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OMAN SAIL START STRONGLY AT ARAB GAMES IN ALGERIA



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OIL AND GAS EARNINGS BUOY OMAN REVENUE TO RO 5.463 BN AS OF MAY 2023



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TUR JEWELLERY'S ETHICAL MINING JOURNEY



GCC for peaceful resolution of Russia-Ukraine conflict

OMAN CHAIRS MINISTERIAL MEET; GCC FOR WIDER RUSSIA TIES

MOSCOW: Representing Oman, Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy chaired the 6th Joint Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC Countries and Russia in Moscow on Monday.

In his speech, Sayyid Badr said that the meeting contributes to deepening mutual understanding on many common interests. It also strengthens the cooperation relations in all economic, political, cultural, climate issues, renewable energy and other areas of common interest.

He added that the GCC countries highly appreciate the stances and efforts of the Russian government towards the Palestinian issue. The GCC countries, noted Sayyid Badr, stresses the centrality of this issue and the strategic necessity to solve it and end one of the most important causes of instability in the region.

He affirmed that the GCC countries condemn the Israeli practices and violations that target the Palestinians in their lives, property and presence on their land. The GCC countries, said Sayyid Badr, stress the importance of intensifying efforts to reach a comprehensive and just settlement of this issue on the basis of the two-state solution and in accordance with the rules of international legitimacy, in a way that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital,



Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow on Monday. – AFP

according to the borders of 1967, as stipulated in the resolutions of international legitimacy.

END SUDAN SUFFERING

Sayyid Badr affirmed that the GCC countries keep tab of the developments in Sudan, and express their deep concern about the humanitarian and security repercussions of the crisis. He underlined the importance of de-escalation and giving priority to dialogue and lifting the suffering of the Sudanese people, as well as preserving state institutions, and preventing any external interference in Sudanese affairs

PEACE IN YEMEN

Sayyid Badr also stressed the importance of achieving security and stability in Yemen, and baking international and regional efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive Yemeni political solution to the crisis, with the participation of all Yemeni parties. In this context, he pointed out that the GCC renews its support for the Presidential Leadership Council in Yemen and the aspirations of the Yemeni people to establish peace.

UKRAINE

As for the conflict in Ukraine, Sayyid Badr affirmed that this war has repercussions on international peace and security. In this regard, he affirmed that the GCC believes in the importance of moving towards a peaceful solution, via dialogue and the standards of international law and resolving the conflict between all parties by peaceful means and on the basis of respect for the principles of good neighbourliness and the sovereignty and independence of states.

BUDGET SPENDING RECORDS 4% RISE

MUSCAT: The State's public revenue at the end of May 2023 amounted to RO 5.463 million, up by 3 per cent when compared to RO 5.325 million registered over the same period in 2022, according to the monthly Fiscal Performance Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance.

This is mainly due to an increase in net oil revenue and current revenue, representing 52 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, of total public revenue.

Net oil revenue amounted to RO 2.810 million at the end of May 2023, up by 9 per cent when compared to RO 2.568 million registered over the same period in 2022. This is driven by an increase in average oil price of \$84 per barrel and an increase in average oil production to 1,064,000 barrels per day. Current revenue by the end of May 2023 registered RO 1.644 million, up by 18 per cent when compared to RO 1.393 million in 2022. By the end of May 2023, public spending amounted to RO 4.882 million, up by RO 188 million, i.e. 4 per cent compared to actual spending over the same period in 2022.

The following are the most important items of public spending: Current expenditure at the end of May 2023 amounted to RO 3.365 million, down by RO 320 million, i.e. 9 per cent when compared to an amount of RO 3.685 million in the

same period in 2022. As for the development expenditure of civil ministries by the end of May 2023, it reached RO 289 million, representing 32 per cent of total development spending, i.e. RO 900 million, allocated for 2023. Further, by the end of May 2023, the total amount of contributions and other expenses amounted to RO 678 million, up by 31 per cent compared to RO 516 million in the same period in 2022. This increase is a result of electricity subsidy and oil subsidy by RO 244 million and RO 143 million, respectively, at the end of May 2023. Additionally, an amount of RO 166 million was transferred to future debt obligations budget-item.

The State's General Budget registered a surplus of RO 581 million by the end of May 2023, compared to a surplus of RO 631 million achieved over the same period in 2022.

Meanwhile, the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI) in its June report said GDP at fixed prices increased by 4.7 per cent by the end of the first quarter of 2023, registering RO 8.7 billion when compared to RO 8.3 billion over the same period in 2022. During the first quarter, the value-added of oil activities increased by 3.5 per cent, registering RO 2.8 billion when compared to the figures recorded over the same period in 2022. — ONA

Get ready for electric car rides in Khareef

AMAL AL RIAMI
NIZWA, JULY 10

Cute electric cars that steal the limelight in Nizwa will now vie for the hearts of Khareef tourists in Dhofar.

Abu Yamena Trading, the company behind these eco-friendly cars, had trialled the service last year in Salalah with two cars to gauge the response of the public. Buoyed by people's enthusiasm for the ride, this year the company is bringing 6-8 cars to Wadi Darbat and Al Mughsayl in Dhofar.

Yunus bin Ali al Anquodi of Abu Yamena Trading said: "We will be present at Khareef Salalah Festival for marketing and investment purposes and also to help visitors of Khareef Salalah to

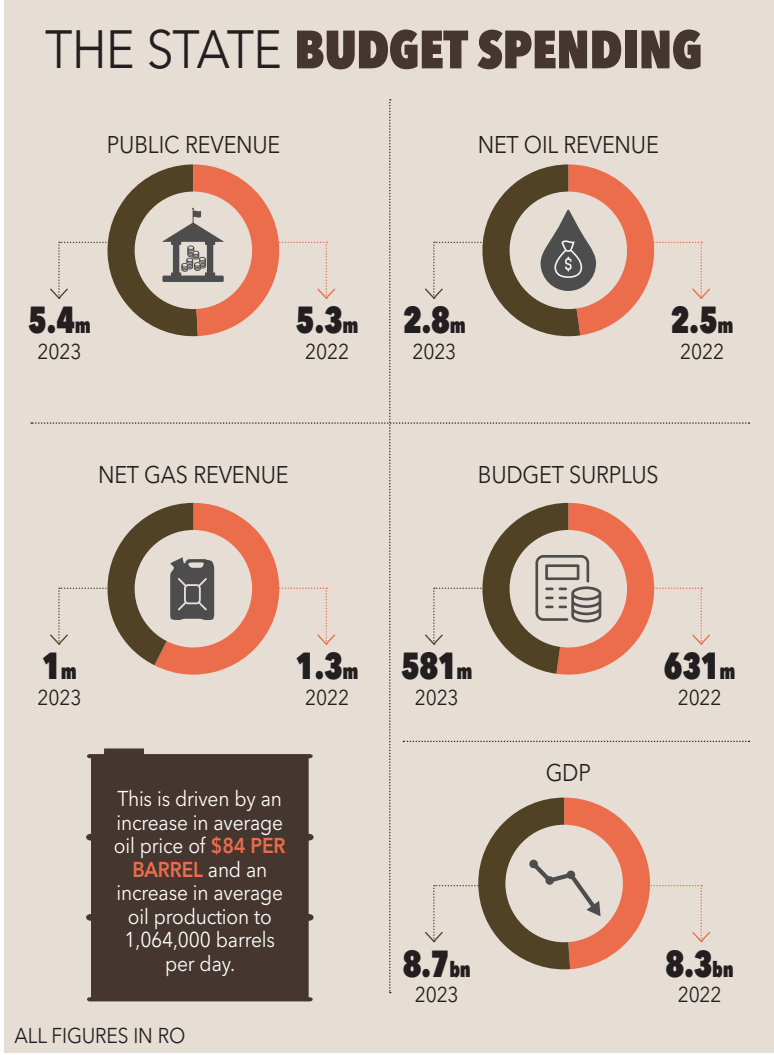


move from one place to another, especially for the elderly and children who are unable to walk." The idea is to offer comfortable transport to tourists from one place to another. These cars will be available from the end of July till August. It depends on

whether the sites are ready for the deployment of these cars. Transportation will be available throughout the day, from 9 am to 6 pm.

Al Anquodi thanked Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, for the opportunity to participate in the Khareef Dhofar. He also thanked all the supporters from the Roads Department and Project Management Department.

These golf cart like cars, which run at a top speed of 40 km per hour, are an attraction for tourists in the old Al Aqr neighbourhood in the Wilayat of Nizwa in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. Visitors get a chance to see many landmarks like old houses, mosques, Nizwa Fort and souq.





Sayyid Shihab inspects strategic exercise ‘Decision Making-10’



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs on Monday inspected the implementation of the strategic exercise “Decision Making-10” at the National Defence College

(NDC) in the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. The exercise, which kicked off on July 2 is ongoing till July 13, 2023.

Upon the arrival of HH Sayyid Shihab at the college, he was

greeted by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the NDC.

HH Sayyid Shihab was briefed on the various stages of the exercise. During his inspection, several participants

introduced the exercise and means of responding to simulated international events and national issues, in addition to proposed solutions through various methods in the process of decision-making. — ONA

GCC for peaceful resolution of Russia-Ukraine conflict

FROM PAGE 1

Sayyid Badr underscored the commitment of the GCC countries to support all efforts aimed at achieving reconciliation and peace, expanding all diplomatic channels and enhancing communication and dialogue between the concerned parties in a bid to achieve peace, security, stability and prosperity. This, he said, will serve hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the two countries and the region.

He added that this meeting comes at a time when global challenges related to climate change, armed conflicts and political instability are increasing, while at the same time there are many opportunities that need to

be utilised for development and progress. He underscored the positive examples seen in the Gulf region, including the hosting of Expo 2020 Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar, the Formula races in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) besides other important international events, the UAE’s preparation to host the COP 28 conference in Dubai in November as well as Qatar’s readiness to host the Asian Cup in January 2024.

All these events, said Sayyid Badr, reflect the GCC countries’ openness to partnership and cooperation with the world, as well as the safety and stability they enjoy, making them an attractive destination for investment,

tourism, business, entertainment, sports, culture and other activities.

The Foreign Minister also touched on other important developments, namely the resumption of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

GCC-Russia ties

The meeting reviewed relations between the GCC countries and the Russian Federation. It also touched on means of boosting joint cooperation in various areas, particularly in the fields of economy, investment, trade and tourism. The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues of common concern.

The meeting emphasised the importance of adhering to

the rules of international law in resolving conflicts, adopting dialogue and peaceful means, and respecting the sovereignty and independence of states in order to preserve the policy of good neighbourliness and peaceful coexistence to maintain security, stability and peace at the regional and international levels.

The meeting was attended by the GCC foreign ministers, GCC Secretary-General, and Sergey Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister.

The Omani delegation comprised Shaikh Ahmed bin Hashil al Maskari, Head of the GCC and Regional Neighbourhood Department; Hamoud bin Salim al Tuwaih, Ambassador of Oman to Russia; and officials. — ONA

State Council finishes discussing draft Public Debt Law

MUSCAT: The State Council held its 11th ordinary meeting of the 7th annual sitting under the chairmanship of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman, on Monday.

During the meeting, the State Council has finished discussing the draft Public Debt Law referred to it from the Council of Ministers and the Economic Committee’s opinion about the draft law. It also approved a number of studies prepared by the council’s standing committees.

Addressing the meeting, the chairman of the State Council reviewed the agenda of the meeting which also included discussion on the studies of the two ad hoc committees on the ‘Penal Procedures in Bounced Checks Offences’ and ‘Traffic Congestion Within Muscat Governorate; Reality and Solutions’, and the Education and Research Committee’s study on the policies and legislation of distance education and ways to develop it.



On discussing the draft Public Debt Law through the Economic Committee’s statement, Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Harthy, chairman of the committee explained that that the State Council had earlier prepared a study entitled ‘The Framework and Determinants of the Draft Public Debt Law’ which laid out the general framework for the draft law, and the study came up with recommendations that ensure the optimal ceiling for the public debt. He added that the draft Public Debt Law took into account the stability of the national economy. The law is in harmony with the state’s public finances and the requirements of sustainable development and sets clear goals for managing public debt.

