Leaves” by Hayat Amjad, and “Six Days Are Not Enough” by the two directors, Mahmoud Abu Shamsia and Thaeer Metwally. From Iraq “Article 57” directed by Ali Hassan Abbas, “Sherine” by Zaid Shukr, “The Last Promises” by Ali Abdel Sattar, “Sukrah” by Mohammed Abdel Amir, “Peace” by Faten Karim, “Traffic light” directed by Mohammed Khudair, and “Naima” directed by Sami Seif. From Morocco “The Secret of the Seal” and “Inverse” by Abdelrahim Bouklas, “Clowny’s Mama” by Manal Goa and “Tarifs/ Takhareef” by Aziz Bojh. From Syria and France, the movie “The Odor of Orange” by the Malas brothers, and from Syria “Abha” by Rabab Merhajo, “Sabbat” by Hossam Hamo, “Very Long” by Robin Issa. From Tunisia “Krenti”, directed by Aziz al Shennawy, from Sudan “Cinnamon Dalia” by Khairy Samir, and from the UAE the movie “Curtain” directed by Majed al Jasmi and Khalifa al Bahri were screened.

Organisers of the fest said that since the launch of the first session in 2020, the festival had proven its importance in embracing the passion and creativity of Omani and Arab youth.

HM MESSAGE TO CROWN PRINCE OF KUWAIT



KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a written message to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Deputy Amir and Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait. It deals with fraternal relations between the two countries and means of promoting them. The message was handed over by Dr Saleh bin Amir al Kharousi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait, when Shaikh Salim Abdullah Al Jaber al Sabah, Kuwait’s Foreign Minister, received him here on Wednesday. — ONA

Ways to advance media training discussed



MUSCAT: Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, received here on Wednesday Majri Mubarak al Qahtani, Director General of Gulf Radio and Television Organization.

The meeting dealt with aspects of cooperation in the field of media training, between the Information Ministry’s Media Training Centre and Gulf Radio

and Television Organization.

The meeting also touched on various media issues and underscored the need to hold specialised courses on areas of significance to modern developments in media.

The meeting was attended by Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Information, among other officials. — ONA

National Museum displays rare perfume bottles



MUSCAT: Embodying the historical value of the frankincense tree, the National Museum displays at the Land of Frankincense Gallery a collection of perfume bottles dating back to 1983 made of crystal, gold (24 karat) and silver. The collection stands as the first aromatic innovation of Amouage Perfumes.

The perfumes were presented by late Sultan Qaboos bin Said to his guests. The three fragrant flasks depict Oman’s three greatest natural treasures namely frankincense, rose and amber along with other rare ingredients. Frankincense was and still a

bridge of communication and highly regarded globally.

One of the perfumes’ shape was inspired by the Omani dagger. Another perfume has a cubic design plated with gold and engraved with delicate decorations, while the design of the bottle cap was inspired by the dome of the mosque.

The museum also displays a perfume bottle in the form of “Lily of the Valley” from 1931, made of crystal and designed by “Rene Lalique” in Paris, the French Republic. The perfume bottles will be on display at the museum for a duration of six months. — ONA



NDC hosts Secretary-General of Arab League

MUSCAT: The National Defence College (NDC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Wednesday hosted Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League.

The guest delivered a lecture entitled “Regional and International Variables and Their Impact on Joint Arab Action”, in the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroun, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

The lecture was given as part of the general curriculum of the NDC 10th batch.

Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, NDC Commandant, delivered a speech during which he welcomed the Secretary-General of the Arab League. He also appreciated his keenness to participate in delivering a valuable and enriching lecture for the



participants of the course.

During the lecture, Aboul Gheit touched on the impact of the reality of the current Arab system on joint Arab action, the extent of the impact of regional and international changes and events on the march of the Arab League’s work.

He also reviewed obstacles and incentives for the joint Arab action, the role of the Arab League in settling conflicts and disputes among Arab countries, as well as the foundations and pillars of success from the point of view of the Secretary-General of the Arab League.

At the end of the lecture, the lecturer replied to inquiries of the attendees and participants of the NDC 10th batch.

The lecture was attended by officials, senior officers at the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and Guidance Body.

— ONA

Honour for Unesco listed personalities

FROM PAGE 1

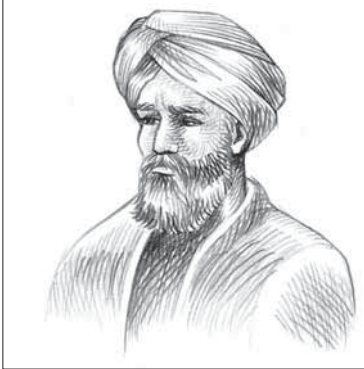
She pointed out that the event also reflects the country’s keenness on innovative throughout history and in the legacies left behind by the scholars for humanity. It celebrates the accomplishments that transcended the boundaries of place and accessed wide global horizons, benefiting many knowledge-seekers interested in medicine, navigation, geography and literature.

The minister added that some regional and international researchers, libraries, research centres and modern universities gave impetus to Omani personalities that had a global impact. This, she said, constitutes a focal point that contributed to consolidating the legacy of Omani figures and promoted their sustainability throughout the ages.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, laid emphasis on Oman’s efforts to strengthen its presence in the Unesco programme that celebrates influential Omani personalities of global outreach.

Al Busaidy said that Oman’s contribution started right upon the establishment of the Unesco’s programme in 2005, namely through the registration of Arab scholar Al Khalil bin Ahmed al Farahidi, then the listing of the Arab physician and pharmacist “Rashid bin Omeira” in 2013.

Al Busaidy pointed out that Nouredine al Salmi, an Omani



polymath, encyclopaedist and social reformer was included in the Unesco’s list in 2015, alongside physician and physicist Abu Mohammed al Azdi (Ibn Al Dhahabi).

In the field of poetry and journalism, Omani scholar Abu Muslim al Bahlani was included in the Unesco’s list in 2019, while another Omani scholar named Ahmed bin Majid was added to the Unesco’s list in 2021, Al Busaidy said. — ONA

35,000 invasive birds eliminated

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Environment Authority (EA) has announced that over 35,000 invasive birds have been eradicated as a result of the national campaign to combat their presence in the Governorate of Dhofar.

The preliminary results, released on Wednesday, showed that 9,368 of the birds were Indian crows and 25,786 were mynahs.

The increasing number of invasive birds prompted the EA to launch a national campaign



in December with the aim of controlling their spread across the Sultanate of Oman. A team was formed to conduct a study on the impact of these birds and

develop a comprehensive strategy to address the issue.

Invasive birds, such as Indian crows and mynahs, cause significant harm to

the environment and local communities. They destroy crops, eat bees and transmit diseases, parasites and fleas to both humans and animals. The mynah, first reported in the Muscat Governorate in 1982, also affects the food chain in the areas they inhabit, often attacking and killing the young of other bird species.

The EA’s efforts to eliminate these invasive birds will not only reduce their negative impact on the environment and local communities, but also preserve the delicate balance of the ecosystem.

■ OMAN’S HUMANITARIAN MISSION



MUSCAT: In compliance with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, the Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday began operating an airbridge to transport relief aid and medical supplies to earthquake-hit areas in Syria and Turkey.

The move, which seeks to alleviate the suffering of brethren there, stems from Oman’s keenness on performing its humanitarian duty.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority also

dispatched a search and rescue team to participate in global operations in southern Turkey. The team left onboard a Royal Air Force of Oman aircraft.

Since the moment Turkish authorities declared earthquake, Oman’s Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority joined hands with the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which affirmed the full mobilisation of its force to participate in rescue operations in earthquake-hit areas. — ONA

‘Mountain man’ makes link road to reduce travel time by 3 hours

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A man who dug a mountain for the whole prime time of his life to make a road for the people of his village in India went to the annals of history, inspiring generations and underlining the simple fact that determination is the key to moving mountains.

Here in the Sultanate of Oman, media-shy Saeed bin Salem al Muqeemi of Al Oud in Wadi Bani Khalid worked with complete determination to facilitate easy access to the next village and save hours of travel time.

Al Oud in Wadi Bani Khalid, a wilayat in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, is surrounded by mountains. The people here had to travel 3.5 hours to reach the next village Halut in the mountainous Niyabat Tiwi of South Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

The hard work of Al Muqeemi reduced the travel time to and from Halut by 3 hours. With sheer dint of grit and determination, he converted the passage between the two villages into easy access. He tirelessly supervised the construction of the road until its completion.

Saeed brought an excavator and took it upon himself to provide relief to people in the mountains by shortening the distance between the two villages. After several months of hard work fuelled by



determination, he successfully constructed a link road connecting the two villages in two separate governorates.

“It was not an easy task to construct a road. I really had to spend a considerable amount of my time every day and get behind the excavator control to supervise the work. My typical day at the construction site began at 5 am and sometimes even before so that I could achieve the target of 7 to 8 kilometres of road in the desired time,” a jubilant Saeed said.

Last week, after the road connecting the two villages was opened to the public, it shortened the travel time from 3.5 hours to just 30 minutes, with the travel distance of 200 km reduced to less than 8 km.

When he decided to construct a road through the mountain, people questioned his sanity by saying, “Had there been a possibility, the road would have been made much

earlier.”

However, some people appreciated his decision and stood by him for the initiative and offered all possible support in the form of money, efforts and extended moral support, according to Al Muqeemi.

Finding sufficient funds to support the project was a big question, and that paused his dreams of the road. Saeed was awarded a grant as part of the Sultan Qaboos Award for Voluntary Work last year.

“I bought an excavator with that money, and that was the beginning on July 1, 2022, and it was the day we embarked upon the strenuous task of breaking the mountains that blocked us from connecting,” Saeed marked with a smile.

“It was a challenging task, and we were required to dig deeper into the side of the mountain and had to expect that anything could go wrong any time during the construction, such as a rock falling



onto workers below and other threats, which we overcame with luck and determination,” Saeed adds.

He advised them to drill and blast that part of the mountain after surveying and mapping the road. Later, roads are cut into the mountainside by digging deep into it after making a trace-cut by tracing the line. Later, the earthwork began with the excavator, which operated through the soil and soft rocks. Months long mountain cutting, drilling, blasting and clearing rock, which was, are all part of the job, the road was ready to welcome commuters on February 02.

“The pleasure of seeing villagers from both sides happy and easily travelling is inexplicable. But I’m happier to see that our efforts will definitely inspire someone somewhere, and the concept of volunteerism will inspire both citizens and residents,” said Saeed.



Panel reviews traffic situation

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Road Safety held a meeting at the Directorate-General of Traffic here on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Chairman of the Committee.

The committee looked into the situation of traffic in Oman. It studied annual indices and statistics on the levels of road safety, notably the results of



analysis of road accidents. The meeting touched on the efforts undertaken by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) to devise an educational syllabus on road safety in cooperation with

the departments concerned. It valued the outcome of studies on this syllabus due to its role in engendering road safety culture in students and the young generation.

The committee also underscored the role of traffic safety institutes in consolidating the concept of road safety and engaging all segments of society in promoting it. The committee also valued the role of the media in spreading awareness about road safety. — ONA

Symposium on financial technology opens

MUSCAT: Deliberations of the International Symposium on Financial Technology began at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on Wednesday under the auspices of HH Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd al Said, SQU Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation.

The event was organised by SQU's College of Economics and Political Science, in cooperation with the

Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and Imperial College London. The symposium included a presentation of local and international practical experiences, highlighting the role of government regulation in promoting financial technology, discussing current trends in the sector and devising policies and laws necessary to enhance this field.

— ONA



Conference sets stage for new era in work culture



MUSCAT: Activities of the 6th edition of OSHRM's conference on developing human resources kicked off on Wednesday at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. The conference is organised by the Ministry of Labour and Oman Society for Human Resources Management (OSHRM).

The conference seeks to find ways to hone the skills of human resources and to endorse a new work culture based on innovation.

The event, which lasts for several days, will discuss the modernisation of work instruments and the welfare of employees envisaged to operate in a healthy environment, under the guidance of a talented leadership.

It includes dialogue sessions on reviewing developments in the human resources sector, approved experiences and innovative solutions.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour.

The minister said that human resources development takes centre stage in the government's priorities. The Ministry of Labour activates all its resources to develop human resources. He called upon establishments of the private sector to draft and implement similar plans to meet labour market needs for trained human resources.

Dr Ghalib bin Saif al Hosni, Board Chairman of OSHRM, said that this year's edition aspires to introduce new ideas in developing human resources and providing this sector with continuous support to help it keep pace with global progress.

The conference is attended by international companies and it offers an opportunity to meet specialists, follow up the latest technologies, exchange expertise in this field and and furnish attractive environment for employees.

The conference also looks into major challenges facing the human resources sector.