The meeting approved the study prepared by the ad hoc committee tasked with looking into the penal procedures in the cases of bounced checks. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al

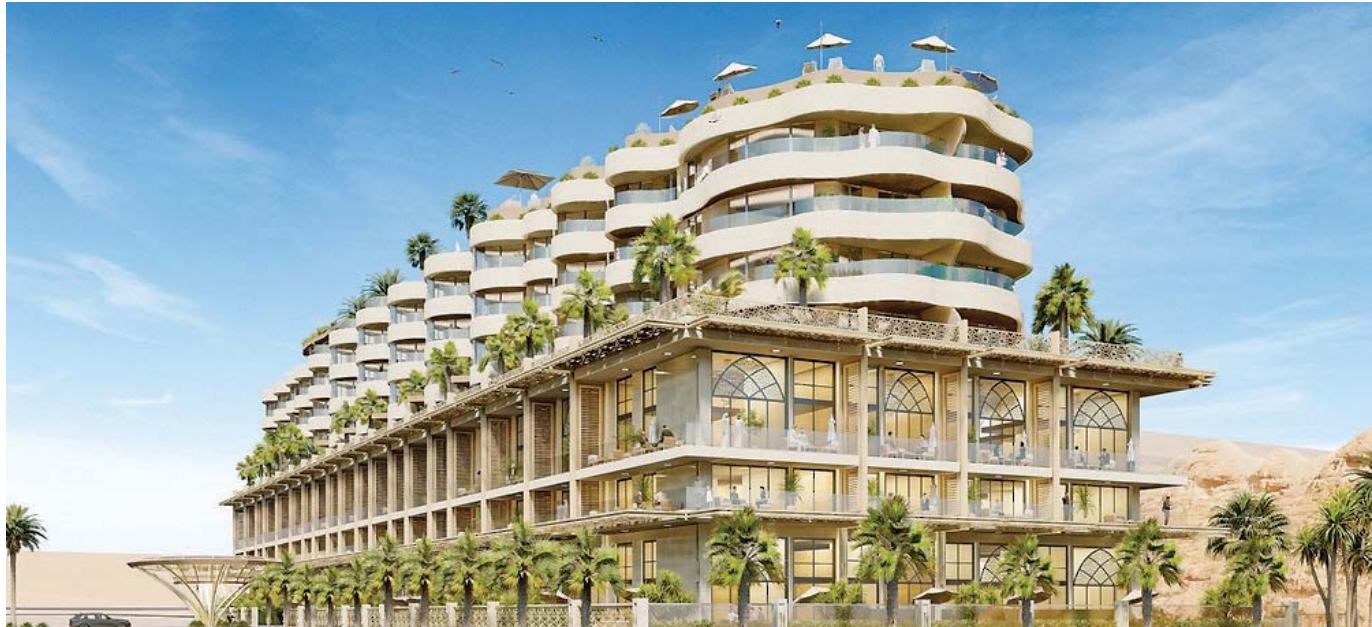
Harthy, head of the committee explained that the study aimed at simplifying the procedures for cashing of checks and making it more flexible.

The meeting also approved a study conducted by an ad hoc committee on traffic congestion in Muscat Governorate.

Dr Mariam bint Abdullah al Awadiyah, head of the committee said that the study sought to analyse the causes and factors of traffic congestion by analysing the nature of the problem through discussion with a number of officials and specialists in government and private agencies concerned with the subject matter. Besides, the committee conducted field visits and international visits to learn about the solutions and technologies applied by other countries to reduce traffic congestion.

The State Council also approved the Education and Research Committee’s study on the policies and legislations of distance education and its development. Mohammed bin Hamdan al Toobi, head of the Education and Research Committee, said that the study aimed to identify distance education, its nature, importance, and effects, and to identify the challenges and difficulties facing it from the legislative, organisational, and technical aspects. He added that the study proposed legislation for governing distance education and how to develop by embracing the best practices to ensure its effectiveness and sustainability for the future.

RO 10 MILLION TAQA LONG BEACH PROJECT PACT INKED



SALALAH: An Agreement was inked on Monday to implement Taqa Long Beach Project worth RO 10 million in the Wilayat of Taqa, Governorate of Dhofar. The project is set on an area of 33 km square metres, while the construction area is 6,500 square metres. It consists of a complex comprising 7 floors that include 200 housing units, a sports club, a meeting room, a five-star restaurant and a number of commercial activities. — ONA



New batch joins Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic Language

MANAH: The Sultan Qaboos Institute for Teaching Arabic Language to Non-Native Speakers received a new batch of students, on Monday.

The new batch comprises 36 students from the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Center (SQCC) in Washington, the Omani British Friendship Association and the Republic of Hungary.

The new students were introduced to the teaching staff,



administrators and supervisors after which they were taken on a tour around the institute’s facilities where they were acquainted with the services provided at the institute and watched a visual display about the Sultanate of Oman and its civilisation and culture.

The visual display also included general tips and instructions that help the students integrate and communicate directly with

the local community through trips, visits and various events. In addition to studying the Arabic language, the student programme includes various events, lectures, cultural evenings, educational trips to historical and natural places as well Arabic calligraphy classes, technical workshops and language partner programme.

The course lasts for eight weeks with 160 hours of study in the skills of Arabic language. — ONA



FOLLOW TRAFFIC RULES

ROP launches extensive awareness campaign

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 10

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has launched an extensive social media campaign to raise awareness of traffic rules and educate the public, especially those traveling to Salalah and other parts of the Sultanate of Oman for their vacations. The campaign focuses on highlighting the dangers of incorrect traffic acts including overtaking, using mobile phones, among others.

ROP highlighted restricted areas where overtaking is prohibited such as intersections, roundabouts, and curves, where limited visibility and the potential for collisions pose significant risks. Overtaking is also forbidden on hills, slopes, slippery roads, and near pedestrian crossings due to safety concerns. These overtaking restrictions are implemented to ensure the safety of all road users and minimise the occurrence of accidents in potentially hazardous situations. Drivers should always be aware of and comply with these regulations



to maintain road safety.

Driving with the headlights turned on at night is crucial for safety reasons. This requirement applies to both well-lit and dark areas, as well as on roads and off-road situations, regardless of whether the location is populated or not.

When a driver briefly glances at their phone screen while driving, it may seem like a momentary distraction. However, during that

time, the vehicle covers a significant distance without the driver paying attention to the road conditions. At an urban driving speed of 50 km/h, the vehicle travels approximately 14 metres in just one second. This diversion of attention increases the risk of a serious car accident as the driver's focus shifts from observing the road, anticipating hazards, and making necessary adjustments. It is crucial to avoid phone distractions while driving to ensure road safety.

Pedestrians are strongly advised to use sidewalks whenever available as they provide a dedicated space separated from the road, offering a higher level of safety. In the absence of sidewalks, pedestrians should walk on the left side of the road, facing oncoming traffic. This allows pedestrians to have better visibility of approaching vehicles, react promptly, and make necessary adjustments. Walking on the left

side also facilitates establishing eye contact with drivers, further enhancing pedestrian safety.

SAFETY OF CHILDREN

The safety of children during car journeys is of utmost importance. Placing children in the front seat of a vehicle is strongly discouraged due to safety considerations. Instead, it is highly recommended to use the rear seat and provide a dedicated child seat for optimal safety.

Studies have demonstrated that using the rear seat along with a dedicated child seat can reduce the risk of injuries by approximately 45 per cent compared to placing a child in the front seat without proper restraints, confirmed ROP.

This significant risk reduction highlights the importance of following these guidelines and prioritising children's safety during car trips.

By following these practices, pedestrians can minimise the risk of accidents and contribute to a safer road environment.

39th issue of Scientific Insights published

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) published the 39th issue of Scientific Insights magazine, which explored a number of different reports and articles in the fields of science and innovation.

In the latest issue of Scientific Insights, the Cover Story discusses how social media affects the values and sense of belonging of the Omani citizens with a number of researchers, experts, and academics. It also explores the advantages and disadvantages of social media, the dangers of social media on Omani values, the importance of preserving Omani customs and traditions, and many more.

The magazine also examines topics such as the genetic characterisation of Omani camels through the genotyping of DNA sequences.

Sustainable Goals 2030 committee meets



MUSCAT: The national committee for following-up the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 held its first meeting on Monday under the chairmanship of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, Chairman of the Committee.

The meeting reviewed the tasks assigned to the committee after its reformation, most importantly supervising the preparation of voluntary national reports to follow up the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

2030, as well as monitoring the progress achieved on this regard.

During the meeting, the committee discussed the proposed methodology for preparing the second voluntary national report, which is scheduled to be presented next year at the high-level political forum (HLPF) of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and the time frame for its preparation. This move reflects the commitment of the Sultanate of Oman to sustainable development as one of the main pillars of Oman Vision 2040.

The committee also reviewed the preliminary results of the central dashboard for the goals of sustainable development, which represents an informational monitoring of the progress made in achieving the goals, objectives and indicators of the seventeen goals at the national and governorate levels until 2022.

The committee also discussed the formation of the national work team and small technical task forces, which include all the main partners from various

government and private units, civil society institutions, bodies and the academic sector to ensure cooperation, coordination and concerted efforts among all partners in monitoring efforts in achieving the 17 goals of sustainable development.

It is worth mentioning that an official delegation will represent the Sultanate of Oman in the high-level political forum of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, due to be held in New York City during this month. — ONA



HIGHER EDUCATION MINISTRY INKS AGREEMENT TO PROVIDE 742 SCHOLARSHIPS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed 23 agreements with private higher education institutions to provide 742 free scholarships during the academic year 2023/2024 to the tune of RO 9.104 million.

This came during a seminar on the roles of private higher education institutions in community service and the transition to a knowledge society. The event was organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. The seminar aimed at highlighting the role and contributions of these institutions in serving the local community and achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, said that all private higher education institutions in Oman are working, in cooperation with the ministry, towards diversifying and enhancing the quality of their programmes to keep pace with international developments and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). On her turn, Lara Ghassan Obeidat, Director General of Scholarships at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation said that these scholarships will be offered for competition through the Higher Education Admission Centre.

— ONA

Private sector leads the way in fostering youth in digital leadership

SIHAM AL SAID
SUHAR, JULY 10

Sohar Port and Freezone, in collaboration with Innotech, have launched the new edition of a programme (Maseer) aimed at developing the skills of future leaders in digital leadership. This initiative provides young people with a unique opportunity to explore smart strategic directions and gain insights into the latest advancements in the industrial sector. The programme emphasises the importance of the Sultanate of Oman in adopting new terms and technologies to create job opportunities and

promote sustainability.

Supported by Sohar Port and Freezone, the programme spans a month, presenting a series of training workshops led by field experts from Innotech company at Radison Blue hotel at Suhar. As a leading company in the field of smart technological solutions, Innotech has established itself as a key player on both national and Middle Eastern levels in smart industries and solutions.

The programme includes seven diverse training workshops, each focusing on a unique topic related to digital leadership skills.

Participants will explore different fascinating subjects in

the field such as 3D design and printing, artificial intelligence, Arduino programming, smart cities, and renewable energy. These workshops offer invaluable insights into cutting-edge technologies that are shaping the future.

About 30 participants from various youth categories will participate in each session, with the programme targeting a total of 200 individuals from the province. Promoting social responsibility and enhancing leadership skills among the youth of the province are main goals for such programmes.

Furthermore, the private sector



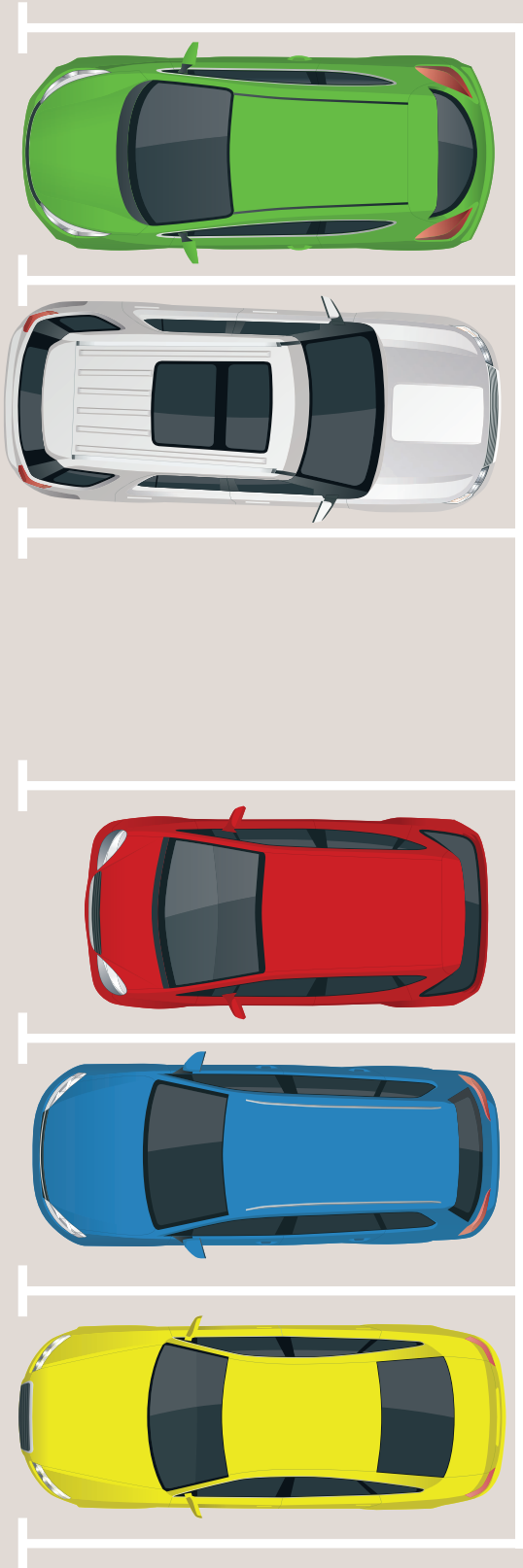
has joined forces to support this initiative, recognising the importance of fostering the next generation's skill development.

The private sector's active involvement in this programme demonstrates its commitment to nurturing youth talent. By

collaborating with initiatives like this, private companies contribute significantly to bridging the gap between education and industry demands.

Moreover, their support in empowering young people with AI leadership skills ensures that the workforce of the future is well-equipped to navigate the evolving landscape of technology and innovation.

Through this collaboration, the private sector play a vital role in positive change, inspiring young minds to explore emerging fields and opportunities in the digital era by fostering a culture of learning and innovation.



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PARKING RECEIPT

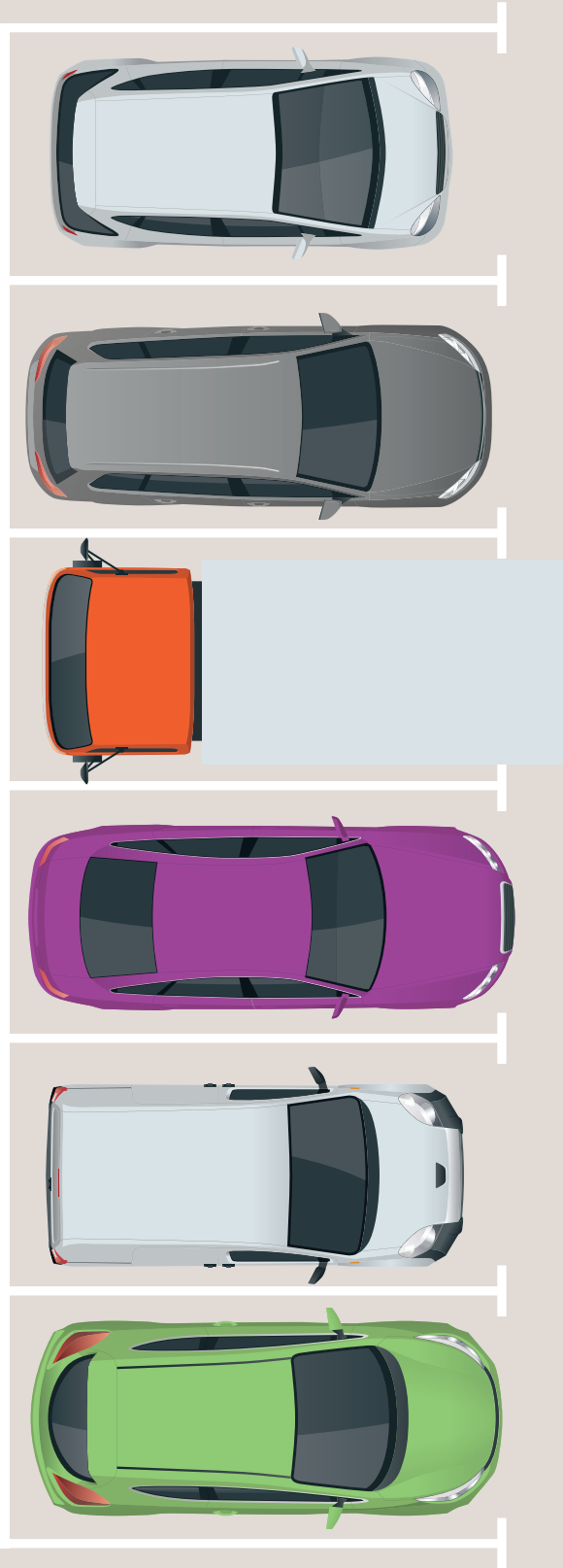
DATE: 00/00/00 00:00:00 AM

FROM: 00/00/00 00:00:00 AM

TO: 00/00/00 00:00:00 AM

Paid:00.00

THANK YOU AND DRIVE SAFELY!



PAID PARKING BECOMING A COSTLY AFFAIR

SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

As more and more areas have been included as paid parking zones in Muscat due to the increase in the number of vehicles, and to eliminate the issue of abandoning vehicles in free parking slots, many say that paid parking is becoming a costly affair.

From last year, more areas including the parking lots around the new Al Khoudh Market, behind Ooredoo Store, Sultan Qaboos Mosque in Ruwi and Sultan Qaboos Street in Al Khuwair South which is opposite commercial buildings have been made paid parking

zones. As the population increases across the country, cities continue to develop and the usages of vehicles increases. Hence, the benefits of paid parking limit the people to park their vehicles for their limited time.

However, people often confuse whether certain areas are paid or free parking zones. “I was been fined for parking for just a few seconds of time. I went to a shop to buy something and was fined RO 10 in just a blink of an eye. I could not see the parking warning sign in any visibility though I confess to have seen it later,” Ali Khalfan, road commuter said.

People feel there should be some leniency. “I ended up paying RO 10 when

I parked for five minutes to buy a cup of tea and I felt so bad and frustrated because some sign boards are far apart from each other and sometimes far away from where the parking zones are. I am not against any parking charges or even fines, but the sign boards must be placed big and within visibility range,” Fatmah al Naamani, another commuter said.

According to Muscat Municipality, parking fees are charged between 8 am and 1 pm and from 4 pm to 9 pm - except for Fridays, Saturdays and official holidays that are announced by the concerned authorities.

“The users can reserve the vehicle parking via SMS by sending the number and code of the vehicle and the number

of minutes required (between 30 minutes and maximum 300 minutes) to 90091,” stated Muscat Municipality.

If the user wants to extend the time, he has to send another message to the number 90091 and follow the same previous steps. And to inquire about the remaining time, the beneficiary can send the word ‘time’ to 90091. The cost of each parking via text message is 110 baisa for 30 minutes.

With the said payments, it may be too high especially for those who work in the areas where there is only paid parking slots. However, according to the municipality, there is always a cheaper option of obtaining cheaper monthly payments.



Biden meets King Charles ahead of Nato summit

WINDSOR: US President Joe Biden met Britain's King Charles on Monday to discuss how to tackle climate change after earlier dropping in to see Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and hail the "rock-solid" friendship with a close ally.

Biden is in Britain at the start of a three-nation trip including the Nato summit in Lithuania, at which allies aim to show solidarity with Ukraine.

Both sides played down the president's meeting with Sunak, their fifth in as many months, describing it as a continuation of long-running discussions, though it was Biden's first visit to the prime minister's Downing Street office as president.

"Great for us to carry on our conversations," Sunak told Biden as they sat in the Downing Street garden.

"We've got a lot to talk about," Biden replied. "Our

relationship is rock-solid. Couldn't be meeting with a closer friend and a greater ally. We've got a lot to talk about."

After spending less than an hour at Sunak's office, Biden headed to Windsor Castle to meet the king, the higher-profile part of his short British trip.

Biden was expected to discuss climate change in Windsor, a cause on which Charles has campaigned for more than five decades.

The 74-year-old king greeted the 80-year-old president in the quadrangle of the castle, where he was given a guard of honour.

The men were due to have tea before discussing how to help boost private investment to combat climate change, a threat both leaders say is existential.

"The president has huge respect for the king's commitment on the climate



US President Joe Biden and Britain's King Charles review an honour guard at Windsor Castle in Windsor, England. – Reuters

issue in particular. He has been a clarion voice on this issue," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters aboard Air Force One on Sunday.

Sunak and Biden were due to share notes before the Nato summit in Lithuania, which kicks off on Tuesday and will be dominated by the Ukraine crisis.

Ahead of the trip, Biden urged caution for now on Ukraine's campaign to join Nato whose mutual defence pact obliges all members to come to the aid of any member that is attacked. "I don't think there is unanimity in Nato about whether or not to bring Ukraine into the Nato family now, at this moment, in the middle of a war," Biden said in an interview.

His trip comes a few days after he agreed to send US cluster munitions to Ukraine.

— Reuters

Uzbekistan president Mirziyoyev cements power with election win

TASHKENT: Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev won a third term that will keep him in charge of the gas-rich country until 2030 as international observers said on Monday the vote had lacked "genuine" competition.

Mirziyoyev, who was running against three largely unknown candidates, won Sunday's election with 87 per cent of the vote, according to preliminary results.

The 65-year-old has promised to open up Uzbekistan to foreign investment and tourism and implement major reforms in Central Asia's most populous country.

"Uzbekistan's presidential election lacked genuine political competition despite some efforts to reform," an election monitoring mission from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said in a statement.

They also said that a number of recommendations key to the democratic process



Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is greeted at a local polling station during early presidential election in Tashkent. – Reuters

"remain unaddressed."

Urszula Gacek, the head of the mission, said her organisation urged the country to "take bolder measures towards a true democracy that includes all citizens".

Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Mirziyoyev on a "convincing electoral victory."

The win "confirms your high political authority and points to the broad, popular support for your policy of large-scale reforms," he wrote.

The two also spoke on the phone and discussed their

"strategic partnership".

Chinese leader Xi Jinping also congratulated Mirziyoyev in a phone call.

"Xi Jinping pointed out, in recent years, under our joint leadership, China-Uzbekistan relations have achieved breakthrough development, and cooperation in various fields has been comprehensively strengthened," state broadcaster CCTV said.

Xi told Mirziyoyev he "very much cherishes the good working relationship and personal friendship with you",

CCTV added.

In May, Xi hosted Mirziyoyev and other Central Asian leaders for a summit in the northern Chinese city of Xi'an.

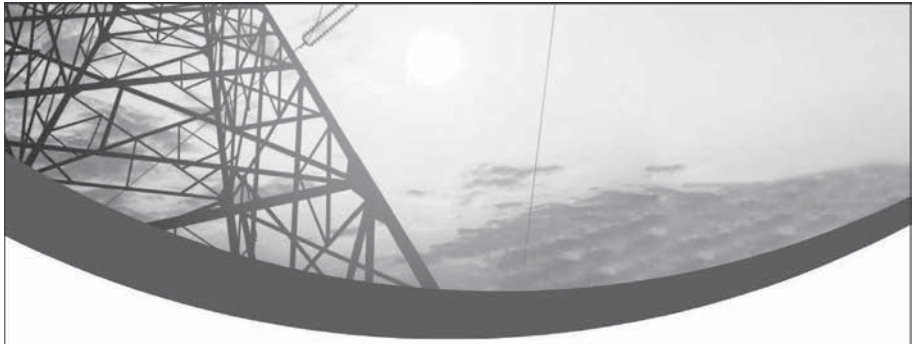
Mirziyoyev previously served as prime minister under his hardline predecessor Islam Karimov before winning his first term in 2016 and getting re-elected in 2021.

A constitutional referendum this year paved the way for him to serve two more presidential terms and increased the mandate from five years to seven, meaning he could stay in power until 2037.

Mirziyoyev, who trained as an engineer, portrays himself as a reformer creating a "New Uzbekistan" and has said he wants to double gross domestic product to \$160 billion soon.

He focused his re-election campaign on the economy and education.

He has ended the practice of forced labour in Uzbekistan's cotton fields and released political prisoners jailed during Karimov's quarter-century rule. — AFP



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/W/ TENDER/ MAN/ 2023/002	OPERATION & MAINTENANCE OF REVERSE OSMOSIS WATER DESALINATION PLANT AT SHALIM	25 th July 2023	10 th August 2023	RO. 525.000

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232554
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om



Dhofar Integrated Services Company S.A.O.C.
CR Number: 2185229, P.O. Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number: 23232523, Fax: 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om



More than 300 migrants in 3 boats went missing in Atlantic Ocean

MADRID: Three refugee boats with some 300 people on board went missing in the sea between Africa and Spain's Canary Islands.