— ONA

DJIBOUTIAN COMMANDER VISITS MSC



MUSCAT: Col Wais Omar Bogoreh, Commander of the Djiboutian Coast Guard, on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The guest toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. He was also briefed on the roles and tasks carried out by the centre within its national duties, as it coordinates with relevant authorities in search and rescue missions for the safety of the maritime environment. — ONA

SAIL INTO THE PAST

DISCOVER MARITIME HERITAGE AT SUR FESTIVAL

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlbalushia

A museum refreshes memory, knowledge, skills and experiences from generation to generation. Al Rabban Museum, with its collections, is among the most important platforms for returning back to the roots of maritime heritage.

Most corners of the Sur Festival take the visitors to the life of their ancestors.

The Wilayat of Sur is rich in many elements that embody history, especially the marine. Citizens are able to collect the treasures of the state's history and preserve them. A large museum here includes many things called 'Sur Houses', with historical pictorial and nautical contents on display at the Al Rabban Museum.

The Al Rabban Museum at the Maritime Heritage Festival depicts the cultural heritage of contemporary societies and is an essential resource for development and cultural tourism.

Bader bin Said al Sinani, the owner of the Al Rabban Museum, said, "The corner of the Al Rabban Museum in the Maritime Heritage Festival embodies the personality

of the skipper and all his marine equipment, as well as the tawash, which is the profession of the original pearl merchant, with all the old pearl tools and a box that was sold in that era, and types of old goldsmiths, as well as the embodiment of the role of the perfumer of ancient perfumes that it was brought at that time and became scarce."

He added that what distinguishes the museum is its embodiment of life in the past, as the place smells of history and takes you to the atmosphere of the ancestors so that you can live the moment through displaying and explaining many old maps dating back to 1890.

The Rabban Museum is diverse and contains archaeological and rare holdings. It contains perfumes, ancient herbs, old sewing machines, utensils, manuscripts, marine maps, documents, newspapers, old books, magazines, and mock kitchen utensils from the past, in addition to mock costumes and all their contents, such as swords, guns, and others.

The corner presents historical personalities everyday as an educational and cultural means, especially for the current



generation, to embody the role of the Omani person in that era, including the part of the skipper, the perfume merchant, the figurehead house and other personalities.

It considers participation like the same of this museum to enhance the community's culture, inculcate the spirit of historical knowledge, preserve maritime history, and stimulate tourism.



EU TO HOST DONOR CON



TEN DEADLIEST QUAKE

2004	230,000 DEAD, SOUTHEAST ASIA On December 26, a massive earthquake measuring 9.1 on the Richter scale strikes off the coast of Sumatra, triggering a tsunami that kills more than 230,000 throughout the region, including 170,000 in Indonesia alone. Huge waves of 700 kph reach heights of 30 metres.	2010	200,000 DEAD, HAITI A magnitude 7 quake on January 12 devastates the capital Port-au-Prince and the surrounding region. The quake cuts the country off from the rest of the world for 24 hours, killing over 200,000 people, leaving 1.5 million homeless and shattering much of its frail infrastructure.	2008	87,000 DEAD, SICHUAN More than 87,000, including 5,335 school pupils, are left dead or missing when a 7.9-magnitude quake strikes southwestern Sichuan province on May 12. Outrage erupts after it emerges 7,000 schools were badly damaged by the quake, triggering accusations of shoddy construction, corner-cutting and possible corruption, especially as many other buildings nearby held firm.	2005	75,000 DEAD, KASHMIR An October 8 earthquake kills more than 73,000 people, the vast majority of them in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and the Pakistani-administered zone of Kashmir state. Some 3.5 million people are displaced.
2003	31,000 DEAD, BAM A 6.6-magnitude quake on December 26 in southeastern Iran destroys the ancient mud-brick city of Bam, killing at least 31,000 people. Nearly 80 per cent of Bam's infrastructure is damaged, and the desert citadel, once considered the world's largest adobe building, crumbles.	2001	20,000 DEAD, INDIA A massive 7.7 earthquake on January 26 hits the western Indian state of Gujarat, killing more than 20,000 people. The quake levelled buildings across the state, with many fatalities in the town of Bhuj near the Pakistan border.	2011	18,500 DEAD, JAPAN On March 11, Japan is struck by an enormous 9.0-magnitude earthquake, unleashing a towering tsunami that levels communities along the country's northeastern coast. Around 18,500 people are left dead or missing as the terrifying wall of water travelling at the speed of a jet plane swallows up everything in its path.	2015	9,000 DEAD, NEPAL A 7.8-magnitude earthquake on April 25 strikes in central Nepal, triggering avalanches and landslides across the Himalayan nation, destroying schools and hospitals. The massive quake kills almost 9,000 people and renders millions homeless, while also reducing more than a hundred monuments to rubble, including centuries-old temples and royal palaces in the capital's Kathmandu valley.



omanobserver.com/podcast

earthquake

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

THURSDAY | FEBRUARY 9 | 2023

7

CONFERENCE ON QUAKE AID

TURKISH LEADER ACKNOWLEDGES PROBLEMS

BRUSSELS: The EU plans to host a donors conference in March to mobilise international aid for Syria and Turkey to deal with the devastating impact of this week's earthquake, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said Wednesday. "We are now racing against the clock to save lives together. Soon we will provide relief aid, together. Türkiye and Syria can count on the EU," von der Leyen wrote on Twitter.

Meanwhile, President Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday admitted to problems with his government's initial response to a devastating earthquake in southern Turkey amid anger from those left destitute and frustrated over the slow arrival of rescue teams.

Erdogan, who contests an election in May, said on a visit to the disaster zone that operations were now working normally and promised no one would be left homeless, as the combined death toll across Turkey and neighbouring Syria climbed above 11,000.

But across a swathe of southern Turkey, people sought temporary shelter and food in freezing winter weather, and waited in anguish by piles of rubble where family and



A rescuer holds baby boy Kerem Agirtas, a 20-day-old survivor who was pulled from under the rubble, in the aftermath of a deadly earthquake in Hatay, Turkey. - Reuters

friends may lie buried. Rescuers were still digging out some people alive. Others were found dead.

There were similar scenes and complaints in neighbouring Syria, where the impact of Monday's huge quake extended to.

The death toll from both countries was expected to increase as hundreds of collapsed buildings in many cities have become tombs for people who had been asleep in the homes when the quake hit in the early morning.

In the Turkish city of Antakya, dozens of

bodies, some covered in blankets and sheets and others in body bags, were lined up on the ground outside a hospital.

Families in southern Turkey and in Syria spent a second night in the freezing cold.

Many in the disaster zone had slept in their cars or in the streets under blankets, fearful of going back into buildings shaken by the 7.8 magnitude tremor - Turkey's deadliest since 1999 - and by a second powerful quake hours later. "Where are the tents, where are food trucks?" said Melek, 64, in Antakya, saying she had not seen any rescue teams. "We survived the earthquake, but we will die here due to hunger or cold here."

The death toll rose to 8,574 in Turkey on Wednesday. In Syria - already devastated by 11 years of war - the confirmed toll climbed to more than 2,500 overnight, according to the government and a rescue service operating in the rebel-held northwest.

Turkish authorities released video of rescued survivors, including a young girl in pyjamas, and an older man covered in dust, an unlit cigarette clamped between his fingers as he was pulled from the debris. — AFP



A Syrian man who was injured in a deadly earthquake sits with a child in a make-shift shelter in the camp of Deir Ballut in the Afrin region of Aleppo province. - AFP



Russian rescue workers at work at a collapsed building in the town of Jableh in the province of Latakia, northwest of Damascus. - AFP



Why first 72 hours are crucial for quake rescues



Ilan Kelman, professor of disasters and health, University College London

PARIS: Time was running out for survivors buried in the rubble of the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, as search efforts near the crucial 72-hour mark, a rescue response expert said on Wednesday.

More than 90 per cent of earthquake survivors are rescued within the first three days, said Ilan Kelman, a professor of disasters and health at University College London.

But that number can vary significantly depending on the weather, aftershocks and how quickly rescue teams and equipment can arrive at the scene -- all factors which are currently going against efforts in Turkey and Syria.

Over 11,200 people have been killed and thousands more injured after the earthquake struck southeastern Turkey and neighbouring

Syria at 04:17 am on Monday. With the 72-hour window closing early on Thursday morning, Kelman said why this timeframe is so important.

INJURIES, TEMPERATURE, WATER

"Generally, earthquakes do not kill people, collapsing infrastructure kills people," said Kelman, who has published research on quake rescue responses.

The most pressing factor is getting medical attention to people crushed under collapsed buildings before "their bodies fail" or they bleed out, he said.

Weather is also a key factor, and "it is completely against us" in Turkey and Syria, Kelman said.

The quake-hit regions have suffered

through freezing temperatures as well as rain and snow since Monday.

"This very sadly means that hypothermia is possible, and people are probably unfortunately perishing due to the weather," Kelman said.

Those who do manage to survive the cold and their injuries still need food and water.

Without water, many people "will start dying at the three, four, five day mark," Kelman said. Aftershocks, which hit without warning in the days after an earthquake, can further collapse buildings, posing "a huge and frightening risk" to both survivors and those trying to rescue them, he added.

The quake-hit regions have been shaken by relentless aftershocks, including a massive 7.5 magnitude tremor on Monday.

GETTING HELP TO THE SCENE

Kelman said that normally "the vast majority of survivors are brought out within 24 hours by local teams, often using no more than their hands or a shovel."

Dozens of nations have pledged to send search and rescue teams as well as relief supplies to Turkey and Syria.

But the quake occurred in "a remote area, in a conflict zone, which is very difficult to get into," Kelman said. It generally takes at least 24 hours for international rescue teams to arrive, get set up and start working.

"At that point, a good number of the people who could have survived have already perished," Kelman said.

For areas stricken by conflict near the Syrian border, access is trickier still.

The secret of the Veeries



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
khalidalharibi@gmail.com

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

Words cannot express how tragic is the lost loss of life, nature, and infrastructure in natural disasters. At the beginning of the year 2023, humanity witnessed another devastating earthquake wreak havoc not only in one country - Turkey but also in Syria. A tweet from a Dutch researcher two days prior to the devastating natural disaster accurately warned about it shocking many observers and scientists alike. The researcher's explanation echoed theories shared by scholars from all ancient civilisations including the scholars during the Islamic civilisation, which is that universal cosmic events follow rules that impact earth and continue to impact our lives.

So, the question that resurfaced again today, does the universe know somethings that we do not know? Here are three examples that show that we have partners in this universe who could help answer this question. Birds I believe that a small bird in North America has a secret that could save thousands of lives, and billions of riyals in reconstruction. These birds, called Veeries, were subject to an extensive scientific study for the past few years to learn about their migration patterns around the hurricane season in North America. The results of this study, that were made popular in a docuseries

VEERIES ARE NOT ONLY ABLE TO PREDICT HURRICANE SEASON BUT ALSO HOW INTENSE THE HURRICANES WILL BE, BEATING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE MODELS DEVELOPED BY SCIENTISTS FOR OVER 20 YEARS

by Netflix called 'Connected', proved that Veeries is not only able to predict hurricane season but also how intense the hurricanes are going to be, beating Artificial Intelligence models developed by scientists for over 20 years. Each one of us knows that watching birds can be fun, but

perhaps we do more now for birds because we know that we are all connected pieces of a puzzle that can make our atmosphere safer and more predictable. Sardines Every few years, in my home Governorate of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman, schools of Sardines flock to the beach in abundance, in the tens of thousands. This phenomenon is well known because it's immortalised in the local folklore and heritage with songs and stories. Fishermen and farmers benefit from this blessing because Sardines are used to feed valuable animal farms and in other agricultural uses. Nowadays, the recurrence of such phenomenon could be a

sign of something less benevolent; overfishing and ocean pollution causing Sardines to congregate in such small spaces could be a message to us, just as an Veeries' migration could be a message that a hurricane will be more intense. Camels Many lives have been lost on the road due to untimely animal crossings. Camels should be blamed when roads have encroached on their natural habitats where they lived and crossed for years. Every tragedy has lessons for us to learn. The secrets that Veeries, sardines and Camels carry are a tiny piece of an infinite universal knowledge that we should dedicate our lives and resources to uncover and share.