Two boats, each with up to 60 people on board, left Senegal on June 23 for the Canary Islands, and a third with about 200 people left the coastal town of Kafountine on June 27, Helena Maleno of the Spanish aid organisation Ca-minando Fronteras said on Monday.

The organisation was in contact with the relatives of the missing people, who had not heard from the people on board.

Maleno said: "We are very worried because after the unrest



in Senegal in June and because of political persecution, people are even less prepared than usual to flee in a hurry."

In June, 19 boats with refugees from Senegal arrived on the Canary Islands, while not one had been registered since the beginning of the year.

Maleno criticised Spain for only using one search plane,

which was only in the air for a few hours per day.

There is also a lack in cooperation with Morocco: "Which only works to ward off refugees but not to rescue them," she complained.

"If 300 Germans were missing in the Atlantic, there would be a huge search operation," she added, while the Spanish sea rescue service promised to give a statement later in the day.

Kafountine is about 1,700 kilometres from the Spanish island group, and the Atlantic Ocean with its strong currents and high waves is considered one of the most dangerous migration routes to Europe. — dpa



MINISTRY OF HEALTH ROYAL HOSPITAL ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDER

THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF ROYAL HOSPITAL INVITE SPECIALIZED COMPANIES TO SUBMIT TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	LAST DATE FOR COLLECTION OF TENDER DOCUMENT	BID SUBMISSION CLOSING DATE ON/BEFORE 10:00 AM TUESDAY	ELIGIBILITY	TENDER FEE (NON-REFUNDABLE)
2542/2023/ MOH/ DGRHP-125	SUPPLY OF LABORATORY & CONSUMABLE ITEMS AT ROYAL HOSPITAL	18/JUL/2023	15/AUG/2023	SPECIALIZED COMPANIES REGISTERED WITH TENDER BOARD	25 RIALS

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: **24402200**, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Israel parliament to vote on controversial judicial overhaul

JERUSALEM: Israel's parliament is to vote on Monday on a bill that would limit court powers, in a new political offensive to push on with a judicial overhaul that has split the nation.

The changes, proposed by the hard-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have sparked one of the country's biggest ever protest movements since their announcement in January.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets in weekly rallies, demanding a halt to the planned overhaul of Israel's justice system.

Following stiff opposition and growing international criticism — including from US President Joe Biden — Netanyahu ordered a “pause” in March to allow for talks on the proposals.

But with Israel's two main opposition leaders, Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz, pulling out of negotiations, Netanyahu has now made a fresh bid to pass the legislation in parliament.

Parliament will see the first reading of a bill aimed at excluding the judiciary's right to rule on the “reasonableness” of government decisions. One of its potential effects would be on the appointment of ministers.

Netanyahu in January was forced to dismiss cabinet



Israel's Finance minister Bezalel Smotrich speaks during a parliament (Knesset) meeting in Jerusalem. — AFP

member Aryeh Deri, of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish party Shas, after intervention by the Supreme Court over a previous tax evasion conviction.

The proposals would also give the government a greater say in the appointment of judges.

The administration of Netanyahu, who returned to power in December at the head of a coalition with ultra-Orthodox Jewish and extreme-right allies, argues that the revamp is necessary to ensure a better balance of power.

But critics have accused Netanyahu, who is on trial over corruption charges, of trying to use the overhaul to quash possible judgements against him. Netanyahu denies the charges and rejects any link between the judicial changes and his own case.

— AFP

Xi says Russia and China should ‘lead global governance reform’

BEIJING: China and Russia need to “lead the correct direction of global governance reform”, according to Chinese President Xi Jinping, who hailed the two countries’ partnership at a meeting with a top Russian politician in Beijing on Monday, state media reported.

Beijing and Moscow have ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic contacts in recent years, with exchanges only growing closer since Russia's attack of Ukraine last year.

On Monday, Xi met Valentina Matviyenko, the speaker of the Federation Council — the Russian parliament's upper house — at the Great Hall of the People, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Xi said the development of relations between the two countries was “a strategic choice made by both countries based on the fundamental interests of their respective countries and peoples”, according to CCTV.

“Both sides also need to strengthen communication and collaboration within multilateral mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS countries, lead the correct direction of global governance reform, and safeguard the common interests of emerging market countries and developing countries,” the



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing. — Reuters file photo

statement continued.

On Monday, Western leaders gathered in Lithuania's capital ahead of a summit expected to present unity on Ukraine's future membership of the Nato military alliance — a prospect Russia has reacted furiously to.

Beijing says it is a neutral party in the war, but its refusal to condemn the attack has led many of Kyiv's allies to accuse it of favouring Russia.

Matviyenko on Monday said the strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow “has reached the highest level in history and continues to develop steadily”,

according to CCTV.

She said a March visit by Xi to Moscow, where he met his counterpart Vladimir Putin, had “injected strong impetus into the further development of Russia-China relations”.

Xi said China was “willing to continue to work with Russia to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership of mutual assistance, deep integration, innovation, and inclusive cooperation in the new era”.

Meanwhile, China and Solomon Islands signed a new deal on police cooperation on Monday deepening their bilateral

development of relations between the two countries was “a strategic choice made by both countries based on the fundamental interests of their respective countries and peoples

XI JINPING
Chinese President

partnership.

The “implementation plan” on policing was one of nine documents signed on Monday following talks between visiting Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Chinese Premier Li Qiang at Beijing's Great Hall of the People.

The Solomons’ decision to switch its diplomatic recognition to Beijing was “the correct choice that conforms to the trend of the times”, he added.

Sogavare told Li that his country “has a lot to learn from China's development experience”. — AFP

Erdogan links Sweden's Nato bid with Türkiye's EU membership

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Monday he would only back Sweden's Nato candidacy if the European Union resumes long-stalled membership talks with Ankara.

The mercurial Turkish leader's unexpected new demand came on the eve of a landmark Nato summit at which Western leaders want to display unity in the face of Russia's war on Ukraine.

Erdogan has been blocking Sweden's accession for months because of what he deemed was Stockholm's failure to crack down on Kurdish militants who have been waging a bloody insurgency against the Turkish state.

His new condition — never raised in public before — threatened to open a new chasm between Türkiye and its Western allies in the heat

of Europe's worst conflict since World War II.

Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz quickly called Erdogan's demand unrelated to the issue of giving Sweden the security guarantees afforded by the world's most powerful military organisation.

Erdogan argued on Monday that many of the same leaders who were blocking Türkiye's EU membership now wanted him to support Sweden's candidacy.

“Almost all the Nato members are EU members. I now am addressing these countries, which are making Türkiye wait for more than 50 years, and I will address them again in Vilnius,” Erdogan said moments before boarding his flight for the summit in the Lithuanian capital.

“First, open the way to Türkiye's membership of the European Union, and then we



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan (L) and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson shake hands next to Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg prior to their meeting, on the eve of a NATO summit, in Vilnius. — AFP

will open it for Sweden, just as we had opened it for Finland.”

Erdogan added that “this is what I told” US President Joe

Biden when the two leaders spoke by phone on Sunday.

Türkiye first applied to be a member of the European Economic Community — a predecessor to the EU 3in 1987.

It became an EU candidate country in 1999 and formally launched membership negotiations with the bloc in 2005.

The talks stalled over European concerns about human rights violations that came in the midst of a sweeping crackdown Erdogan launched after surviving a failed 2016 military coup.

Scholz said Erdogan's new demand conflated two unrelated issues.

“Sweden meets all the requirements for Nato membership,” he said in Berlin. “The other question is one that is not connected with it and that is why I do not think it should be seen as a connected issue.” — AFP

SHORT TAKES

KURUME

Two dead after ‘heaviest rain ever’

At least two people were killed in torrential rain in southwest Japan on Monday, with fears the toll could rise, as tens of thousands of residents were told to evacuate their homes.

Downpours after a week of steady rain have caused rivers to burst their banks and sodden earth to collapse in deadly landslides.

A landslide in Kurume city engulfed 10 people. Nine of them survived, but a local man in his 70s was confirmed dead. Local media put the death toll even higher, with



the Kyodo news agency reporting at least five deaths late on Monday.

An additional male body was discovered in Kurume, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun and national broadcaster NHK.

BAGHDAD

Iraq signs massive energy deal

Iraq and French oil major TotalEnergies on Monday signed a long-delayed \$27 billion energy deal that aims to increase oil production and boost the country's capacity to produce energy with four oil, gas and renewables projects.

The deal has faced delays amid disputes, but was finally closed in April when Iraq agreed to take a smaller than initially demanded stake in the project of 30 per cent.

TotalEnergies Chairman and



CEO Patrick Pouyanne signed the agreement with Iraqi oil minister Hayan Abdel-Ghani at a ceremony in Baghdad, with Pouyanne calling it a “historic day”.

TEHRAN

President to set out on rare Africa tour

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will embark on Tuesday on a rare Africa tour in the latest diplomatic ties.

The three-day trip -- which includes Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe -- will be the first by an Iranian president to Africa in 11 years.

Raisi will head a delegation that includes Iran's foreign minister as well as senior business people. He is scheduled to meet with presidents from the three countries.



On Monday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani described the trip as “a new turning point” which could bolster economic and trade ties with African nations.



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In brief

■ SYDNEY



POLICE SUSPEND SEARCH FOR MISSING BACKPACKER

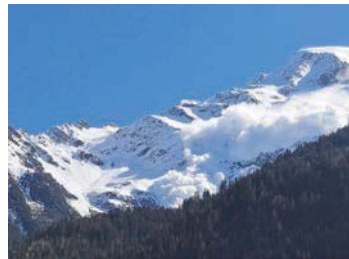
Australian police on Monday suspended the search for Belgian hiker Celine Cremer in remote northwest Tasmania, saying she could not have survived the “treacherous” conditions since disappearing more than three weeks ago.

Cremer, 31, was last seen on June 17 in Waratah, a small town in the island’s scenic northwest.

It is believed that she left her white Honda CRV in a carpark before embarking on a day walk at Philosopher Falls around June 20.

Police have said it appears the tourist left the car “equipped for a light walk”.

■ DIJON



2 HIKERS KILLED IN FRENCH ALPS FALLS

A British man and an Italian died in separate falls on Sunday while hiking in the French Alps, emergency responders said on Monday.

The Briton in his 50s was killed near the foot of France’s tallest mountain Mont Blanc, police in the Chamonix region said. The hiker was taking a difficult track near the Bionnassay glacier at a spot known as Nid d’Aigle (Eagle’s Nest).

He fell around 50 metres and was killed instantly, emergency responders said. The Italian man, aged 67, was hiking with his wife at around 3,000 metres above sea level near Lake Mont-Cenis in the Savoy region.

■ NEW YORK



HEAVY RAINS PUMMEL US NORTHEAST

The northeastern United States was inundated on Monday with heavy rain and flooding across several states a day after storms and flash floods washed out highways and killed one person in New York state.

Parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Vermont were under flood warnings as of 6:00 am on Monday, with states in the region recording rapid rainfall and “life threatening” flash floods.

NWS said it had received “multiple reports” of significant flooding and of persons trapped in vehicles in Orange county.

Hurdle to Ukraine Nato membership dropped as leaders gather



Banners reading ‘Ukraine’ and ‘Nato’ are seen on the Nato Summit venue in Vilnius, Lithuania. — AFP

VILNIUS: A key hurdle to Ukraine’s membership of Nato was lifted on Monday as leaders of the bloc gathered for a summit in Lithuania and Kyiv claimed it had made advances near Bakhmut.

A Western official said that the allies “are set” to drop the Membership Action Plan required for Ukraine’s application to join the alliance.

The breakthrough comes amid rare glimmers of disunity over Washington’s controversial decision to supply cluster bombs to Kyiv.

Ukraine’s foreign minister said the diplomatic move — which Moscow said would have serious consequences for European security — would shorten Kyiv’s path to Nato membership, even though Ukraine must still undertake reforms before joining.

“Nato allies have reached consensus on removing MAP from Ukraine’s path to membership,” Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said.

It came as Kyiv said its troops captured key heights around the eastern city of Bakhmut.

Deputy Defence Minister

China on Monday denounced the move as “irresponsible” and said it could lead to “humanitarian problems

Ganna Malyar said they had established fire control over the “entrances, exits and movement of the enemy around the city”.

Its military had earlier claimed to have recaptured 14 square kilometres from the Russians in the past week amid “heavy fighting” near Bakhmut.