Arctic cold 'no sweat' for electric cars in Norway

Norwegian electric car owners have a word for the way they feel when they look nervously at their battery indicators while driving in subfreezing weather: "rekkevideangst", or "range anxiety". Tesla owner Philip Benassi has experienced it on cold winter days, but like other Norwegians, he has learned to cope with it. With temperatures often falling below zero, rugged terrain and long stretches of remote roads, Norway may not seem like the most ideal place to drive an electric car, whose battery dies faster in cold weather. Yet the country is the undisputed world champion when it comes to the zero-emission vehicles. A record four out of five new autos sold in Norway last year were electric, in a major oil-producing country that aims to end the sale of new fossil fuel cars by 2025 — a decade ahead of the European Union's planned ban. By comparison, electric cars accounted for 12.1 per cent of new car sales in the EU in 2022, up from 9.1 per cent a year earlier, according to data published on Wednesday by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association. Benassi took the plunge in 2018. In his gleaming white Tesla S, the 38-year-old salesman for a cosmetics company clocks between 20,000 and 25,000 kilometres a year. Like most new electric vehicle owners, he had moments of panic in the beginning when he saw the battery gauge drop quickly, with the prospect of it falling to zero on a deserted country road. "I didn't know the car well enough. But after all these years, I have a pretty good idea of how many kilowatts it needs and I know that it varies a lot depending on whether the car has spent the night outdoors or in a garage," he said. The car uses much more battery when it is parked outside in temperatures that can reach minus 15 degrees Celsius, Benassi said. "It takes quite a while for it to go back to normal consumption," he added. In the cold season, how much range electric cars lose depends on the model and how low the temperature gets. "But the following rules of thumb apply: a frost of around minus 10C will reduce the operating range by around a third compared to summer weather, and a severe one (minus 20C or more) by up to half," said Finnish consultant Vesa Linja-aho. "By storing the car in a warm garage, this phenomenon can be mitigated somewhat," he added. Drivers must plan their routes before long journeys, but car applications and Norway's vast network of more than 5,600 fast and superfast charging stations help make the process easier.

— AFP

How earthquakes test our souls and our governments



Bret Stephens

The writer is an American conservative editor and columnist

In every life, there are a few indelible dates: the birth of a child, the death of a parent, a national tragedy such as 9/11. An indelible date for me is September 19, 1985. I was an 11-year-old boy living in Mexico City, in a car on my way to school, a few minutes after 7 am. Suddenly the road began to sway. The car swerved from one side of the road to the other. It felt as if we were flying. This went on for nearly three minutes. At school, a rumour had spread that the downtown had been flattened. My father liked to get to his office there around 7. I spent the morning in a panic. The earthquake had a magnitude of 8. It killed at least 5,000 people, though the real death toll was probably much higher. A terrifying aftershock the next day measured 7.5. For comparison, the 1994 Los Angeles earthquake was a 6.7 and lasted less than 20 seconds. The quake that shook Turkey and Syria on Monday was a 7.8 and didn't stop for about two minutes. The scenes emerging from Idlib, Aleppo, Hatay, Iskenderun and other devastated cities are awful. They're especially emotional for those with their own memories of major quakes. Twenty years after the Mexico City earthquake, I went to Pakistan to report on the US relief effort for the 2005 Kashmir earthquake, in which an estimated 86,000 people were killed. On my first night in Islamabad, a minor quake that lasted a few seconds jolted me awake in the middle of the night, and I jammed myself under the bed. As I lay there, in a sweat, memories of Mexico flooded back. The next morning, I got a ride in a Pakistani helicopter to what had once been a small city called Balakot, in the North-West Frontier province. From its population of 50,000, it had lost 16,000 in an earthquake that lasted less than a minute. It looked like pictures of post-atomic Hiroshima; only a few buildings remained standing among the flattened ruins. Earthquakes are always said to be "natural" disasters. It's a misleading term. The real disaster is almost always human-made, often in the

EVEN IN THE AGE OF UKRAINE AND OTHER DISASTERS, CAN WE STILL MUSTER A SUSTAINED SENSE OF CHARITY AND COMPASSION TO HELP, INTELLIGENTLY, IN THE LONG RECOVERY THAT LIES AHEAD?

form of poorly constructed homes and buildings with insufficient rebar and other structural supports, followed by incompetent crisis management in the aftermath of the catastrophe. In Pakistan, the shoddy construction was mainly a function of poverty. In wealthier Mexico, which on paper had stringent building codes dating back to the aftermath of previous quakes, the reason tended to be government corruption. After the quake, it became impossible to ignore that privately built office

towers and homes stood unscathed while government-built and operated hospitals, ministries and schools lay in ruins. The quake exposed the rot, structural and moral, at the heart of Mexico's quasi-dictatorial, development-oriented regime. It also didn't help that the Mexican government refused foreign aid in the critical early hours after the disaster. Nationalism and false pride have no place in a disaster. The government's incompetence enraged many Mexicans previously resigned to keeping their distance from politics. That rage led to the creation of civil-protest movements, and campaigns for better governance. It isn't simple to place the origins of Mexico's transformation into a true democracy, but September 19, 1985, may well be the right date. Good things can emerge from the most tragic circumstances. Maybe that will be true for Turkey as well, particularly if President Recep Tayyip Erdogan responds to the emergency with his usual ham-fistedness and paranoia. He faces crucial elections in the spring and was already presiding over a country facing a nearly 60 per cent inflation rate. — *The New York Times*



Rescue workers comb through the wreckage of a collapsed building in Iskenderun, Turkey.

Ideologies and the risks of digital age

Ideology understanding is a challenging yet important topic. Ideology as a set of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes that can reflect or shape interpretations or misconceptions of the social, political, and economic worlds. It helps to recommend, justify, or endorse group actions aimed at preserving or changing political practices and institutions.

Media studies examine how prevalent social structures establish what is right and wrong as well as how society ought to operate. Behind a word, an image, and the purpose of its creators, ideology can be seen in the media. The ability to recognise ideological discourses is crucial, and for that reason, as on previous occasions, I endorse the need for media literacy.

One prevalent ideological model is the act of voting. Certain social groups influence voters to support a system sympathetic to the goals and interests of prevailing groups. In the current era of social media platforms, voter behaviour is a field that requires specific study due to the online radicalisation of political communication.

On January 8, 2023, the buildings of the three branches of government in Brazil - the executive, legislative, and judicial were invaded and assaulted. On January 6, 2021, a mob attacked the Capitol Building in the United States. In both cases, which are comparable, the invaders, through violent actions, sought to annul the results of presidential elections. A significant distinction: in the United States, invaders attacked the Capitol Building to halt the counting of electoral votes and annul the 2020 election result. Before the riots broke out in Brazil, the election results had been declared and validated; the only remaining step was the symbolic transfer of power.

The raid in Brazil seemed to be more about a rejection of a democratic outcome. The invaders looted and vandalised all three of the most important democratic institutions while demanding that the army reinstate the previous president. The outgoing president was already on



SONIA AMBROSIO
soniambrosio@gmail.com

The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

MEDIA STUDIES
EXAMINE HOW
PREVALENT
SOCIAL
STRUCTURES
ESTABLISH
WHAT IS RIGHT
AND WRONG AS
WELL AS HOW
SOCIETY OUGHT
TO OPERATE

vacation abroad, and the newly elected president had already been officially certified, whereas in the United States, the attack on the Capitol Building took place while the president was still in office.

Both examples show how dominant perspectives are disseminated through social media using a certain set of beliefs and attitudes; in these cases, it was political, but it could be religious, racial, or environmental. With social media platforms providing ground for all types of ideological groups - online communities - the proliferation of different world views can break the imagined social order.

Misunderstanding, misinformation, and fake information may occur when people try to spread disruptive ideologies. Reflecting on what people post online, including live streams, as well as the type of platform being used, it becomes evident that particular sets of content are more likely to draw viewers who are seeking out different perspectives, have the same mindset, or tend to take a harder stance on social and political issues.

In the examples of Brazil and the United States, the circumstances point to political unrest. The violent acts had middle-class and middle-aged people adhering to intellectual manipulators and extremist groups' encouragement to sway the outcome of the elections.

What emerges is an insight into how ideologies and mindsets can affect politics, culture, and ways of life. Despite the fragmentary efforts of social media companies, conspiracy theories have been rapidly taking off in every corner of the world. Conspiracy theories followed by confrontational extremism are not unique to the United States and Brazil. Germany experienced its share.

It is not just anti-democratic movements that are emerging; shootings and knife stabs are also part of a few aggressions exposed. Rhetoric and modus operandi are widely disseminated in social media and encrypted chat rooms. Dogs that don't bark are a growing threat. A critical engagement with disaffection is needed.

LEMONS AND ORANGES...



Workers put final touches on a sculpture made with lemons and oranges named 'Carmen' during the 89th Lemon festival around the theme 'Rock and Opera' in Menton, France, on Wednesday. – Reuters

The Fed's complacency on climate change

The US Federal Reserve is being dangerously complacent about climate change. While it understandably does not want to take the lead on an issue that remains so politically polarising in the United States, the limited actions it has taken fall woefully short of what is needed.

Worse, its new "pilot climate scenario analysis" exercise with six major banks is likely to understate both the risks of climate change and the opportunities offered by the transition to net-zero emissions. Having failed to absorb the lessons from similar exercises by central banks in Europe and elsewhere, the Fed is relying on scenarios created by the Network for Greening the Financial System (NGFS), despite a growing recognition that these rest on flawed foundations.

Central banks have long conceded that crucial risks are missing from the mainstream integrated assessment models (IAMs) that they use. Yet they fail to admit that these gaps leave their analyses systematically biased against climate action. They have ignored trenchant critiques from eminent economists such as Nicholas Stern and Joseph E Stiglitz, who note that "IAMs have very limited value. They fail to provide much in the way of useful guidance, either for the intensity of action, or for the policies that deliver the desired outcomes."

The increasing frequency and



Mark Cliffe

The writer is a visiting Professor at the London Institute of Banking and Finance

THE FED'S NEW
"PILOT CLIMATE
SCENARIO
ANALYSIS" WILL
RELY ON MODELS
THAT ARE LIKELY
TO UNDERSTATE
BOTH THE RISKS
OF CLIMATE
CHANGE
AND THE
OPPORTUNITIES
OFFERED BY THE
TRANSITION
TO NET-ZERO
EMISSIONS

severity of extreme weather events is now too obvious for central banks to ignore. Yet while the Fed's exercise will include a scenario in which a major hurricane hits the US East Coast, its NGFS-style modelling will omit many critical factors and processes.

Disruptive shifts in politics, policy, financial markets and technology will all be glossed over. The complex interactions between climate-driven events and human behaviour, involving tipping points and non-linear changes or discrete jumps in climate-risk probabilities, will barely be captured.

This means that possibilities such as a prolonged war in Ukraine, a return of White House climate denialism, a renewables trade war with China, recessions, or stock-market crashes are nowhere to seen. Nor are more positive possibilities, such as a surge in the popularity of progressive green politics, an explosion in electric-vehicles sales as they reach price parity with internal combustion engine vehicles, or continued rapid technological progress.

Far from being mere technical details, these kinds of modelling flaws could lead to disaster. The NGFS scenarios would have us believe that in a "business as usual world" heading to 3° Celsius warming, global GDP in 2050

would be only around 4 per cent lower (implying a loss of less than two year's growth) than in a world where we have achieved net-zero emissions and kept warming within 1.5°C. No wonder central banks foresee only modest financial losses.

Yet this outlook contrasts starkly with climate scientists' frantic warnings about the enormous damage that continued global warming will do.

Compounding the problem, the NGFS scenarios downplay the potential benefits of the net-zero transition. In fact, they suggest that it will lead to higher inflation and lower growth, while ignoring the possibility that green technological progress will lower prices and boost growth.

This brings us to another problem with the Fed's climate-

scenario exercise: It will do little to help banks meet the NGFS's own call for them to consider climate risks and opportunities in all their decision-making.

Banks in Europe have already cast doubt on the usefulness of their local supervisory exercises, and a similar reaction is likely in the US. Scenarios that are woefully inadequate for assessing long-term systemic risk obviously are even less useful for stress-testing specific banks.

Having issued their own net-zero pledges, banks are under more immediate pressure to develop and execute their transition plans. Many have already committed to interim targets such as halving the emissions that they are financing by 2030, implying reductions of 8 per cent per year. Such robust

changes will transform their strategies, business models, and credit and investment decisions.

These developments ought to force a radical shift in climate-scenario analyses. There is a glaring need not only for more realistic long-term scenarios, but also for more suitable short-term and bespoke scenarios. These would be profoundly different from the NGFS scenarios. But, again, the Fed seems not to have gotten the memo. Although it has shortened the time horizon for its exercise from 2050 to 2032, it is sticking with the NGFS.

This makes little sense. For scenarios extending less than ten years, global warming is not a risk; it is a near certainty.

The crucial uncertainties are those stemming from extreme weather events and transition risks involving the interplay of geopolitics, local climate policies and financial-market volatility.

True, the NGFS has announced plans to address this gap by developing short-term scenarios. But it remains to be seen whether these will be able to meet banks' immediate needs.

Most likely, banks in the US and elsewhere will be forced to take the initiative themselves.

But this points to another problem with the Fed's incremental approach.

©Project Syndicate, 2023



The US Federal Reserve is being dangerously complacent about climate change.

SPORT

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



CEREMONIAL TEE SHOT OFFICIALLY STARTS INTERNATIONAL SERIES OMAN

GOLFING ELITE READY FOR CHALLENGE AT AL MOUJ

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Al Mouj Golf course will witness exciting action with a world-class field of 132 players teeing off in the International Series Oman in Muscat on Thursday.

Four-time Major winner Brooks Koepka said he is ready for the challenge in Oman.

“That stretch of holes by the water is amazing and I’m looking forward to seeing the challenge the course has to offer on Thursday when the tournament starts.”