But Russian shelling on Sunday of a humanitarian aid hub in the frontline Zaporizhzhia region killed four people, the local governor announced on Monday.

President Volodymyr Zelensky had voiced hope that Tuesday’s Nato summit in Vilnius would provide a “clear signal” that Kyiv could join the alliance once its

war with Russia is over.

Ahead of the meeting, the Western official who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that “MAP is just one of the steps in the Nato accession process... so even with its removal, Ukraine will still need to complete further reforms before joining Nato.”

White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday played down any rift between the two leaders and in Nato, saying that Biden and Sunak were “on the same page strategically on Ukraine”.

China on Monday denounced the move as “irresponsible” and said it could lead to “humanitarian problems”.

Meanwhile an aid hub in the town of Orikhiv in southern Ukraine was hit by Russian shelling, which killed three women and a man, regional governor Yuriy Malashko said on social media.

“They hit a humanitarian aid delivery spot in a residential area... Four people died on the spot: women aged 43, 45 and 47 and a 47-year-old man,” Malashko said, calling the attack “a war crime”. — AFP

Indian airport eyes foreign carriers to stay afloat

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

An international gateway for two Indian states is struggling to stay afloat after authorities refused to give permission to foreign carriers.

The Kannur International Airport or KIAL is beneficial for the people of Kerala state’s districts of Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikode, and some parts of neighbouring Karnataka state including Mangalore but is in dire straits triggering concerns of the shareholders, employees and travellers.

However, Vasudevan Thulasidas, former managing director of the fourth international airport of Kerala, said there is no room for worries as no airport has ever been closed in the world. He said several airlines like Emirates, Etihad, Qatar Airways, Saudi Airlines, Oman Air, Kuwait Airlines are interested in operating from here. Allowing them will be the easiest solution to save the airport.

“There’s no room for worries on a long term basis as nowhere in the world has any airport failed. The present issue is a temporary one and I’m pretty sure that the Government of India will realise that this airport is an asset to the nation generating income to the exchequer and they will change their policy by allowing international carriers to use the airport,” Thulasidas, who is now the Special Officer of Sabarimala International Airport Project.

“What caused the present predicament of the Kannur Airport is that although we were assured of permissions for international carriers in a couple of months after commencement, we were told by the Ministry of Civil Aviation that they were not in a position to allow KIAL to operate foreign carriers whereas it will remain an international gateway with only Indian carriers operating international sectors,” said Thulasidas.

“We had brought this factor to the attention of the MoCA secretary and the official assured



The Kannur International Airport is beneficial for the people of Kerala and Karnataka.

that they will assess the scenario in 6 months. But no action was visible till now. This was the primary reason why there were less number of flights and with less number of flights, fares to this sector naturally went high forcing passengers to abandon this airport because most of the passengers were with just average financial capacity,” Thulasidas.

Despite these issues, the airport, which was opened in Dec 2018, made huge profits by 2019 and it was a golden year for the airport as both domestic and international flights were operating from Kannur.

“We crossed 1 million passengers in this short period. If more were allowed to operate, the momentum would have been high.” For an airport, the majority of its revenue comes from international flight operations while domestic doesn’t bring in much money. And the revenue increases if the flights are wide bodied whereas domestic services and narrow bodied aircraft don’t fetch much.

Cargo operations gave KIAL upper hand as it promoted perishable cargo. Again, the quantity of cargo which can be carried on narrow bodied was less resulting in lower revenues.

When GoFirst stopped the services, it was another blow to the airport because majority of expatriates from the north Kerala and the nearby places were dependent on the carrier because it offered affordable rates.

“As if now, only Air India Express and Indigo are operating from Kannur. Air India used to operate from Kannur but after the privatisation, it stopped. Had GoFirst been operating from Kannur, it would have been a great respite for us.”

North Korea warns it may strike US spy planes

SEOUL: North Korea accused the United States on Monday of violating its airspace by conducting surveillance flights and warned that, while Pyongyang was exercising restraint, such flights may be shot down.

Provocative military actions by the United States were bringing the Korean peninsula closer to a nuclear conflict, said an unnamed spokesperson of North Korea’s Ministry of National Defence in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

The report also cited the use of US reconnaissance planes and drones and said Washington was escalating tensions by sending a nuclear submarine near the peninsula.

“There is no guarantee that such a shocking accident as the downing of the US Air Force strategic reconnaissance plane will not happen” in waters east of Korea, the spokesperson said.

The statement cited past incidents of the North shooting down or intercepting US aircraft at



Senior military officials watch a parade at the main Kim Il Sung square in Pyongyang. — Reuters file photo

the border with South Korea and off the coast. North Korea has often complained about US surveillance flights near the peninsula.

There was no immediate

response from the US military stationed in South Korea to a request for comment.

South Korea’s military said North Korea’s claim of airspace

violation is not true. It said US air surveillance assets conduct routine reconnaissance flights around the peninsula, adding the allies work closely together to monitor the

North.

The moves by the United States to introduce strategic nuclear assets to the Korean peninsula is “the most undisguised nuclear blackmail” against North Korea and regional countries and presents a grave threat to peace, KCNA said.

“Whether the extreme situation, desired by nobody, is created or not on the Korean peninsula depends on the future action of the US, and if any sudden situation happens ... the US will be held totally accountable for it,” it said.

Kim Yo Jong - the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un - said the country would respond decisively if the US military entered North Korea’s economic zone again, according to state media KCNA.

US and South Korean forces have been conducting air and navy drills this year that involved a US aircraft carrier and heavy bombers. A US nuclear-powered cruise missile submarine also made a port call at Busan in South Korea last month. — Reuters

Unleash the power of manifestation



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a neuro-transformational coach

In a world fraught with uncertainty, doubt and countless obstacles, it’s easy to lose sight of our dreams and aspirations. However, there is a powerful tool that lies within each and every one of us, waiting to be unlocked, which is the power of manifestation. This is the process of turning your thoughts, desires and beliefs into reality. It is the art of creating the life you truly desire by harnessing the power of your mind. In essence, manifestation is rooted in the belief that our thoughts have the ability to shape our reality, as what we consistently focus on and believe in has a way of materialising in our lives. By cultivating a positive mindset and directing our thoughts towards our goals, we can attract the people, opportunities and circumstances necessary to bring our dreams to fruition.

The first step in the process of manifestation is to gain clarity on what you truly desire. This involves taking the time to reflect on your goals, passions and aspirations. By clearly

defining what you want to manifest, you are creating a road-map for your subconscious mind to follow. The more specific and detailed you are, the clearer the path becomes. Once you have a clear vision, follow through with believing in the possibility of its realisation. This is where the power of positive thinking comes into play. By cultivating a mindset of unwavering belief in your dreams, you will begin to align your thoughts and emotions with the energy of what you want to manifest. This positive energy acts as a magnet attracting the resources, opportunities and people needed to support your journey. Visualisation is a powerful tool in the process of manifestation. Take time each day to vividly imagine yourself already living your desired reality. Engage your senses and immerse yourself in the emotions of achievement and fulfilment. The subconscious mind cannot differentiate between what is real and what is imagined, so by consistently visualising your goals, you are programming your mind to

BY CULTIVATING A POSITIVE MINDSET AND DIRECTING OUR THOUGHTS TOWARDS OUR GOALS, WE CAN ATTRACT THE PEOPLE, OPPORTUNITIES AND CIRCUMSTANCES NECESSARY TO BRING OUR DREAMS TO FRUITION.

attract the corresponding experiences into your life. Manifestation is not a quick fix nor a guarantee of immediate results. Patience, perseverance and resilience are key qualities to cultivate along the journey. There will be setbacks, challenges and moments of doubt, but it is during these times that your unwavering belief and determination will be put to the test. Trust the process, stay focused on your vision and continue to take inspired action. The power of manifestation is a profound tool that allows us to tap into our potential for success. Through clarifying our goals, cultivating positive beliefs, visualising our desired outcomes, taking continuous action and embracing patience and perseverance, we have the ability to shape our reality to create the life we truly desire. Here’s to dreaming big, believing in the strength of your thoughts and unleashing the power of manifestation to create the life of your dreams.

‘Teflon’ Dutch PM finally comes unstuck

The Dutch dubbed him “Teflon Mark” because scandals always slid off him like pancakes from a non-stick pan. But Mark Rutte, the Netherlands’ longest-serving leader and current second-longest-serving EU leader, has now come unstuck. The 56-year-old leader of the centre-right VVD party stunned parliament on Monday by announcing that he would leave politics after elections, following the collapse of his coalition government in a row over migration. The stalwart of European politics had survived a previous resignation and multiple re-elections due to his backroom skills and his “Mr Normal” image. Rutte made a characteristically low-key arrival to tender his resignation to the Dutch king on Saturday, driving himself in his humble Saab station wagon. One slight surprise on that occasion was that he did not arrive on his bike, as he had done for previous meetings with King Willem-Alexander. But the big surprise was that this skilled political operator had fallen by a crisis of his own making, with elections not due for another couple of years. Rutte’s demands for a limit on family reunifications for asylum seekers always looked like it would be too much for his coalition partners. Dutch media said he had been playing to hardliners in his own party who wanted a tougher stance on migration. The youngest of seven children, his father Izaak was a trader, while his mother Mieke was the sister of Izaak’s first wife, who died in a Japanese internment camp in World War II.

Rutte initially wanted to be a concert pianist, but after attending the prestigious Leiden University he joined the Anglo-Dutch consumer giant Unilever, where he spent a stint at its peanut butter division, Calve. A fan of British leaders Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher, Rutte finally went into politics with the pro-business VVD (People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy). Rutte became premier in 2010 and immediately showed what critics called a willingness to sacrifice principle for power, entering a coalition supported by the firebrand anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders that later collapsed. Wilders failed to unseat Rutte despite several attempts. But critics said Rutte only managed to do so by pandering to the same anti-immigration rhetoric, with the issue now casting its shadow over his party once again. Rutte finally seemed to come unstuck in 2021, when his coalition resigned over a scandal in which thousands of parents, many from ethnic minority backgrounds, were falsely accused of childcare subsidy fraud. — AFP

MANY PATIENTS SAY THEY AVOID SWEETS TO HELP FIGHT THE DISEASE. BUT WHILE A HEALTHY DIET IS IMPORTANT, YOU CAN’T “STARVE A TUMOUR.”

Does sugar actually feed cancer?

CONNIE CHANG

During the eight years Stacy Shawhan has worked as an oncology dietitian, she has heard many questions from her cancer patients about how their diets influence their prognosis. But one question has come up more than the rest: Will consuming sugary foods and drinks feed my cancer cells, making my condition worse? “Cancer patients are so vulnerable, and some of them are terrified to eat,” said Shawhan, who practices at the University of Cincinnati Cancer Center. “They think, ‘If I stop eating sugar, then I can starve my cancer.’” The “sugar feeds cancer” narrative goes back to the 1920s, when a German physiologist noticed that some tumour cells consumed more glucose than healthy cells did. Soon after, low-sugar diets sprang up claiming to cure cancer. Recent polls from the United States and Europe suggest about a third of cancer patients actively avoid sugar. While experts say that diets high in added sugars may increase your risk of cancer over a lifetime, cutting out all sugars doesn’t actually fight existing tumours. “Every cell requires glucose, our brain requires glucose,” said Philipp Scherer, a diabetes researcher at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. In other words, the best way to eat if you have cancer — or are trying to lower your risk of getting it — is with a balanced, healthy diet. Sugar isn’t a carcinogen, Dr Scherer said. There’s no evidence showing that eating sugar will cause cancer itself (like, say, smoking cigarettes would). Besides, Dr Scherer added, “many, many cancers prefer to use fat as their primary energy source, so even the idea that cancers prefer glucose isn’t quite true.” Still, a limited yet growing body of evidence has linked the overconsumption of added sugars (the kind found in cookies, cakes and soft drinks) to cancer. For example, a large review of studies published in 2018 cited several that linked added sugar and sugary beverage consumption to an increase in cancer risk. Excess sugar consumption has been shown to spark chronic inflammation



in some people, which can damage cells that may then become cancerous, Shawhan said. Overconsumption of added sugars has also been shown to lower immunity, which can allow cancer cells to more easily spread. And consuming excess sugar can alter metabolism in ways that may lead to obesity and diabetes, conditions known to increase the odds of getting cancer. Once you’re diagnosed with cancer, eliminating sugar doesn’t seem to slow or halt cancer growth in most cases, Shawhan said. “By this point, it is not sugar intake that is driving cancer growth, but the cancer itself.” Additionally, sugar is essential for most living things, Dr Scherer said. And when it occurs naturally in foods like dairy products, fruits and vegetables, it’s part of a healthy diet, said Natalie Ledesma, an oncology dietitian at the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. For the most part, experts agree that there’s no need to abstain from sugars that appear in whole foods. But Ledesma notes that consuming excess added sugar has been associated with worse outcomes — including higher mortality rates — in patients with certain solid tumours like breast, colon and prostate cancers. Other cancers may also be impacted, she said, but research on rarer cancer types has been limited. It’s also important that cancer patients manage their diets without becoming afraid of food, said Dr Santosh Rao, an integrative oncologist

at University Hospitals Connor Whole Health in Cleveland. Up to half experience muscle loss as a result of their disease. And sometimes things that doctors recommend for patients during rounds of gruelling treatments — like Ensure, electrolyte drinks or even potatoes — can contain a lot of sugars, Shawhan said. While all people should avoid diets high in added sugars, cancer patients with certain metabolic diseases should be especially vigilant because those diseases can affect their prognosis. “Patients with poorly controlled diabetes tend to have more aggressive breast cancer,” for example, said Dr. Rao. And a meta-analysis suggested obese patients were more likely to die from colon, breast and uterine cancers. The best way to lower your cancer risk, and to eat if you have a cancer diagnosis, is to follow a healthy diet that has plenty of whole fruits and vegetables. Mediterranean diets meet these goals and help reduce cancer risk, some studies show. Pairing carbohydrates with protein, fibre and fat (a dab of peanut butter on an apple slice, for example) prevents spikes in glucose that can, over time, wreak havoc on our metabolism and increase cancer risk. Generally speaking, Shawhan said, it’s OK to indulge in a little added sugar, even on a daily basis, as long as you’re getting essential nutrients from the rest of your diet. — *The New York Times*

Implications, challenges of the IPEF

Ever since May 2023, when the-14 member Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) reached an agreement on strengthening the resilience of supply chains, a crucial aspect of the framework's second pillar, an intense debate has been ignited within academia and media regarding its feasibility and implications.

For obvious reasons, scholars and commentators have delved into the potential ramifications and explored various perspectives on the matter. Some have scrutinised the practicality of implementing the agreement, while others have examined the potential economic and geopolitical implications it may entail.

While the final text of the IPEF Supply Chain Agreement is yet to be unveiled to the media, initial indications have partially revealed its main features, suggesting the creation of broad-spectrum regulations and institutional mechanisms. The success of this agreement hinges on its implementation, with a particular focus on delineating tangible measures and possibly establishing specialised projects to propel further advancements.

Launched by US President Joe Biden in May 2022 during a Quad Summit in Tokyo, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) is a coalition of India, Australia, Brunei, Fiji, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The official declared IPEF objective is to establish a shared framework based on four key pillars: connectivity and digital trade, resilient supply chains, clean energy, and corruption-free fair trade. But the IPEF is generally viewed as the United States' strategic response to its perceived retreat from the Asia-Pacific region during the Trump era, symbolised by the withdrawal from the ambitious Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

Apparently, the IPEF is a move by the Biden administration to counter China's increasing sway in the Indo-Pacific



Dr Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

THE SUCCESS OF THIS AGREEMENT HINGES ON ITS IMPLEMENTATION, WITH A PARTICULAR FOCUS ON DELINEATING TANGIBLE MEASURES AND POSSIBLY ESTABLISHING SPECIALIZED PROJECTS TO PROPEL FURTHER ADVANCEMENTS.

region. With the IPEF, the United States aims to expand its economic leadership in the region while advancing its foreign policy and economic interests. Through strategic partnerships with member countries, the US seeks to enhance the development of supply chains and promote regional connectivity in both physical and digital realms.

The global response from the business community, trade experts, and civil society has been a mixed bag. While some hailed this agreement as a comprehensive accord aimed at tackling supply chain vulnerabilities, critics were quick to highlight its lack of substantial action and enforceable commitments.

Instead of concrete measures, the agreement appears to prioritise a process-driven framework, raising doubts about its effectiveness in delivering tangible results. This disparity in reactions underscores the scepticism surrounding the IPEF's approach. Septics argue that a focus on building frameworks and institutions without substantive actions may fall short in addressing the pressing challenges faced by global supply chains. The absence of binding commitments raises concerns about the agreement's ability to bring about meaningful change and protect labour rights in an increasingly interconnected and vulnerable economic landscape.

Ironically, the current structure of the framework falls short in providing substantive specifics. This has lent weight to the prevailing belief among Washington insiders and regional power centres that the Biden Administration faces challenges in fleshing out the substantive components of the IPEF. The IPEF agreement on supply chain faces its most pressing challenge in its inability to offer tangible market access advantages to regional nations. Southeast Asian and South Asian developing countries eagerly anticipate exporting their agricultural and manufactured goods to the United States. Under the pressure of the United States, the IPEF has deliberately omitted any discussion of market access, a matter of critical importance to the ASEAN countries.

BEAT THE HEAT



A couple takes pictures with an umbrella along the Spanish Steps during a heatwave across Italy, in Rome on Monday. – Reuters

What the last attack on Jenin tells us about Israel now

Our screens are filled once again with images of weeping women, children, and the elderly marching down the street with their hands raised or waving white garments from slow-moving vehicles. Palestinians have seen this before, having lived through a long history of expulsions from their homes and villages under the threat of fire.

The newest images came in last week during the Israeli invasion of the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank. Reporters and ambulances of the Palestinian Red Crescent, which struggled to reach the injured, were impeded by military obstacles.

At a Fourth of July event in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that the Israeli Army had attacked “the most legitimate target on the planet — people who would annihilate our country.” He was referring to months of armed resistance against Israeli settlers by young men in the Jenin refugee camp.

More than 20 years ago, another right-wing prime minister, Ariel Sharon, led an extensive military campaign against the same refugee camp. It was two years into the second Palestinian uprising. Palestinian suicide bombers, some of whom hailed from Jenin, had rocked Israeli streets. In response, the



Tareq Baconi,

Tareq Baconi is the author of Hamas Contained.

TODAY, THERE IS NO NEED FOR ISRAELI OFFICIALS TO SUGARCOAT THEIR POLICIES FOR FEAR OF DIPLOMATIC REPRISAL, OR TO MITIGATE AGAINST THE PRESUMPTION OF EVENTUAL PARTITION.

Israeli Army invaded the West Bank and ravaged the Jenin refugee camp, then, as now, a centre of Palestinian resistance.

The two invasions unfolded in vastly different contexts. Between 2002 and 2023, the illusion of partitioning the land into two states disintegrated. It exists now only in diplomatic talking points, hollowed out of all meaning, and replaced by a consensus among international and Israeli human rights organisations, including B'Tselem, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, that Israel is practicing the crime of apartheid against Palestinians, vindicating what Palestinians have long believed.

For most Jewish Israelis, this shift is barely perceptible, as they continue to be effectively sheltered from the cost of their government's policies toward Palestinians. The Palestinians, meanwhile, are experiencing growing despair and fatigue, ground down by the daily structural violence. With the absence of any hope for statehood, and with no viable political leadership to lead the struggle, some take matters into their own hands through armed and unarmed forms of resistance, others

are apathetic or preoccupied with the crippling effort to support their families, and many live in fear.

In 2002, though round after round of American-mediated negotiations had faltered, there was still the hope — and the expectation — that a peace process would resume. The two-state solution was touted as the only option for peace. The framework of territorial partition — that Israel would withdraw from the territories it had occupied in 1967 in exchange for peace with the Palestinians and its Arab neighbours — was the dominant policymaking approach.

But as the Second Intifada came to an end, Israel intensified practical measures to expand its occupation and undermine the two-state solution while maintaining the diplomatic pretence of engaging with peace efforts. With the financing of Western and Arab donors, Israel pacified the West Bank with neoliberal incentives even as it hollowed out the core of its economy and carved up the Palestinian territory with expanding settlements. It implemented security coordination measures with the Palestinian Authority, turning the Palestinian

government into a key partner for managing local resistance. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, initiated an expansive state-building agenda as it sought to project an image of an authority with control, one that was setting the foundations of a future Palestinian state.

Under Sharon, Israel also unilaterally reconfigured its occupation of the Gaza Strip, dismantling its settlements and initiating a territorial disengagement that proponents of the two-state solution celebrated — perhaps genuinely, but naïvely — as a step toward peace, one that demonstrated the possibility of Israeli territorial withdrawal paving the way for eventual Palestinian rule. Like Jenin, the Gaza Strip also has a history of resistance against Israeli occupation. With Hamas's rise to power in 2006, Israel, in coordination with Egypt, tightened a hermetic blockade on the strip, effectively severing it from the rest of Palestine, and experimented with military techniques to force the population into submission.

Alongside food restriction policies and an economic chokehold, this took the form of devastating military assaults. The

military referred to this doctrine as “mowing the lawn,” the approach of using disproportionate military force to periodically weaken Palestinian resistance and manage a restive population chafing against Israeli control.

Last week, Israel turned this military approach, perfected in the Gaza Strip, onto the West Bank, as it cordoned off the refugee camp in Jenin, pummeled it from the air and ground and destroyed crucial infrastructure for water and electricity as a form of collective punishment.

In the time between the two invasions of Jenin, Palestinians throughout the West Bank have been systematically funnelled — through land expropriation, home demolitions and expansion of settlements — into isolated urban centres surrounded by land occupied by Israel. Just like Gaza, most urban centres in the West Bank can now be, overnight, entirely severed from the ecosystem around them, as was witnessed in Jenin. Today, there is no need for Israeli officials to sugarcoat their policies for fear of diplomatic reprisal, or to mitigate against the presumption of eventual partition.

— The New York Times

sport

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Strong start for Oman Sail at Arab Games

MUSCAT: Oman's sailing squad has made a promising start to competition at the 2023 Pan Arab Games in Algeria, with five of the seven sailors in the top three places across all classes and two more performing strongly in a hotly-contested fleet.

Making the most of the ideal conditions and wind speeds of between 8-12 knots, Hassan Nasser al Wahaibi leads the Optimist, with teammates Tamim Suleiman al Balushi in second and Feras bin Haitham al Nabhani in third. Just three points separates the top three at the top of the leader board. Soud bin Talib al Shaqsi is currently in fifth place, just two points behind fourth.

Omani sailors Hatim bin Mohsin al Orami is currently third in the ILCA 4 competition, just five points behind the leader. Teammate Abdullatif bin Zaid al



Qasmi ended the day in fifth, one point back and just six points from top.

In the ILCA7, the impressive

Abdulla Janahi of Bahrain leads the way with a perfect score from the six races so far. Oman's Ahmed bin Hassan al Balushi is currently in third place after he and Adil Khaled fom UAE in second both encountered difficulties in the last race of the day.

The seven Omani sailors have joined over 3,800 athletes from 18 countries at the 15th edition of the Pan Arab Games. The team is being trained by coaches Sultan al Zadjali and Munther al Kindi, and Abdulaziz al Shidi has been selected to be part of the Technical Committee team alongside Nawaf al Ghadani who is part of the Jury Committee Team for the event.

Commenting after the opening series of races, Sultan al Zadjali said, "We are very pleased with our performance so far. The team has started well and remains in contention for medals at the end of

the week. We have a lot of work to do, and the fleet is strong, but we will do our best and see where we stand on the final day."

Ahmed al Balushi, currently third in the ILCA7 competition, added, "I had been improving after the first race on day one and carried that into the second day, but then had a setback. Sport is about learning and getting better, and I will use this experience to be stronger tomorrow and finish as high as I can. It is a great honour to represent Oman and I want to do my best."

As well as gaining invaluable competition experience, the Omani sailors are also in the middle of preparing for the Oman Sailing Championship in Ras Al Hadd from 24-28 August, and this year's Al Musannah Race Week which will be held at Barceló Mussanah Resort from 18 to 24 of October.



Oman Racing finishes seventh in Monza race

MONZA: Round five of the FIA World Endurance Championship ultimately proved to be a frustrating race for Ahmad al Harthy and Oman Racing with TF Sport at Monza in Italy on Sunday, 9th July, with a top speed performance disparity ending the team's recent run of podium form.

Delivering an excellent strategy and with Al Harthy producing a very competitive and well-judged first couple of hours behind the wheel of the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage, in the middle part of the race the Balance of Performance difference to the rival Porsche and Ferrari entries proved too great.

In the end, Al Harthy, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood fought as hard as possible but the challenge was insurmountable against cars which had a clear top speed advantage all weekend at the renowned flat-out track. Seventh position was the best the trio could achieve.