The start of the International Series Oman was marked with a ceremonial tee shot at the Greg Norman designed Championship golf course, welcoming local dignitaries to celebrate its Middle Eastern debut and first of 10 International Series events on the Asian Tour in 2023.

Hosted at Al Mouj Golf and led by

Asian Tour CEO Cho Minn Thant and Chairman of Oman Golf Association (OGA) Mundhir al Barwani, the tee off took place on the first hole of the oceanfront course, as a number of local VIP’s gathered to witness the Asian Tour breaking ground in the Middle East for the first time. Chief guest Lujaina Mohsin Darwish, Chairperson of Mohsin Haider Darwish LLC, and a member of the Board of Directors at Oman Olympic Committee were present on the occasion.

Ahead of the elevated series taking place in the Sultanate for the first time, Al Mouj Golf CEO Nasser Al Sheibani welcomed this event, saying: “We are proud to host the season-opener event of The International Series 2023 on the Asian Tour, here at the championship course of Al Mouj Golf. It’s fantastic to welcome so many local dignitaries alongside the world-class field

that’s been assembled.

“The International Series promises to promote the country across continents, elevating the competitive experience for players on the Asian Tour and it once again highlights Oman as a unique venue on the world golf stage.”

OGA chief Mundhir al Barwani said it is a great occasion for Oman golf to host the elite players of the game.

“We are proud to host such world class players for the Asian Tour’s International Series. We hope to continue the association with the Asian Tour in the coming years as well.”

“Some of the players like Sergio Garcia also run a golf academy and the OGA is looking to get connected to such projects in our effort to bring Oman golf forward,” Al Barwani told Oman Observer.

The impressive 132-player field

includes golfers from 23 countries across 6 continents, headlined by Brooks Koepka, Sergio Garcia, Graeme McDowell, Louis Oosthuizen, Joaquin Niemann and Charl Schwartzel, all competing on the oceanfront course for their share in a total prize money of \$2 million.

BALE JOINING GOLF EXCITING FOR GAME

Spaniard Garcia said Welsh footballer Gareth Bale taking up an active golf career will strengthen the profile of the game.

“Bale is my good friend. He is a good golf player, so no wonder he took up an active career in golf”

“Joining of such top players in other sports will definitely boost the credentials of the game, making it more popular.”

“Super stars like Gareth Bale, Michael Jordan or Steven Curry taking up golf

is great for the game and we are super excited for the sport,” Garcia added.

Local golfer Azzan al Rumhy said it is a great honour for him to compete among the best in the game.

“Hosting the International Series by Asian Tour is a huge moment for Oman. Playing along with such master talents will definitely bring out the best in me. The tournament is a great exposure and experience for players like me,” Azzan said.

Graeme McDowell commented on playing in Oman for the first time and said: “I’ve played a lot of golf in the Middle East for the last 20 years and it’s always amazing to come to new places. I like what I see so far, it’s a beautiful country with great facilities and a great golf course. I’m really looking forward to competing this weekend.”

Oman beach soccer team stuns Saudi Arabia in friendly

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Oman beach soccer team stunned Saudi Arabia 5-2 in the opening friendly match in Saudi Arabia’s Jizan city on Tuesday. The match was part of the team’s ongoing abroad camp in Saudi Arabia which started on Sunday and will conclude on Saturday.

The camp aims to get the players ready for the crucial forthcoming assignment of the AFC Beach Soccer Asian Cup Thailand 2023 which will take place in Pattaya from March 16 to 26.

The national soccer team’s triumph against hosts Saudi Arabia was registered after Omani domination in all the periods of the match. Khalid al Orami and Sami al Balushi scored two goals each while Mashal al Orami

netted one.

Two more games will be played against Saudi Arabia and there was one match played late on Wednesday while the next match is scheduled to take place on Friday.

Besides the warm-up matches against the Saudi team, the team undergoes daily training sessions in Jizan city. Oman players are aiming high in the upcoming edition of the Asian finals event.

Oman are placed in Group D besides Palestine, Kuwait and Kyrgyz Republic. Hosts Thailand will vie for the title as they face 2006 champions Bahrain, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia in Group A. Two-time winners Islamic Republic of Iran will play against Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan placed in Group B.



Defending champions Japan will defend their title as they will play against Lebanon, China PR and Indonesia teams in Group C. The top three sides in the Asian event will join hosts United Arab Emirates at the Fifa Beach Soccer World Cup 2023.

Oman team had defeated Iran 4-3 in the last preparatory match between both teams in Muscat while Iran edged Oman in the opening friendly game.

The previous warm-up matches helped in building up the player’s fitness and physical readiness besides technical harmony developed among them. Playing more strong games against top Asian teams will position Oman’s squad in a strong technical position to show top performance in the major Asian championship.

German freestyle football champion in Salalah



SALALAH: Marcel Gurk, a talented German freestyle football champion, has become known for his creative skills with a ball.

Gurk arrives at the Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara in mid-February, where guests can attend workshops and lessons with the football star.

Football freestyle is the art of juggling a football and performing tricks with the ball whilst keeping it in the air using any part of the body, excluding the elbows to the hands. Inspired by Brazilian soccer legend Ronaldinho, who has now become his personal friend, Marcel has cultivated his football skills since he was a child.

From February 17-23, a complimentary freestyle football show will be held every morning at Sakalan and from February 18-22, Marcel will host a 90-minute freestyle football session at 5 pm.

He has collected ten Guinness World Records for football freestyling and travels the world demonstrating his skills and providing lessons for others to learn from him. He also released the first book on football freestyling and is the

current German champion for the sport.

The sport involves the entire body and helps with balance and agility. It also stimulates the brain, improves concentration and memory. Marcel specialises in teaching children of various ages in freestyle football.

Marvel at Gurk's dexterity over a generous breakfast and be inspired by his tricks.

Andrea Orru, General Manager, Al Baleed Resort Salalah by Anantara, says, "This is a fantastic opportunity for football lovers to up their game and meet a true master. We look forward to welcoming Marcel to our beautiful stretch of the stunning coastal resort and expect it to be an action-packed week of fun."

Avail of special packages when you book three workshops for RO 100 per person and five workshops for RO 150 per person across the week. Guests can book a private lesson during the week-long event for RO 45 per person.

To join Marcel and improve your freestyle football skills, call 2322 8222 for more information and bookings.

Al Hilal shock Flamengo with 3-2 win in Club World Cup semi-final

TANGIER: Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal stunned 10-man Flamengo to reach the Club World Cup final with a 3-2 victory over the South American champions on Tuesday thanks to two penalties from Salem Al Dawsari and a close-range strike from Luciano Vietto.

Al Dawsari opened the scoring from the spot after three minutes and while Pedro levelled for the Brazilians, their hopes were hit when Gerson conceded a penalty and was sent off in first-half stoppage time.

That allowed Al Dawsari to grab his second and Vietto added a third after the break, ensuring Pedro's late goal for Flamengo was just a consolation.

Al Hilal, the first Saudi side to reach the Club World Cup final, will face the winners of Real Madrid's semi-final against Al Ahly on Wednesday in Rabat.

On a windy and chilly night at a half-empty Ibn Batouta stadium, Flamengo's Portuguese coach Vitor Pereira sprung a surprise, leaving former Atletico Madrid fullback Filipe Luis on the bench.

He also left out Uruguay's Guillermo Varela, opting for a younger and more attack-oriented fullback duo.

It was Varela's replacement, right back Matheuzinho, who changed the course of the game in the third minute, when he went too forcefully into a challenge on Vietto inside the box and the referee immediately pointed to the spot.

Al Dawsari slotted it home, just out of the reach goalkeeper Santos.

Flamengo went on the attack and wasted a golden opportunity in the 15th minute when Gerson, in a great position to score inside the area, tried to win a penalty instead of shooting.

The referee did not fall for it and showed a yellow card to the Flamengo midfielder for simulation.

But Pedro equalised four minutes later, firing home with a



Al Hilal's Andre Carrillo in action with Flamengo's Everton. — Reuters

first-time strike from close-range from a Matheuzinho assist.

Flamengo, desperate to avoid becoming only the fourth Brazilian side to lose a Club World Cup semi-final, lost their cool and were shown four yellow cards in the first half.

The fourth, and Gerson's second, proved decisive as it reduced them to 10 men.

It came after a VAR check right on halftime, as the referee spotted on the pitch-side monitor that the former Olympique de Marseille midfielder had stamped on Vietto's ankle inside the box.

Al Dawsari didn't pass up the opportunity, slotting his spot-kick to left of the keeper, who had guessed the wrong way.

With Flamengo reduced to 10 men for the entire second half, Al Hilal controlled the tempo and eventually scored the third, when Al Dawsari returned the favour to Vietto, putting the ball on a plate



Al Hilal's Salem Al Dawsari celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters

for the Argentinian to score with a point-blank strike.

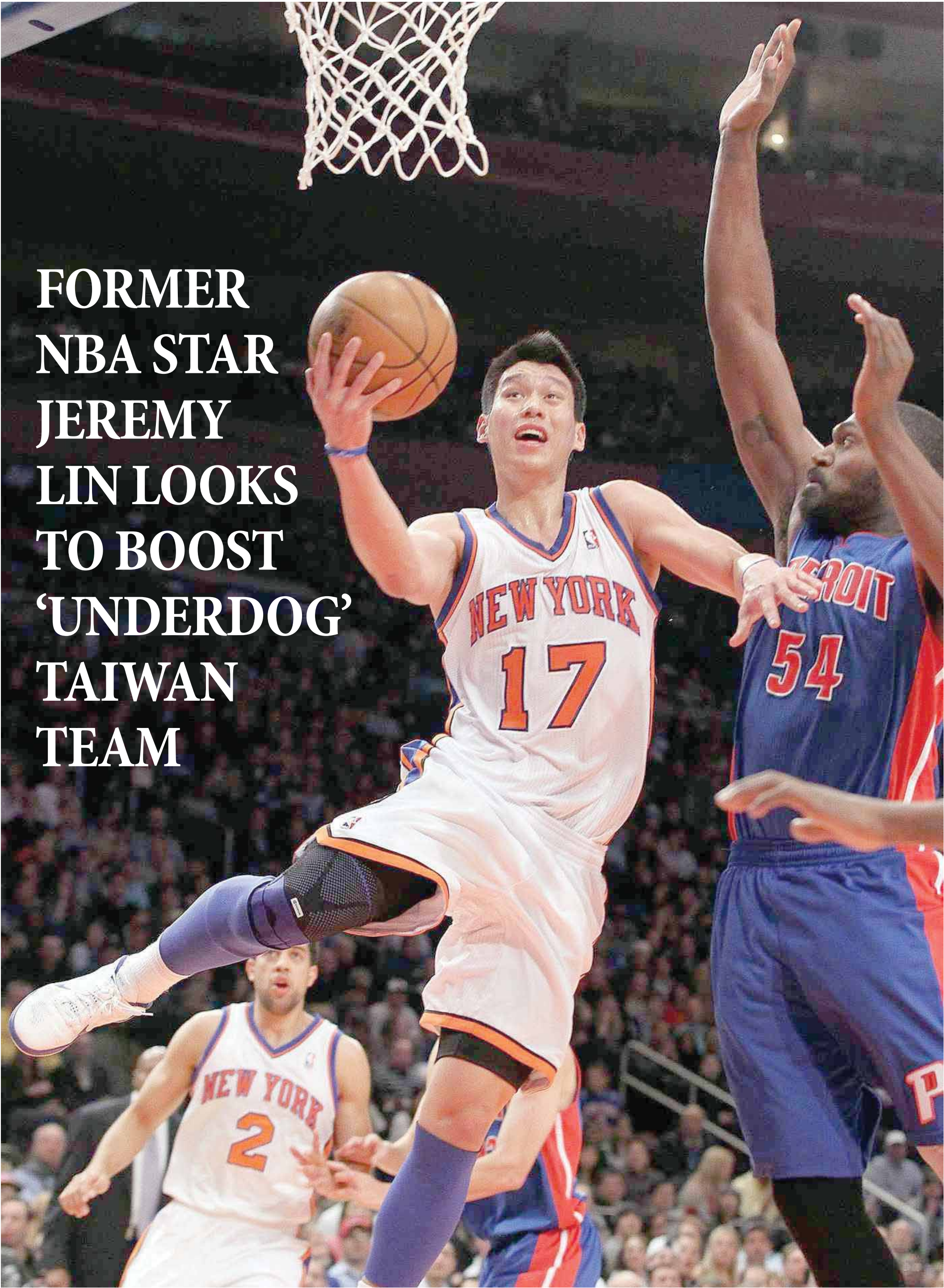
Pedro's close-range range effort in added time was too little to

late for Flamengo, who became only the sixth Copa Libertadores champions not to advance to the final. — Reuters

■ OMANI KNIGHTS COMPETE WITH FIVE HORSES IN THE EMIR OF QATAR SWORD RACE FOR 119 KM



The Sultanate of Oman will take part in the horse race festival, the Emir of Qatar's sword race for 119 km, on February 10-11. Five horses will represent Oman. 'Haboub Muscat' is led by Ahmed bin Said al Saeedi and trained by Said bin Khamis al Hinai. 'Nebras Muscat' is led by Mohammed bin Said al Saeedi and trained by Hamad bin Said al Saeedi. 'Bejab' is led by Mohammed bin Suleiman al Abdul Salam and trained by Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Balushi. 'Warid' is led by Ammar bin Abdul Rahim al Balushi and trained by Muhannad bin Ibrahim al Balushi.



FORMER
NBA STAR
JEREMY
LIN LOOKS
TO BOOST
‘UNDERDOG’
TAIWAN
TEAM

KAOHSIUNG, Taiwan: Former NBA star Jeremy Lin said he was excited to lift the fortunes of his new “underdog” team in Taiwan, after the league’s last-placed Kaohsiung 17Live Steelers officially unveiled him on Wednesday.

More than a decade after his seven-game NBA winning streak -- dubbed “Linsanity” -- shot him to global prominence, the 34-year-old will make his debut in the six-team Taiwanese P.League+ on February 12.

Lin, born in the United States to Taiwanese immigrant parents, became the first Asian American to capture an NBA title when the Toronto Raptors won the championship in 2019.

He joined the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) in 2019, most recently with the Guangzhou Loong Lions.

After a CBA stint defined by Covid, including a 10,000 yuan (\$1,400) fine in December for reportedly criticising China’s quarantine facilities, Lin said he was looking forward to his new role.

“When I made the decision to join the Steelers, my first thought was I wanted to fast forward to my first game, to be back in an environment with audiences,” he said in fluent Mandarin.

“I think I can help the team a lot,” he added.

The American has struggled with injuries and inconsistency since he sparked “Linsanity” while playing for the New York Knicks in 2012, when he led them to level their record at 15-15.

That season elevated his stardom to Asia, where it also triggered a tussle between Taiwan and China, with both claiming to be his ancestral homeland.

Lin said he wants to focus on “meaningful basketball” and to inspire younger players in Taiwan.

“When I was young I wanted to prove myself, to win championships, but perhaps now I am older, I want to find meaningful basketball and I want to focus on the next generation of players”.

The Harvard graduate started his professional career in 2010 with the Golden State Warriors.

He played for several NBA teams, including the Knicks, the Houston Rockets, the LA Lakers and the Charlotte Hornets. — AFP

Reifer,
Blackwood
hit half-
centuries for
Windies in
Zimbabwe

BULAWAYO, Zimbabwe: Raymon Reifer and Jermaine Blackwood scored half-centuries as the West Indies declared their second innings at 203-5 on Wednesday on the final day of the first Test against Zimbabwe.

Reifer made 58 and Blackwood 57 as the tourists built a 271-run lead during the penultimate session of the match at Queens Sports Club in the southwestern city of Bulawayo.

The pair atoned for poor first-innings showings with Reifer making just two runs and Blackwood five.

Reifer struck nine fours before being caught and bowled by spinner Wellington Masakadza while Blackwood got a faint edge to wicketkeeper Tafadzwa Tsiga off Masakadza after hitting a six and five fours.

Tsiga, one of five Test newcomers for Zimbabwe, claimed another victim when Roston Chase edged an out-swinging Brad Evans delivery having made 14.

Earlier, first-innings big scorers Tagenarine Chanderpaul and Kraigg Brathwaite were less successful second time round.

Chanderpaul, the son of former West Indies skipper Shivnarine, struck an unbeaten

207 and captain Brathwaite 182 in the first innings.

Batting again, Chanderpaul did not manage even one boundary before being bowled by quickie Evans for 15 after a thin inside edge sent the ball back onto his stumps.

Brathwaite joined his fellow opener in the pavilion 27 deliveries later, having made 25, when trapped leg before by Masakadza after the bat got stuck behind his pad.

Both teams made first innings declarations with the West Indies posting 447-6 and Zimbabwe 379-9 in a rain-affected match. — AFP





New brand identity for Omani products to be unveiled

OMAN INDUSTRY DAY

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 8

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion celebrates Oman Industry Day today, February 9, Thursday, with the attendance of government dignitaries and CEOs of public and private sector industries.

This year's Omani Industry Day will focus on the following objectives: local content development and ICV, development of the national economy, diversification of sources of income, integration between industries, enhancing production of local goods and supporting local SMEs in the sector primarily because of its potential to create jobs for Omanis.

The celebrations will also seek to strengthen partnerships between the public and private sectors, address challenges and difficulties faced by investors, enhance the investment environment for industries and embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution and future industries.



As part of activities marking the anniversary, the recommendations of the Converting Industries and Future Industries Lab will be made public.

In addition, a number of agreements emerging from the Lab recommendations will be signed. Importantly, a new identity for Omani products will be unveiled.

This is based on a unified national framework for defining the Omani product and standardising its marketing identity through the application of promotional programmes by the Ministry working in cooperation

THIS YEAR'S OMANI INDUSTRY DAY WILL FOCUS ON THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES: LOCAL CONTENT DEVELOPMENT AND ICV, DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL ECONOMY, DIVERSIFICATION OF SOURCES OF INCOME, INTEGRATION BETWEEN INDUSTRIES, ENHANCING PRODUCTION OF LOCAL GOODS AND SUPPORTING LOCAL SMES IN THE SECTOR PRIMARILY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL TO CREATE JOBS FOR OMANIS.



with partners.

This aims to enhance the added local value of national products and encourage them to target new export markets.

In a statement, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas (pictured),

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, underscored the importance of the industrial sector to the government's goal to diversify the economy away from its

longstanding dependence on hydrocarbons.

Industry's GDP contribution to GDP climbed 30.4 per cent as of end-September 2022, while the total value of the non-oil sector amounts to RO 20.8 billion,

representing an increase of 14.9 per cent.

The share of manufacturing industries accounted for 48.3 per cent of the total industrial output.

Al Rawas also recalled the recent expo on Omani products held in Riyadh.

"The Chamber participated in the National Products Exhibition (OPEX), which was held recently in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh. It was a tangible success enhancing the Omani product," he said.

"There is no doubt that companies and industrial facilities in the Sultanate are able to work for the advancement of the national industrial sector, and overcome these challenges by providing more facilities represented in laws, legislation and other facilities.

"Contributing to making the industrial sector a major source of income for the national economy, making it an important source of income for the country and a major contributor to the GDP, a promising sector that attracts foreign investments, in addition to creating many job opportunities for job-seekers in the Sultanate," he added.

Oman Chromite hits new production record in 2022



CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 8

Oman Chromite Company, partly owned by the Omani government represented by Minerals Development Oman (MDO), has announced a record production of 105,992 tonnes of chromite ore during 2022, representing a 134-per cent increase over the previous year's total of 45,194 tonnes.

Board Chairman Humaid bin Masoud al Maqbali attributed the uptick to the company's ramp-up mining and exploration activities across its licences.

"The company was also able to achieve good exploratory results in 2022 through the development of the exploration department and the use of modern technologies, which enabled it

to increase production during the year.

"It is also expected that the company's exploratory efforts in the current sites in 2022 will result in achieving a good level of production and profitable returns in 2023," Al Maqbali stated in the Directors' Report for fiscal 2022.

Revenue from the sale of chromite ore surged 155 per cent to RO 4.5 million in 2022, up from RO 2.9 million in 2021.

Net profit after tax also soared to RO 1.384 million for the year, up from RO 0.369 million a year earlier. Significantly, 72 per cent of chromite ore marketed by the company last year went to local consumers, chiefly ferrochrome smelters operating in the Suhar area.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Major mining projects make headway

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Energy and Minerals is seeking to attract foreign investments represented by international companies specialised in the field of minerals, which have advanced technologies and capabilities that make them able to explore for the mineral resources latent in the Sultanate of Oman.

Eng Saud bin Khamis al Mahrooqi (pictured), Director-General of Minerals, said: "The Ministry's direction in the mineral sector in the next stage is to complete the strategic directions that serve the ambitions in terms of developing and strengthening the geological portfolio, digitising it, raising the volume of investments and promoting them, especially with the emergence of good mineral indicators in Oman, in particular through the Ministry's identification of 12 mining concession sites for Minerals Development Oman (MDO) of the Oman Investment Authority."

Eng Saud al Mahrouqi added that the Ministry has adopted several projects in cooperation with partners in the minerals sector, including a project to offer ready sites for marble ore and building materials for bidding with the award (the first package), with the aim of creating competitive investment opportunities for marble ore and building materials by the bidding system in order to achieve the principle of transparency, equality and financial efficiency.

And technical by organising the process of granting licences and bringing in the serious investor to create real and sustainable investment opportunities for the sector, and it is expected that the project will



be completed as a preliminary package during the end of the first quarter of this year.

Omani mining firm Kunooze aims to produce up to 3 million tonnes annually of raw dolomite in stages, he said, noting that the initial geological study shows that the volume of resources at the site may reach more than 250 million tonnes of dolomite ore.

Another key project is underground mining for copper at Al Ghizain in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah in Al Batinah North Governorate, he said. The project aims to extract about 6.5 million tonnes of copper ore with a purity of 2 per cent over a period of 6 and a half years. The completion rate of the project reached 21 per cent.

Regarding the project to develop the Shaleem mining site,

The Ministry has adopted several projects in cooperation with partners in the minerals sector, including a project to offer ready sites for marble ore and building materials for bidding with the award (the first package), with the aim of creating competitive investment opportunities for marble ore and building materials by the bidding system in order to achieve the principle of transparency, equality and financial efficiency.

ENG SAUD AL MAHROUQI
Director-General of Minerals

he said the project aims to mine gypsum, limestone and dolomite ores for export to the global market initially, stressing that the project has reached advanced stages in the economic feasibility study. Deposits of high purity are found in an area covering 3,314 sq km. The project is slated for completion in 2026.

Likewise, the Naqaa salt project aims to produce salt with high quality and purity for commercial and industrial uses. Meanwhile, Mazoon Mining has uncovered commercial discoveries of copper and gold ore at many locations in Block 10 in Yanqul.

The amount of copper produced by this project is estimated at more than one million tonnes annually and with good revenues. It aims to complete the implementation of the project by 2025. In the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, a copper ore project aims to produce concentrated copper with 24 per cent copper per tonne in the new processing plant.

Enjoy memorable experiences in the powerful Ford Explorer



MUSCAT: The Ford Explorer is a capable and dependable vehicle which makes a great choice when it comes to enjoying fun family experiences. Equipped with 4x4 capability, impressive space, comfort and a host of features and technology, the Explorer always rises above and makes a fine mark on every terrain.

The Explorer is equipped with a revised 2.3-litre turbocharged EcoBoost engine that produces 300 horsepower and 420Nm of torque.

The engine is matched to an all-new 10-speed transmission and Intelligent All-Wheel-Drive system. With its quick-shifting 10-speed automatic transmission, Intelligent Four-Wheel Drive plus a Terrain Management System featuring seven selectable drive modes, the new Explorer is built to tackle virtually any adventure. Sand mode comes standard on all models.

In the Ford Explorer improved off-road capability comes courtesy of intelligent four-wheel drive and an available new Terrain Management System that features seven easy-to-engage drive modes. Standard features include a power liftgate, 8-inch digital touch screen with SYNC 3, and a comprehensive package of driver assist and safety technologies.

Every Explorer comes

standard with Ford Co-Pilot360, a suite of driver-assist technologies including Pre-Collision Assist with Automatic Emergency Braking, which includes Pedestrian Detection, Forward Collision Warning and Dynamic Brake Support; Blind Spot Information System with Cross-Traffic Alert; Lane-Keeping System; Rearview camera with built-in lens cleaner and Auto headlamps with auto high-beams.

Other available Ford Co-Pilot360 Assist+ technologies include Evasive Steering Assist, which provides steering support to help avoid a collision; and Post-Impact Braking provides braking after a collision to lessen injury and damage caused by a secondary crash event.

Explorer also is available with Ford's all-new Intelligent Adaptive Cruise Control which automatically slows the vehicle down when traffic ahead slows. It also helps keep the vehicle centred in its lane.

In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.fordoman.com, or www.facebook.com/FordOman or www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel or www.instagram.com/ford_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

Oman to host international forum on ‘Quality & Value Engineering’

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 8

The General Secretariat of the Tender Board, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Asayel Company for Conferences, is organising the 4th International Conference on Quality and Value Engineering in Muscat from February 21, 2023.

The two-day forum, focusing on the theme, ‘Value Engineering in Light of Global Changes’, will take place at the Grand Millennium Muscat under the auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat. At a press briefing to announce the conference, the organisers noted that this year’s conference comes as a result of the global challenges faced by different countries of the world, as well as institutions and companies of all categories.

Economic challenges are the most worrisome, requiring institutions to rethink everything from raising production capacity, improving performance and quality levels, while maintaining efficiency and reducing cost and financial waste as much as possible.