Having qualified an unexpected second fastest, Al Harthy took the start of the race at 12.30 local time and the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS backed racer made a good launch to maintain second in GTE Am.



Soaking up immense pressure early on from the No.83 Ferrari 488 GTE Evo, the Omani was unflappable with three quicker cars queuing up behind.

Around a quarter of an hour into the encounter, the Aston Martin slipped to third after

a successful challenge by the No.33 Chevrolet Corvette C8.R. Al Harthy then kept a good gap to fourth, before following the Corvette into the pits at the 30-minute mark.

Emerging ahead of the rival car, Al Harthy was sixth on the

road and the first of those to have made a pit-stop at that point and he soon moved back through to fourth around one hour into the race. As the differing strategies played out, Al Harthy climbed into the lead in hour two and then made his second stop with

90 minutes gone – holding a 16 second cushion prior to the pit visit. After a quick turnaround he threaded back into the race in fifth and then moved into fourth when another of the front-runners served their second stop. Within eight seconds of the

Corvette at the end of the second hour, just a few minutes later the Safety Car was required and soon after that the Omani moved up into third place, then second as a couple of rivals pitted.

Racing resumed with just over two hours and 15 minutes elapsed and Al Harthy assumed the lead when the Corvette pitted, before then heading for pitlane himself the next time around to cap a very strong double stint over 70 laps.

Dinan climbed behind the wheel for his first race mileage and settled in to third position, moving into second later in hour three before being edged back to fourth. As the halfway point of the race was reached Dinan remained in fourth, but the heat of battle increased as the speed advantage of the other front-runners began to tell.

Over the course of a very long and thankless final three hours, Dinan and then Eastwood did all they could through their respective stints but the Oman Racing with TF Sport car took the chequered flag in eighth position. Post-race, a penalty for a rival entry elevated them into seventh place.



India eye WTC boost from struggling Windies

ROSEAU, Dominica: India's latest quest for an elusive World Test Championship title gets under way on Wednesday in the lush tropical setting of Windsor Park Stadium in Dominica against a West Indies team expected to struggle to cope with the formidable challenge presented by the visitors in the two-match series.

Rocked by the failure of the two-time winners to qualify for the 50-over-a-side World Cup in India in October-November this year, the Caribbean cricket community is unlikely to find solace in the shape of Kraigg Brathwaite's side in seeking to end a barren run of 21 years without a single Test match victory against the Indians.

This brief series, which ends in Trinidad the following week in what will be the 100th Test between the two teams, marks the start of the next two-year WTC cycle leading to the final in 2025.

Beaten by New Zealand in the inaugural final in 2021 and then outplayed by Australia in the 2023 decider just four weeks ago, Rohit Sharma's team is likely to show no more than three changes from the side that lost the new Test cricket showpiece by 209 runs at The Oval in London.

With veteran batsman Cheteshwar Pujara dropped and pacer Mohammed Shami rested, there are now opportunities for either of the uncapped Yashasvi Jaiswal or Rituraj Gaikwad to make the number three spot their own while it will be a toss-up between Jaydev Unadkat and

Navdeep Saini to fill the breach in the fast bowling department.

Spinning all-rounder Ravichandran Ashwin, unlucky to have been omitted from last month's duel with Australia, should have the chance to add to his already impressive record against the West Indies.

In 11 Tests against these opponents he has taken 60 wickets and compiled four of his five Test centuries in averaging just over 50 with the bat.

As disconsolate as they may be by the West Indies' failure to advance to the World Cup, fans in Dominica are anticipating that one of their own, 24-year-old Alick Athanaze, will make his Test debut in the series opener in the middle-order in place of fellow left-hander Kyle Mayers.

While Mayers has been ruled out of contention due to niggling injuries, two other players who were part of the West Indies' abysmal World Cup qualifying campaign in Zimbabwe over the previous three weeks - all-rounder Jason Holder and fast bowler Alzarri Joseph - are expected to shoulder much of the responsibility to quell the threat of a formidable Indian batting line-up.

Senior pacer Kemar Roach will still lead the attack though, while the decision on whether or not to go with two specialist spinners in Jomel Warrican and the recalled Rahkeem Cornwall or opt for the raw pace but questionable fitness of Shannon Gabriel will be determined by the appearance of the pitch on Wednesday morning. — AFP

US beat Canada on penalties, join Jamaica in Gold Cup semis

MIAMI: The United States beat Canada 3-2 on penalties after their CONCACAF Gold Cup quarterfinal ended 2-2 following extra-time in Cincinnati.

The USA will now face Panama on Wednesday in their semifinal in Las Vegas while the other tie will see Jamaica take on Mexico.

The Reggae Boyz overcame a determined Guatemala 1-0 to reach the CONCACAF Gold Cup semifinal on Sunday thanks to Amari'i Bell's 51st-minute goal.

A lackluster encounter between the tournament-favourite Americans and John Herdman's Canada came alive in the 88th minute. US substitute Brandon Vazquez, playing on his home ground where he performs for FC Cincinnati, rose magnificently to head in a deep cross from the left by DeJuan Jones.

But there was still time for Canada to respond in stoppage time when, after a VAR review, the referee pointed to the penalty spot and Steven Vitoria kept his cool to convert.

The Canadians, who had not won against the USA on American soil since 1957, then grabbed the lead in the first period of extra-time with a brilliant solo goal from Jacob Shaffelburg.

The left-winger, who plays in Major League Soccer for Nashville, picked the ball up in midfield, raced clear of Jesus Ferreira and then unleashed a left-foot drive that deflected off Matt Miazga on the way to the far corner. But the USA found a way to force the game to penalties with a fortunate goal six minutes from the end of the second extra period. A long ball high into the box from goalkeeper Matt Turner was headed down by Miazga and Gianluca Busio's shot was parried out by Dayne St. Clair and flew in off the leg of Canadian defender Scott Kennedy.

American keeper Matt Turner saved the first spot kick from Vitoria but then Vazquez skied his effort high over the bar.

Arsenal's Turner, a penalty saving specialist, then kept out



a soft effort from Liam Fraser before Cade Cowell finally found the net for the USA.

There were no further misses until the contest was settled when, needing to score to keep the shoot-out alive, Charles-Andreas Brym blasted his kick against the bar. USA interim head coach B.J. Callaghan, who remains unbeaten, said his team had shown the right spirit to rise to the occasion.

"There are the moments, these are the high stakes, high impact games that we are looking to play because they test the character of the group and tonight we showed up," he told Fox Sports.

Jamaica have now reached the semifinal stage in four of the past

five Gold Cups and have a chance to make their first appearance in the final since 2017.

It was a frantic start with the Central American side buzzing around the field and there was an early chance for Guatemala's American-born striker Rubio Rubin, but his low shot was comfortably dealt with by Andre Blake. Full-back Aaron Herrera had another chance for Guatemala, the ball falling to him in space outside the box, but he was unable to get over the rising ball and blasted his effort high.

It was one of Jamaica's Premier League contingent who created the breakthrough with Everton's Demarai Gray showing his close control and awareness as he

threaded a defence-splitting pass to Bell, who drilled home from the inside-left channel.

Leon Bailey then brought an excellent save from close range out of Nicholas Hagen, the Guatemala goalkeeper's left leg denying the Aston Villa winger.

But Jamaica had their 'keeper Blake to thank for a full-stretch save that kept out a header from Alejandro Galindo which was heading to the top corner.

"It's an amazing feeling to get to the semifinal. It's something we set out to do, but we don't want to stop there. We are going to keep on going and go and win the tournament," said Bell, who plays for promoted Premier League club Luton Town. — AFP

Djokovic on brink of quarters as Rybakina advances

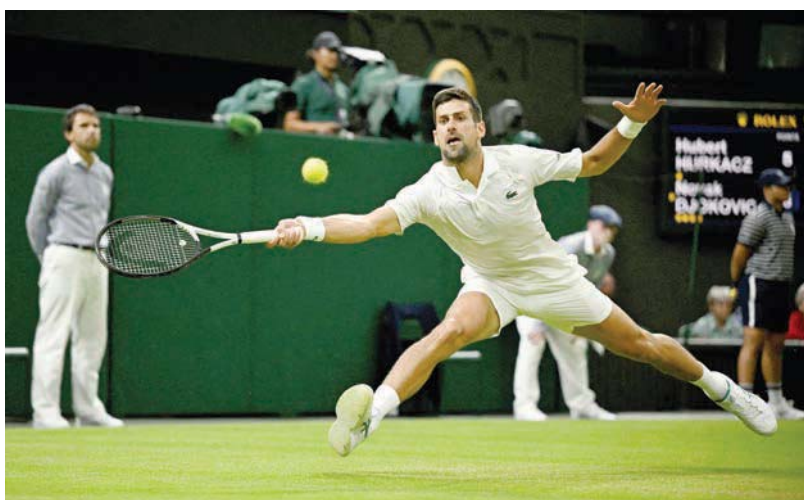
LONDON: Novak Djokovic was on the brink of his 14th Wimbledon quarterfinal on Monday as Spanish sensation Carlos Alcaraz prepared for a testing battle against Matteo Berrettini.

In early action, Russian teen sensation Mirra Andreieva lost to US 25th seed Madison Keys while defending women's champion Elena Rybakina progressed when Beatriz Haddad Maia quit in tears.

World number three Daniil Medvedev reached his first Wimbledon quarterfinal when Czech opponent Jiri Lehecka retired with an injury.

Seven-time champion Djokovic was two sets up against Hubert Hurkacz when play was halted on Sunday ahead of a locally agreed 11:00 pm curfew.

The pair were set to resume on Monday with the winner to face Andrey Rublev for a place in the semifinals.



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during his fourth round match against Poland's Hubert Hurkacz. — Reuters

Defending champion Djokovic is chasing a record-equalling eighth title at the All England Club and 24th career Grand Slam crown.

Top seed Alcaraz is seen as one of the few genuine threats to the defending champion, who has not lost a match on Centre Court for 10 years.

The 20-year-old has little

experience on grass but won last month's tournament at Queen's to set himself up for a tilt at the Wimbledon title.

He comes up against the dangerous Berrettini, who reached the 2021 final, in the last match of the day on Centre Court.

Berrettini, ranked 38th, was forced to miss last year's Wimbledon after testing positive



Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in action before retiring from her fourth round match against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina after sustaining an injury. — Reuters

for Covid and has subsequently struggled with an abdominal injury.

He is desperate to make up for lost time and said he was relishing the opportunity to take on Alcaraz, who won the Queen's tournament on grass last month.

"In a way it's what you want, right? You want to play against the best players in the world. Playing

against Carlos, it's always been like a pleasure, a fight, a great fight."

- Fairytale ends -

The first result of the day was on No. 2 Court, where 16-year-old Andreieva's fairytale run was brought to an end.

The teenager, who came through qualifying, looked set for a place in the quarterfinals when leading Keys by a set and 4-1 but

the American fought back to win 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2.

The match ended in controversy when Andreieva was handed a penalty point for banging her racquet into the surface.

The sanction took Keys to match point.

In the first match on Centre Court, Rybakina was 3-1 up when Brazilian world number 13 Haddad Maia took a medical timeout to treat a lower back injury.

She limped back onto the court but was reduced to walking pace and was in tears as she saw out the fifth game before retiring.

"It's never easy to finish a match like this. I hope it is nothing really serious, it is really unlucky for Beatriz," said Rybakina.

The world number three will face either two-time champion Petra Kvitova or 2022 runner-up Ons Jabeur for a place in the semifinals. — AFP

SMILING POGACAR READY FOR TOUR PART TWO AND MIND GAMES WITH VINGEGAARD

CLERMONT FERRAND: Pressure seems to slide off Tadej Pogacar like water off a duck's back as the two-time champion heads into the second block of racing in the Tour de France locked in a duel with title holder Jonas Vingegaard.

The Slovenian took fresh momentum into the second rest day after gaining another eight seconds on Sunday over Vingegaard, who was dropped twice in the final two mountain stages after being the first to draw blood in the Pyrenees.

Five more mountain stages are on the menu and Vingegaard hinted he would have an edge over his rival in the longer climbs of the Alps -- a suggestion that Pogacar laughed off on Monday.

"We will see in the Alps who it suits better," the 24-year-old said with a smile.

"I also like the Alps stages. I think every year I improve on the longer climbs and in the heat so we need to wait and see who will like it more."

Overall, Pogacar trails yellow jersey holder Vingegaard by 17 seconds and while the Danish rider remains confident that his advantage should see him win another title in Paris, the UAE Emirates rider believes the third week of the Tour could be his.