The conference aims to spread awareness of the importance of value engineering now and in the future, consolidate the



culture of value engineering and its permanence, the importance of using value engineering to improve quality and raise efficiency, enhance the role of value engineering in creativity and innovation, overcome obstacles to development and growth and develop alternatives, and review local, regional and international experiences in value engineering, and more.

Mikael Barsal, CEO of the International SAVE Association, commented: “At a time when challenges abound, competition

for financial resources increases, and the need for innovation and value improvement increases in all private and public sectors, the International SAVE Association comes, which devotes its efforts to pouring into the promotion of the value methodology, or what is called With “value engineering”, which is used in the government sector, construction, production factories, improving projects and developing products, the benefits of value engineering include reducing costs, increasing profits, improving quality and performance and enhancing

customer satisfaction.”

Members of the association apply value engineering in sectors public or private in more than 35 countries and their applications cover many areas such as construction, product design and manufacturing, transportation, health care, environmental engineering and government and provide many services to members, such as training, exchange of tools to enhance value engineering, granting certifications as a provider of value engineering applications and recognition of them.

Golden Group launches issuance of Series 2 of ‘Sukuk Al Ijara’ after timely repayment of Series 1

MUSCAT: Golden Group had successfully set-up RO 200 million sukuk programme in 2018. Maisarah Islamic Banking Services acted as the sole Lead and Issue Manager on the sukuk programme.

This is the largest Shariah compliant sukuk programme in Oman established by a corporate entity. The first tranche of the Sukuk Al Wakalah with a size of RO 50 million which was raised in 2018 by way of private placement and has now matured on February 5, 2023 and successfully repaid to the investors.

Contributing towards the

growth of Oman’s Islamic Capital Market, Maisarah, the Islamic Banking Services window of BankDhofar is advising the issuance of series 2 of ‘Sukuk Al Ijara’ for Golden Group Holdings Company, after the successful close of the first tranche of the sukuk Al Wakalah by the group.

Defying the odds of the market conditions due to the unforeseeable Covid-19, The Golden Group successfully redeemed the Series 1 Sukuk.

Their timely repayment of the Sukuk Al Wakalah showcases the Company’s promise to meet their obligations and safeguard

the interests of its investors. The Founder and Chairman, Shaikh Salim al Ghazali, expresses his gratitude to the investors who participated in the Series I supporting the success of the company through the challenging times.

Currently, Golden Group is planning for Series II Sukuk Al Ijara with a size of RO 50 million.

Elaborating on that, Kamal Hassan al Maraza, GM & Chief Maisarah Islamic Banking Officer said: “This Sukuk will be an opportunity for investors to deploy their funds in the local currency issuance in compliance

with shariah principles.”

Maisarah Islamic Banking Services is acting as the sole Lead and Issue Manager. The Sukuk Al Ijara shall be offered to selective investors by way of private placement.

The proposed Sukuk has a tenure of 5 years and provides full security coverage and will be listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Regarding the Series II, Shaikh Salim al Ghazali highlighted, “The Group is focused on growing its business portfolio with investments in Oman aiming to support the growth of the nation’s economy.”

Oil rises for third day as rate hike concerns ease

LONDON: Oil rose for a third straight day on Wednesday as investor concern eased about US interest rate hikes and an industry report pointed to a drop in US crude inventories. Comments from US Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell on Tuesday were seen as less hawkish than feared, boosting risk appetite and weighing on the dollar. A weaker dollar makes oil cheaper for other currency holders.

“It would appear traders had become a little more defensive on the expectation of a hawkish shift but Powell refrained from taking the leap,” said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at OANDA.

Brent crude rose 41 cents, or 0.5 per cent, to \$84.10 a barrel by 1311 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate crude climbed 48 cents, or 0.6 per cent, to \$77.62.

On supply, Opec and its allies, known as Opec+, decided last week to keep output curbs in place, and an Iranian official said the group would likely continue its current policy at its next meeting.

— Reuters



Oman Chromite hits new production record in 2022

FROM PAGE 13

The balance, typically refractory grade of chromite ore, was exported to international markets in light of the limited size of the domestic market, according to Al Maqbali.

The Chairman also lamented the “lack of reserve” that threatens to be one of the main risks facing Oman Chromite.

“Accordingly, the company continues to work on several directions to ensure growth in the level of its reserves. The company continues its efforts to obtain new mining areas, communicate with decision makers, and develop plans to keep pace with developments in

establishing new mining areas,” he said.

Last June, MDO — the nation’s mining and mineral processing flagship which owns a 15-per cent stake in Oman Chromite — announced the signing of an agreement between the two for the joint exploration and prospecting of chromite ore at two exploration sites located in the governorates of Al Batinah North and Al Buraimi.

Further returns are expected from Oman Chromite’s investment in a new low-carbon ferrochrome project that is presently under construction in Sohar Port and Free Zone. The plant is due to come into operation during 2023.

Financial services and innovative payment methods



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

Despite the spread of many financial services in the world during the past five decades, there are about 1.4 billion adults without bank accounts as of mid-2022, according to World Bank data. These financial services play a major role in promoting and spreading economic and social development in a country and facilitate a better life for living, as a result of transferring savings of foreign workers their money to families.

This is what makes the demand for financial and banking services increase dramatically. Today, only around 76% of adults can access bank accounts globally, compared to about 51% a decade ago.

Banking and financial services have flourished in the Gulf region inhabited by more than 150 nationalities from different countries of the world and with the support of the Gulf Central banks.

Although the world is going through many economic and geopolitical crises today, in addition to the conflict over the global economy due to inflation issues and the decline in the value of local currencies for a number of countries due to debt, supply chain problems and restrictions, high commodity prices, and unemployment, new financial solutions for payment help many emerging markets to obtain billions of dollars and the creation of new capital to be used in various purposes of development interest.

They are obtaining the necessary materials for

livelihoods, continuing productivity and providing thousands of job opportunities for the unemployed.

We have noticed the impact of the lack of financial transfers from cash payments during the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, but with the presence of digital transfers and new financial transfers, this aspect of the negative effects has been bridged, as financial technology has been able to provide consumers with a variety of payment options.

Among the factors that help the continuation of new financial and banking services is the continuation of global population growth, especially among young people who can be creative and proficient in technological business, and the modernisation of global financial and banking services that can attract emerging markets and support them with large investments, whether in Asian or African markets that started in obtaining financing for various economic sectors.

Modern marketing methods have also helped in the growth of remittances through commercial policies of purchasing products and paying later, which helps expand financial inclusion in the world, increase the number of consumers and enhance the capital of institutions.

Today, what helps achieve this system is the existence of mobile phones through which digital payments can be carried out, which have witnessed a great boom, in addition to reliance on them by other Asian and African peoples in all cities and rural areas.

Through these devices, users can generally make payments, store and receive money, issue receipts via mobile phones, and make money transfers, especially in areas where there are no banks and financial service bureaus.

Despite these advantages, official institutions and central banks must monitor these financial activities and not leave the ropes open, so that they do not lead to an increase in money laundering operations in the world.

Opportunity Oman: WHY OMAN



DR YOUSUF HAMED
AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

In this series, the author — a well-known Omani economic planning strategist and consultant — discusses the distinctive and advantageous geopolitical, economic, legal and regulatory characteristics that underpin Oman’s investment appeal.

Oman’s development is not only inspiring but it is also ongoing. Overall, it has progressed well during the last five decades in all aspects of development, as seen through local and international indicators.

However, Oman is at crossroads

and there are many reasons that make reform necessary and urgent for its future, today more than ever.

Oman’s most important revenue resource hydrocarbons is increasingly losing importance globally as the oil market continues to head closer to peak-demand and a shift towards renewable energy where the demand is seen developing. This makes the country in dire need for diversifying its economy away from oil.

Additionally, Oman’s large youth population aspires for productive jobs that can be mostly achieved through expanding the production and private sector activities. Oman realises that there is a need for transformation in order to remain relevant in an ever-shifting world.

Change is imminent and only possible through an innovative and new approach. Oman’s Vision 2040 provides a catalyst for change that calls for a dramatic and paradigm shift in all aspects of development. This requires an understanding of new dynamics on strategic, tactical and operational levels.

In the business sector, Oman

encourages the development of SMEs to enable growth in the private sector, and to open the sector to international banks which will enable diversity to supply consumers with financial services and creativity, thus attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) as a result.

Attracting FDI and joining hands with friends who are advanced in certain industries possessing the know-how, technology and the right team can fill many gaps Oman aspires to fill. It is essential to note that countries share many common complimentary features which require focus to gain better value such as industrial revolution, tourism and manufacturing, which the government of Oman has been actively encouraging investment in.

Oman offers an ideal environment for investment and there are many ingredients that make it a great destination for investors, to name a few:

■ A world-class business destination due to its strategic location which is less than a four-hour flight from over a third of the world’s population.

■ Rich in resources, such as a highly skilled workforce,

abundance of natural assets, world-class infrastructure, pro-business legislation, and legal transparency are just some of the many elements that make the Sultanate of Oman.

■ Possess a competitive market with a robust diversifying economy, world-class infrastructure, a business-friendly regulatory framework, abundance of natural resources, an outstanding multi-lingual talent pool and political stability making Oman a highly attractive destination for international investors.

■ A renowned trade route, as with its highly advantageous strategic location at the crossroads of east-west trade routes and a coastline stretching over 3,000 kilometres. Oman offers direct trade routes from its deep-water ports to the fast-growing markets of the GCC, India, Africa, Far East and Europe.

All major ports in these regions can be reached within two weeks, two days faster than any other port inside the Strait of Hormuz.

■ Stability: With a long-standing tradition of international diplomacy, Oman is consistently ranked first in peace and stability in the Middle East.

The transatlantic subsidies race we need



DANIEL GROS

The writer is a member of the board and a distinguished fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies

The US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) has America’s trading partners in a tizzy. The legislation is not only gargantuan, dedicating some \$369 billion to climate and clean-energy programs; it also has a “buy American” component, delivering cash benefits only to buyers of North American automakers and subsidies to renewable-energy producers that satisfy domestic-content rules.

Many countries, particularly in Europe, are now weighing the possibility of implementing their own green industrial policies. This is the wrong response. The IRA’s subsidies for American-made products are undoubtedly contentious, particularly among leading US trading partners such

as Japan, South Korea, and the European Union.

US President Joe Biden is now in damage-control mode, as he attempts both to reassure partners and to find ways to soften the impact on allies by bending the IRA’s buy-American provisions.

European policymakers are unconvinced. They fear that, unless they introduce subsidies of their own, the IRA will effectively guarantee US leadership in green industries. But the logic underpinning this conclusion is dubious, at best.

True, some European firms have threatened to leave for the US if they do not receive similar subsidies at home. But European producers of, say, wind turbines are unlikely to stop producing in Europe just because they expect

business to boom in the US.

“Buy American” does not mean 100 per cent American.

To secure the 10 per cent domestic-content “bonus” — which the IRA offers on top of generous subsidies that do not depend on meeting the threshold — a company, such as a wind farm, must use only American steel, but only 40 per cent US-manufactured components. In other words, even with the added incentive to use American-made components, the US government expects that firms will rely mostly on imports.

Moreover, according to trade lawyers, “US-made” components could consist largely of imported sub-components, rendering the domestic-content provisions even less stringent in practice. So, while the IRA does give firms

an incentive to produce certain components in the US, there will still be plenty of demand for European products, not only in the US, but also, increasingly, in Europe.

In any case, the IRA is hardly an exemplar of good industrial policy. On the contrary, some of its key provisions encourage waste. In fact, Europe has already rejected the use of inefficient and costly fixed-rate renewable-energy subsidies — which account for \$250 billion of the IRA’s total funding.

Instead, most European countries use auctions to find out what subsidy rate is needed to spur emissions reductions. Some are also employing “contracts for difference,” under which the government pays investors the difference between the market

price and a guaranteed minimum.

Another questionable feature of the IRA is the investment tax credit, which subsidizes 30 per cent of the cost of a renewable-power plant (or 40 per cent, if the domestic-content rules are fulfilled). This is not economically efficient, as the subsidy is not linked to the amount of power that is ultimately produced.

There is also a kind of moral-hazard risk: with investors covering only 60-70 per cent of the total cost, they might not put as much effort into reducing costs, or just increase their profits. And waste in the construction of renewable plants would also lead to more emissions, especially if more energy-intensive goods like steel or concrete are used.

© Project Syndicate, 2023

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

أوربت ORBIT Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
<your name> to
96473232

THURSDAY

FEBRUARY 9, 2023 RAJAB 18, 1444 AH

Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

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

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

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

■ FOR RENT

FLATS 2BHK AND 1 BHK IN MUMTAZ. CONTACT 99341138 AND 90991079.

SPACIOUS 3 bedrooms flat, behind Honda Showroom, Al Wattayah, Muscat. Contact: 92269972, only WhatsApp. RO 200, negotiable.

■ SIT. WANTED

GCC experienced sales and managerial candidate with 13 years in UAE and 12 years in Saudi. Fluent in Arabic and English presently in Muscat with valid UAE driving licence is looking for suitable opportunities. GSM 92132071.

FINANCE professional having more than 20 years of experience in Oman, working as financial analyst in reputed firm looking for suitable placement. Contact: 97997167/ 78369703.

MARKETING person experience in the sales of industrial products is looking for a good break in any manufacturing industry or open for starting a new venture/ start up. Contact: 78501743.

■ SERVICES

AL SUMRI AC maintenance. We are ready to repair and install all types of Air-Conditioner within Muscat Governorate. 94301888.

Noor Muscat
*Cleaning Services
*Pest control
*Supplying office boys. 99333463, 92223227, 96614595

ELECTRONIC Engineer, Seeking Job. Experienced Electronic and Instrumentation Engineer (Male) with BE and Diploma seeking job. Skills: plant engineering, electronics maintenance, SMT operation, control systems, software (C++, C, PLC). Contact: 92929736. Email: farookjalah5@gmail.com

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

■ SIT. VACANT

URGENTLY required sales & marketing executive experienced in building materials in the Oman market with a minimum experience of 3 years & valid Oman driving licence. Please send your CV to recruitsbw2022@gmail.com

The below our advertisement requirement for situation vacant salesman/ marketing must have:

- Oman DL.
- Good experience sales/ marketing.
- Excellent communication skills.

Contact: +968 99866491, aladham1719@gmail.com

HIRING MEP sales engineer, more than 2 years experience in same field Oman/ GCC. Suitable candidates can send CV to: meemcollchr@gmail.com

■ SIT. WANTED

SENIOR accountant, Indian male, 39 years, 15 years experience in accounts & finance at Oman. With Oman/DL. Seeking a senior position in accounts. Experience in oil & gas, construction, FMCG, F & B companies etc. Available to join immediately. Contact No: +968 97921596.

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

■ SIT. WANTED

HOUSE DRIVER
Indian, 16 years experience in Oman. Sayed 00968 71800892.

SR ACCOUNTANT,
Indian male, 7 years of experience. Oman DL & NOC. 92848370.

MOTORBIKE and car driver. Indian male with 11 years experience in franchise restaurants in Oman with valid D/L. 96042447, email: ahmadansari00968@gmail.com

INDIAN female, B.Tech in chemical engineering, 25 years, seeking job in water treatment, environmental pollution control, monitoring operations. 2 years experience in water and environmental quality monitoring, design instrumentation and customer support. NEBOSH certificate in environmental management. Available in Oman and can join immediately. Contact: 96901134, email: honeysreelaya@gmail.com

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

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.

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

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: **recrutment74@gmail.com**

■ SIT. WANTED

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.

GENERAL manager with 16+ years

experience in Oman, MBA — BE, seeks suitable placement.

Contact: 94008034.

■ 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.

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

Indian Social Club Oman (SUR BRANCH)

NOTICE CALLING AGM

Members are hereby notified that the Fifth Annual General Meeting of the Indian Social Club, Sur Branch is scheduled for Friday, the 10th March 2023 at 7.00pm at Sur Club, Sur. The AGM will be followed by election to the Management Committee, Indian Social Club Oman, Sur Branch for the year 2023-2025.

Agenda:

1. Reading of the notice calling the meeting by the General Secretary.
2. Opening address by the President.
3. Approval of the minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting.
4. Report by General Secretary.
5. Presentation of the accounts of 2022 by the treasurer.
6. Discussion and Approval.
7. Any other points raised by the members with the permission of the Chair.

Only those who are already members of the Indian Social Club, Sur Branch and has regularized the membership by the payment of the prescribes fees for 2023 on or before 10th February 2023 are entitled to attend the AGM and election.

The details of the election procedure are displayed on the circular placed on the Notice Board of the Indian Social Club, Sur Branch, Opposite Sur Club Sur at its Office, for the information of the members who desire to vote or submit nomination for the Management Committee Membership.

General Secretary
Indian Social Club, Sur Branch

OMAN عَمَان DAILY Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahd86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com





The crucial role of architecture in Mirbat's history

Mirbat is one of the most important wilayats of Dhofar Governorate that has an amazing history. Located around the area of Jabal Samhan, it is about 74 kilometres away from Salalah. Check out how architecture help shape its history and landscape... **P20**

Hermes, NFT creator spar over 'MetaBirkins' in trademark trial

HERMES INTERNATIONAL SCA urged a US jury on Monday to find that a creator of non-fungible tokens violated its trademark for Birkin bags, while lawyers for the "MetaBirkins" maker countered that the images were art.

The French fashion house in 2022 sued Mason Rothschild

to recover profits he made by selling NFTs depicting Birkin bags covered in colourful fur without seeking Hermes' permission, claiming Rothschild sought to trick consumers into believing he had partnered with Hermes to sell the digital assets.

"He wanted to cash in on the



Birkin name," Oren Warshavsky, a lawyer for Hermes, told jurors in closing arguments in Manhattan federal court after five days of testimony.

Rhett Millsaps, a lawyer for

Rothschild, said in his closing argument that the NFTs were an "artistic experiment" protected by the US Constitution's First Amendment. "He never tried to mislead anyone into believing

that the MetaBirkins came from Hermes," Millsaps said, arguing that Rothschild wanted credit for the project.

The case is being watched for its potential to clarify how trademark law will be applied to NFTs, digital assets that can be used to verify an artwork's authenticity.

Warshavsky said Hermes was working on its own Birkin NFTs at the time, and accused Rothschild of "cybersquatting" by trying to beat the company to the market. He said Hermes would not have brought the lawsuit if Rothschild had complied with a December 2021 cease-and-desist letter demanding he stop selling the NFTs.

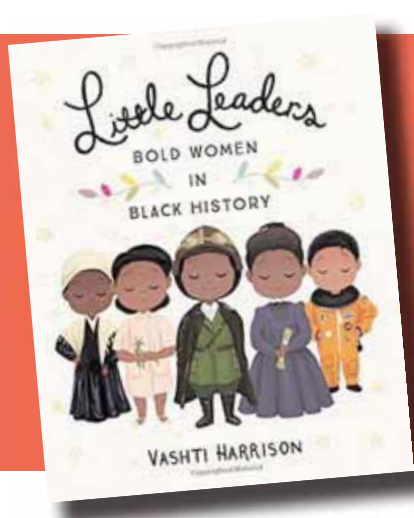
Jonathan Harris, another lawyer for Rothschild, said his client added a disclaimer stating that Hermes was not associated with the NFTs after he received the letter. Jurors are expected to begin deliberations later on Monday afternoon. — **Reuters**

READ

LITTLE LEADERS

BY VASHTI HARRISON

The biographies of 40 African-American women who made a difference.



TRAVEL TALES

A woman takes a picture of a replica of the Alexandria Lighthouse, as part of the 'Alexandria: Past Futures' or 'Alexandrie, futurs antérieurs' at the Mucem Museum in Marseille, southern France. — **AFP**



FASHION

A model presents a creation by Hungarian designer Kata Szegeci during a fashion show in the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, Hungary during the 11th edition of the Budapest Central European Fashion Week. — **AFP**





Codebreakers crack secrets of Mary Queen of Scots' lost letters

SECRET LETTERS WRITTEN by Mary Queen of Scots while she was imprisoned in England by her cousin Queen Elizabeth I have been decoded.

Experts said the code breakers' work is the most significant discovery about Mary for 100 years.

For centuries, the contents of the letters were believed to be lost.

That was until George Lasry, a computer scientist and cryptographer, Norbert Biermann, a pianist and music professor, and Satoshi Tomokiyo, who is a physicist and patents expert, stumbled upon them in the national library of France — Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF).

The trio discovered that Mary had penned the letters after solving her cipher system.

Their work on 57 letters revealed 50 new scripts that historians were not aware of.

The letters date from 1578 to 1584, a few years before Mary's beheading 436 years ago today - February 8 1587.

According to the decoders, the letters reveal fascinating insights on her captivity.

Most are addressed to Michel de Castelnau de Mauvissière, the French ambassador to England, who was a supporter of Catholic Mary.

Lasry, lead author of the study, said: "Upon deciphering the letters, I was very, very puzzled and it kind of felt surreal.

"We have broken secret codes from kings and queens previously, and they're very interesting, but with Mary Queen of Scots it was remarkable as we had so many unpublished letters deciphered and because she is so famous.

"This is a truly exciting discovery."

Part of the multi-disciplinary Decrypt Project involving several universities in Europe, with the goal of mapping,

digitising, transcribing and deciphering historical ciphers, he added: "Together, the letters constitute a voluminous body of new primary material on Mary Stuart - about 50,000 words in total, shedding new light on some of her years of captivity in England.

"Mary, Queen of Scots, has left

tain secrecy.

The existence of a confidential communication channel between Mary and Castelnau is well-known to historians, and even to the English government at the time.

But the code breakers provide new evidence that this exchange was in place as early as May 1578



an extensive corpus of letters held in various archives.

"There was prior evidence, however, that other letters from Mary Stuart were missing from those collections, such as those referenced in other sources but not found elsewhere.

"The letters we have deciphered... are most likely part of this lost secret correspondence."

While in captivity, Mary communicated with her associates and allies, making extensive efforts to recruit messengers and to main-

and active until at least mid-1584.

Computer and manual techniques were used to decode the letters which show the challenges Mary faced maintaining links with the outside world, how the letters were carried and by whom.

Key themes in the correspondence include complaints about her poor health and conditions in captivity, and her negotiations with Queen Elizabeth I for her release, which she believed were not conducted in good faith.

The letters reveal her distrust

of the queen's spymaster, Sir Francis Walsingham, as well as her animosity towards Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and a favourite of Elizabeth.

She also expresses her distress when her son James (future King James I of England) is abducted in August 1582, and her feeling they have been abandoned by France.

Writing in this Special Issue version of Cryptologia, the authors describe how some of the letters were in a large set of unmarked documents in cipher and using the same set of graphical symbols.

The BnF catalogue listed them as from the first half of the 16th century, and related to Italian matters.

However, the study authors say that soon after starting to crack the code, they quickly realised they were written in French and were nothing to do with Italy.

Their work revealed verbs and adverbs often in the feminine form, several mentions of captivity, and the name "Walsingham," suggesting the documents may have been penned by Mary, Queen of Scots.

This was confirmed by comparing them with the plain text of letters in Walsingham's papers in the British Library and through other methods.

A search for similar letters in BnF collections uncovered 57 with the same cipher.

Commenting on the new paper, Mary Queen of Scots expert John Guy, who wrote the 2004 biography of Mary Queen of Scots, said this is the most significant find about Mary for a century.

He said: "This discovery is a literary and historical sensation. Fabulous! This is the most important new find on Mary Queen of Scots for 100 years."

The authors suggest that other coded letters written by Mary may still be missing. — PA Media/dpa

MUSIC

Bowie's handwritten lyrics for 'The Jean Genie' make £57k at auction



A SET OF DAVID Bowie's handwritten lyrics for his track "The Jean Genie" have sold for £57,000 (\$68,460) at auction.

The lyrics, dated 1972, were originally given by Bowie to super fan and founder of the David Bowie fan club Neal Peters.

The song, which was released in 1972 as the lead single from his sixth studio album "Aladdin Sane," tells the story of Jean Genie who "snuck off to the city, strung out on lasers."

Following the sale by Merseyside-based Omega Auctions on Tuesday, auctioneer Paul Fairweather said: "We're well pleased with the price achieved for this historic set of lyrics."

The lyrics are written over 18 lines on a piece of A4 lined paper, which is also titled, signed and dated by Bowie.

US fan Peters founded the inaugural David Bowie fan club, based in New York City, in 1973 and was subsequently given the lyrics by his idol.

The lyrics are also accompanied by a 2009 letter on Neal Peters Collection stationery, detailing how Bowie gave Peters the lyrics, along with several photocopied documents relating to the Bowie fan club and Peters.

Ahead of the sale, the lyrics were estimated to sell for between £50,000 and £70,000, with Omega Auctions auction manager Dan Hampson saying: "The vendor has been in possession of this incredible set for a few years and decided to sell after seeing the amazing price achieved when we sold the Starman lyrics last year."

In September last year music and entertainment specialists Omega Auctions also sold a set of lyrics written by Bowie for his hit "Starman" for £203,500, including buyer's premium.

The song, which featured on the "Ziggy Stardust" concept album, which catapulted Bowie into international rock and pop stardom, was released as a single in 1972.

In 2019 the first demo of Bowie singing "Starman" sold for £51,000. On the demo Bowie can be heard telling his guitarist Mick Ronson, who died in 1993, that he has not finished singing the song when he tries to end the demo.

David Bowie, born David Jones in post-war Brixton, London, died aged 69 on January 10, 2016. — PA Media/dpa

EXHIBITION

Amsterdam slavery exhibition to go on display at UN in New York

A LARGE EXHIBITION BY Amsterdam's world-famous Rijksmuseum on slavery in the former Dutch colonies will be shown at the United Nations in New York, the museum announced on Friday.

The exhibition will be on display in the entrance hall, which is open to the public, from February 27, it said.

This year, the Netherlands commemorates the end of slavery in its colonies 150 years ago. It was only at the end of 2022 that Prime Minister Mark Rutte apologised on behalf of the government for this injustice.

"The recognition of the impact that slavery had and still has on world history is of high importance," said museum director Taco Dibbits.

The Rijksmuseum, which is famous for its collection of Dutch masters such as Rembrandt, had shown an exhibition on this topic for the first time in its history in the summer of 2021. Due to travel restrictions during the Covid-19 period, only a few international visitors were able to see the exhibition.

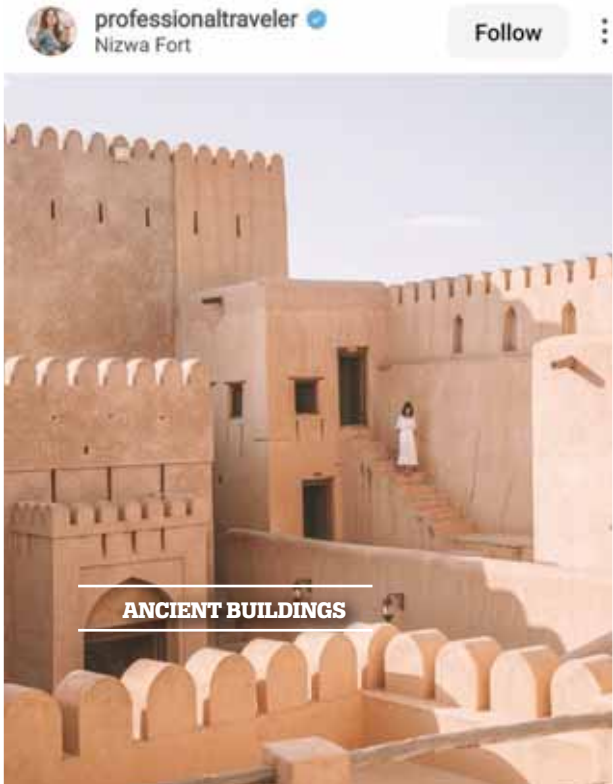
The exhibition shows the story through the example of 10 historical persons from plantation workers to rich merchants. A central object from the collection is also on display in New York: A historical shackle to which several people were chained at the same time.

In about 250 years of colonial history, millions of people were enslaved by the Netherlands: in South America, Asia, South Africa and the Caribbean. It was not until 1863 that the country officially abolished slavery, one of the last countries in the world to do so. Slavery did not actually end until 10 years later: — dpa



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

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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

LIFESTYLE

Thai cadets break world record with mass martial arts ritual



THOUSANDS OF THAI army cadets, university students and a handful of volunteers performed a record-breaking Muay Thai “wai khru” ceremony on Monday, all under the watchful eyes of six massive statues of former kings.

The sunset gathering in Hua Hin, part of a Muay Thai Festival in the seaside resort town, broke the previous Guinness World Record of 250 by having 3,660 participants simultaneously performing the traditional pre-match dance of respect for their coach.

The sun had baked the sheets of concrete hot as the barefoot performers — organised by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), the Royal Thai Army, and the culture and sport ministries — filed onto the parade ground at Rajabhakti Park in front of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-Cha.

Dressed in red uniforms with white Mongkhon headbands, as well as white Muay Kard Chuek ropes — the hemp wrappings fighters wore before gloves — the phalanx of men moved in near perfect unison to the directions of famed Muay Thai fighter Sombat “Buakaw” Banchamek.

“Congratulations, you’re officially amazing,” said the official Guinness adjudicator, confirming the



record had been broken.

“I feel really proud,” said 27-year-old performer Phukrit Purimchaithanat, adding he and his fellow cadets were glad they had pulled it off after months of preparations.

A mix of bemused locals and tourists passing through the popular resort watched the spectacle from a few rickety metal bleachers, gathering around the sides of the fenced area as a loudspeaker blared.

“It’s stunning, it’s crazy, also in front of the kings and everything,” said Hua Hin resident Siena Cruz, 32, as she enjoyed the show with friends.

“The visual is something connected to the tradition,” she said, noting how integral the pre-match ritual was to the sport.

“To be part of another bit of history for Thailand, it’s bragging rights,” she said of the Guinness record.

“I like to watch, but boxing is scary,” said June Rubyung, who had taken her grandson to watch the performance.

The 50-year-old Hua Hin local, who lives close to the army grounds where they performed, said she knew the army cadets had been practising for a month.

“I think they’re good,” she said, “they do it the correct way.” — AFP

CULTURE

Travelling artist provides a different view for Mauritania's poor



FOR THE PAST DECADE, artist Seb Toussaint has travelled to some of the poorest parts of the world to paint brightly coloured frescoes on the walls of down-trodden neighbourhoods.

Dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, the 35-year-old French-British artist, who always paints an inspiring word at the heart of his work, is tackling a piece called “Future” in a dusty slum on the outskirts of Mauritania’s capital Nouakchott.

“The goal is to paint the words of those who don’t have a voice,” he says.

He and two travel companions have daubed the sides of a sheet metal shack with a mural of geometric and undulating shapes in white, blue and baby pink.

As they work, children play in the dirt paths, rolling a tyre or kicking a ball between makeshift homes, as curious women in colourful veils mill around.

Zaatar is a hodgepodge extension of the capital, where fishermen, construction workers, carpenters and casual workers have made their homes.

The soil is too salt-laden to be cultivated, and there is little greenery aside from two ailing acacia trees.

- BRINGING COLOUR TO THE POOR -

Since 2013, Toussaint has painted walls of cement, wood and corrugated iron with words in different languages and alphabets as part of his project, which he calls “Share the Word”.

There was “Humanity” in the Palestinian Territories, “Change” in Nepal, and “Freedom” in Iraq.

He earns a living painting murals in Europe and saves up to finance about two trips a year to spend a month in a slum or refugee camp, where he offers his services to residents.

The homeowner will decide

what word he wants highlighted in the mural.

Toussaint started his career painting “tifos” — vibrant choreographed displays held up by fans at football matches.

He decided to dedicate himself to bringing “colour to an environment where there is very little,” after being exposed to the harsh realities some people face when travelling the world on his bicycle a decade ago.

When he arrived in Zaatar in early January, “we played foot-

hood.”

- PEACE AND LOVE -

Mahmoud got a rare animal painting, “The Camel,” in shades of blue and fawn, in honour of the animal which plays an important role in Mauritanian society.

He has painted eight murals in the neighbourhood, among them “Mum”, “Youth”, and “Friends”, whose colours dazzle in the sun-scorched neighbourhood.

He estimates he has painted 222 word murals around the world, with a general fondness for the themes “Peace” and “Love”.

Some of his works last for years, while others are fleeting. Several murals disappeared when a migrant camp in Calais in northern France was dismantled. The murals also became a backdrop for local music artists to shoot videos, he says. Once, in Nepal, one of his painted walls was used as a backdrop for a fashion shoot. — AFP



DISCOVERY

Warming oceans threaten sea turtle reproduction: Study



RIISING SEA TEMPERATURES are threatening sea turtle populations by warming their nesting sites on beaches across the world, a new study found on Wednesday.

The climate change-fuelled phenomenon could cause local extinctions of the already threatened reptiles, which have a long breeding cycles and are slower to adapt than many other species, such as birds or butterflies.

Sea turtles dig holes and lay their eggs in the sand, which has become warmer in recent years thanks to rising sea temperatures caused by global warming.

Warmer nest temperatures produce more female offspring, thus risking overwhelmingly female populations that will have trouble finding mating partners in the future.

Many nesting sites today are heavily female-biased, suggesting rising temperatures are already having an impact.

High temperatures at nesting sites can also decrease hatchling production.

Wednesday’s study looked at whether sea turtles could shift their breeding period to cooler parts of the year in order to bring nest temperatures down.

In the first global study of its kind, researchers modelled how sea turtles could mitigate the impact of a global temperatures rise of 1.5 degree Celsius — the best case scenario outlined by the United Nations — at 58 nesting sites around the world.

On current trends, the world is headed for an increase of 2.6C above the preindustrial benchmark.

They found that moving the breeding period mitigated about 55 per cent of sea water warming, meaning that in about 45 per cent of cases the nesting was at risk.

- ‘BAND-AID’ FIXES -

“These findings underscore concerns for the long-term survival of this iconic group,” said the report published in the Royal Society Open Science Journal.

Lead author Jacques-Olivier Laloe said the findings point to the “really worrying” possibility that local extinctions could ensue.

The work found that sea turtles breeding at higher latitudes did benefit when they moved their nesting period to a period with cooler weather.

But this was harder for sea turtles living near the equator where temperatures are less likely to fluctuate seasonally, the report said.

Scientists warn that global temperatures are likely to warm beyond 1.5C, possibly by mid-century, which means the study’s findings are likely “optimistic results”, said Laloe of Australia’s Deakin University.

“In reality, it’s likely that sea turtles have less adaptive potential to climate change,” he said.

There are a few ways that humans can help to cool the nests, such as providing shade or watering the sand. But these are “temporary ‘band-aid’ fixes, according to the authors.

“Solutions to address climate change, like reducing greenhouse gas emissions, switching to renewable energies, and changing land-use patterns are required to reduce future climate change impacts,” the study said.

The researchers said the modelling could apply to other reptiles whose breeding success is temperature-dependent and thus vulnerable to climate change, such as crocodiles and tortoises.

The research looked at all seven sea turtle species, six of which are already on the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species. — AFP



The crucial role of architecture in Mirbat's history

By Arwa Al Hashimi
Photos by Mohammed Tabouk

Architecture plays a crucial role in bridging the past and present heritage, reflecting the values and aesthetics of a society, and providing a physical connection to history. It also serves as a symbol of a community's identity, connecting individuals to their cultural roots and reflecting the collective memory of a society. By preserving historical buildings and incorporating elements of the past into new designs, architecture helps maintain continuity and a sense of place, fostering a sense of community and cultural pride.

In Oman, architecture has also played a big role in the growth of the wilayat. Ancient Omanis relied on architecture to provide them protection and it has become one of the most significant tools for defence. Mostly, every wilayat in Oman has a special building or buildings that express its heritage and legacy.

Mirbat is the wilayat of the day. It is one of the most important wilayats of Dhofar Governorate that has an amazing history. Located around the area of Jabal Samhan, it is about 74 kilometres away from Salalah and almost an hour's drive from the airport.

Mirbat in Omani Dialect refers to the stud of horses and that is exactly what Mirbat was most famous for – breeding and exporting horses to a variety of Arab and Islamic ports and cities. Of course, its location in Dhofar made it also famous for trading frankincense and many other interesting handicrafts.

Like other wilayats of Oman, Mirbat is distinguished by the presence of several castles and historical monuments that made it a destination for tourists and visitors. The most important of which is Mirbat castle.

The strategic location, overlooking the coast of Al Fardah is one of the reasons why this castle is unique. Not only that, it is located near Al Noor Mosque which is the oldest mosque in Mirbat, and next to the old Mirbat market, which

some historians consider one of the oldest markets in Dhofar. The construction of the castle dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century AD specifically in 1806 AD. According to historical sources, Sayyid Said bin Sultan ordered the addition of some towers to the castle, and Sultan Said bin Taimour also ordered strengthening it from the northern side after the floods that happened in 1948. Interestingly, the castle remained the seat of the governor of the wilayat until 1988 AD.

The governor meets with notables and the people of the city to discuss their issues. In addition, there is an office for the governor and a room for the staff of the governor's office. The upper floor also consists of a guest room that is 14 metres long and 3 metres wide, in addition to the ladies' room. This is along with bedrooms for the governor and his family. There is also a defence platform in front of the castle consisting of 3 cannons directed at the sea to protect the castle in case of any attack from marine vessels.

The facilities and halls of the castle include holdings of artefacts that were used in the past, the most prominent of which is a stone from the foundation of the old mosque near the fort, and the phrase "D312 AH" was engraved on it.

Mirbat castle was rehabilitated in 1991 and was officially opened in 1994 to become a tourist attraction. It also underwent another rehabilitation in 2011. As of now, it is being visited by many people who are interested in Oman's rich history as it tells many stories about ancient days.

The castle is one of the archaeological landmarks in the wilayat. It was built in the Omani architectural style as a major defensive castle to guarantee the security of the wilayat and its people. Its area is 467 metres and it is 12 metres high. It consists of two floors and two watchtowers, one in the southwestern corner and the other in the southeastern corner.

The first floor includes a suite for the guards. It consists of a room for the commander, a kitchen, and a prison that is 9 metres long and 3 metres wide. That's in addition to the warehouse and the guards' room. It also has openings for reconnaissance and surveillance. The southern suite of the fort includes a room for the governor, in which the