"I'm not at all worried about the last week. I actually should be better than in the first week," said Pogacar, whose preparations were hampered after he suffered a wrist fracture last April.

Asked if he was surprised that his form was so good despite his misfortune in the spring, Pogacar said: "What surprised me was when I lost time on Marie Blaque (in the first Pyrenean stage) but I knew that I was good coming into the Tour and I should not be surprised by my performances in the last days."

WISER THAN IN THE PAST

Vingegaard's Jumbo Visma team believe Sunday's effort in the final part of the Puy de Dome climb (4km at 11.7 per cent) was Pogacar's best



Tadej Pogacar cycles to the finish line to win the 6th stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France. — AFP

We will see in the Alps who it suits better...I also like the Alps stages. I think every year I improve on the longer climbs and in the heat so we need to wait and see who will like it more

TADEJ POGACAR

performance ever in terms of data, but the Slovenian hinted he had already done better at training, saying he could also do better in the racing environment.

"They don't know all my training or race data," he said.

"They don't know my weight and a lot (of other things) about me so they can only assume but I can tell you this one (on Sunday) was good but it could be better."

Pogacar will resume the race without extra pressure, and also a bit wiser than he has been in the past when he would launch long-range attacks and pay a heavy price for some early efforts.

"I have more pressure now that we're deeper into the Tour but racing the Tour when you don't have to defend the title makes a big difference," he said.

Behind Pogacar and Vingegaard, the other big guns are already racing for the lowest step on the podium.

Third-placed Jai Hindley of Australia trails Vingegaard by two minutes and 40 seconds with Spain's Carlos Rodriguez in fourth, 1:42 behind the 2022 Giro d'Italia winner.

Three Britons, Adam Yates and his brother Simon, and Tom Pidcock are fifth, sixth and seventh overall, respectively.

French hopes of a podium finish on the Champs Elysees took a major blow as David Gaudu was again unable to follow the big guns and dropped to eighth overall, 6:01 off the pace. — Reuters

Five talking points from week one of Tour de France

ORCINES, France: The Tour de France has been a breathless, action-packed affair so far since the race set off from the Spanish Basque country.

Here, AFP Sport takes a look at five of the best talking points to emerge from the first nine stages:

Yates twins duel Britain's Yates twins stole the show on stage one. The pair broke away late to contest a family-dominated finale. Adam, by 30 minutes the younger of the two, pulled away from his brother Simon to grab the first overall

leader's yellow jersey.

"I'll stick it to him in a couple of days," Simon Yates, of Australian team Alula, said after the race.

Philipsen stars Jasper Philipsen has dominated the bunch sprints in the early stages of the race with three clear stage wins, albeit garnered with some questionable manoeuvres that kept the race commissaire busy.

Philipsen is the current leader of the green jersey sprint points rankings and looks far from finished.

But the Belgian's Alpecin-Deceuninck team director Christoph Roodhooft said he was even more proud of how much work his other superstar, Mathieu van der Poel, had done to help Philipsen.

"If we're proud of anything it would have to be that," he said of Van der Poel's selfless efforts to get Philipsen in position to strike. The Dutch rider won Paris-Roubaix and the Milan-San Remo earlier this season.

Yellow jersey battle The Tour de France was billed as a straight fight between the

defending champion Jonas Vingegaard and two-time former winner Tadej Pogacar and the pair have battled out a tit-for-tat struggle so far.

Slovenian Pogacar often launches late attacks that seem to annoy Vingegaard. "The Tour won't be won by a few seconds," the Dane said.

Vingegaard leads by only 17 seconds after stage nine, where Pogacar clawed back a few seconds for a second time after the champion dropped his rival to gain 53 seconds on him in Laruns.

Volcano steals the show The Basque country's rolling hills provided an enthralling setting for the opening three stages, and the vineyards of Bordeaux and the final 3km along the banks of the Garonne on stage six also provided a breathtaking backdrop.

But the Puy de Dome volcano on stage nine was more spectacular than the race itself, where outsider Michael Woods won the day as the peloton kept their powder dry. Any predicted eruption in the overall title shake-up will now

have to wait for the Alps.

Agony for Cavendish At 38 years old, British sprinter Mark Cavendish was bidding to go one better than Eddy Merckx by establishing an all-time record of 35 stage wins at the Tour de France.

He hit the highest speed of the Tour, but was denied the record by a charging Philipsen in the seventh stage, before a broken collarbone sustained in a crash the following day put the Manx Missile in an ambulance rather than on the top step of the podium. — AFP



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Oil and gas earnings buoy Oman revenue to RO 5.463 bn

Positive trends in oil market and strategic initiatives shape fiscal outlook as surplus and revenue soar, paving the way for improved social spending and debt reduction

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JULY 10

The Ministry of Finance has unveiled in its latest report on Oman's fiscal performance that revenue climbed 3 per cent to reach RO 5.463 billion for the Jan – May 2023 period, reflecting a steady growth trajectory compared to the previous year's

figure of RO 5.325 billion. This growth can be attributed to the significant contributions of key budget items, particularly net oil revenue amounting to RO 2.810 billion, net gas revenue at RO 1.003 billion, and current revenue totalling RO 1.644 billion. The government's prudent financial management has also led to a significant increase in public spending, rising by 4% from RO 4.694 billion during Jan – May 2022 to RO 4.882 billion for the corresponding period in 2023. This strategic allocation of resources demonstrates the government's commitment to promoting development and addressing critical societal needs.

Furthermore, the state budget achieved a surplus of RO 581 million for the first five months of this year. Although slightly lower compared to the surplus of RO 631 million in 2022, this surplus will be strategically utilised to implement a liability management exercise, reduce public debt, and bolster social spending initiatives. The positive performance indicators are underpinned by favourable dynamics in the oil market. The average oil price per barrel has risen from \$82 in 2022 to \$84 in 2023, accompanied by an increase in daily oil production from 1,034 thousand barrels to

1,064 thousand barrels. These upward trends have played a pivotal role in boosting the nation's fiscal performance and setting the stage for economic growth. With this surplus and revenue growth, the government is now poised to allocate resources effectively and embark on strategic initiatives to address key national priorities. By focusing on targeted social spending, the government aims to improve citizens' well-being and enhance public services. Simultaneously, efforts to reduce public debt through liability management exercises will ensure long-term financial stability and sustainability.

Oman leverages strategic location and neutrality to boost economic growth

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 10

The Sultanate of Oman has a long history of being a seafaring nation and a trade hub, connecting Asia, Africa and Europe. Eng Said al Maawali, Oman's Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, spoke to Bloomberg Media's Managing Director for Europe, Duncan Chater, about how the country is using its strategic location and geopolitical neutrality to boost its economic growth and diversification. Speaking at a conference hosted by Bloomberg on the theme 'Foreign Direct Investment: Scaling New Heights', Al Maawali said that the country has invested \$26 billion in developing its logistics infrastructure, such as roads, ports and airports, to enhance its capabilities and reach more than 200 destinations worldwide. "The country's short-term goal is to maximise the utilisation of these assets and increase the contribution of logistics to the GDP from 5% to more than 10% by 2040," he noted. He added that the country is pursuing five key sectors for diversification, namely logistics, manufacturing, tourism, fisheries

THE COUNTRY'S SHORT-TERM GOAL IS TO MAXIMISE THE UTILISATION OF THESE ASSETS AND INCREASE THE CONTRIBUTION OF LOGISTICS TO THE GDP FROM 5% TO MORE THAN 10% BY 2040

and mining. These sectors have high potential for value addition, job creation and export promotion. He said that Oman is also working on developing its digital economy and innovation ecosystem, as well as improving its human capital and skills. Al Maawali also highlighted Oman's role as a peacemaker and a mediator in the region, which has been plagued by conflicts and tensions. He said that Oman's long-standing policy of neutrality and good relations with all parties has enabled it to attract investments, facilitate trade and bridge gaps between countries. He said, "Oman managed to navigate this for a long time and will manage to stay the same for the next hundreds of years. That comes with responsibility... and advantages when you are in good terms with your neighbours, with the rest of the world. That helps you bring in investments."

Enhanced public transport system to precede Muscat Metro roll-out

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 10

The Muscat Metro won't be a reality unless an efficient public transport system is established first, according to an official at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. Speaking to the Observer, Net Zero Consultant at the ministry, Eng Abdullah al Busaidy, explained that other forms of public transport must be prioritised before the execution of the Muscat Metro. "The ministry is working very closely with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and different initiatives [will be

implemented] where we will try to enable different connections to feed the main metro line, which has been announced recently by the Ministry of Housing and Urban

Planning." However, he explained "The metro won't come soon. Because you'll need to enable public transportation to feed your main metro [line]." Instead, the ministry will focus on enhancing current bus routes and introducing other solutions such as ridesharing. According to Al Busaidy, the ministry is currently in the process of finalising a public transport strategy which will be implemented during the second phase of the Green Mobility strategy from 2025 to 2028. He added that the first enhanced public transportation route will be established by 2026.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Driven by its role to support all private companies and enterprises, the Board of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry approved the

Exemption of all overdue membership renewal fees for the past years to all its members.

OCCI's exemption shall be effective starting from **16 July 2023** and will stay in effect for **Three months**.

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Bank Nizwa expands network with new Sinaw branch

MUSCAT: Strengthening its presence in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Nizwa, the leading Islamic Bank, proudly announces the opening of its 20th branch in Sinaw. Khalid bin Hraez al Mahri graced the occasion by cutting the ribbon alongside Khaled al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa.

This strategic location embodies Bank Nizwa's continued commitment to grow its branches network and provide exceptional Shariah-compliant products and services to the residents of Sinaw and its surrounding areas.

Highlighting the significance of this branch expansion, Khalid al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa, expressed his

enthusiasm, stating, "the opening of our new branch in Sinaw marks a significant milestone for Bank Nizwa. Sinaw is a thriving and strategically important market for us, offering immense opportunities for growth. This expansion aligns with our unwavering commitment to extend our presence and provide exceptional Islamic banking solutions throughout Oman."

Bank Nizwa is a trailblazer in Islamic finance because of its unwavering commitment to provide innovative Shariah-compliant solutions that cater to the unique needs of the local market.

Keeping pace with the changing preferences of customers, the branch will provide an extensive



array of banking solutions encompassing in-branch, online and digital services. Clients will have access to a diverse portfolio of products and services tailored

to meet the specific needs of individuals and businesses, including specialised offerings for wealth management.

As Bank Nizwa expands its

footprint across the Sultanate of Oman, it continues to invest in its most valuable asset — its people. The new Sinaw branch is staffed with highly qualified, well-trained, and experienced Omani employees.

These individuals possess the skills, knowledge and local insights necessary to cater to the diverse needs of the Sinaw community. Equipped with the latest technological solutions, the branch embraces digitalisation and innovation, ensuring seamless and efficient processes for customers.

Bank Nizwa remains steadfast in its mission to make Islamic finance accessible to all segments of the community. It aims to empower individuals with the necessary

knowledge to make informed financial decisions that align with their beliefs and values.

Bank Nizwa's CEO, Khalid al Kayed, remarks, "we are dedicated to meeting the evolving needs of our customers and empowering them to achieve their financial goals through our comprehensive range of Shariah-compliant products and services. With this latest branch, we look forward to serving the Sinaw community and contributing to their financial well-being." As the first and leading full-fledged Islamic Bank in Oman, Bank Nizwa solidifies its position in the Sultanate of Oman with the establishment of the Sinaw branch, fortifying its expansive network across the country.

Al Maha, Precision Tune Centres offer free vehicle inspection

MUSCAT: Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company announced a partnership agreement with Precision Tune Auto Care Centers for free vehicle inspection for vehicles travelling to Salalah from July 1 to August 31, 2023.

Fahmi al Jabri, the manager for quality, health, safety and environment at Al Maha, stated that drivers heading to Salalah can benefit from this opportunity and obtain a free 9-points safety check for the car, at any of the following Precision Tune Auto Care Centers: Mabela, Al Amerat, Samail, Adam, Qurayyat, Janan, Al-Mudhaibi, Ibra, Al-Wadi Al-Kabeer, Salalah, Sahalnot, Duqm, Al-Suwaik, Al-Ghubra North, Mabela Industrial City, Al-Amerat City, New Musana, Saham, Ghala, Mirbat, Rusayl Industrial, Al-Buraimi, Fanja, Al-Ghubra Beach, Al-Hail North, Ansab, Sohar, Ghala Heights.

Fahmy al Jabri continued: "The vehicle safety check increase a hassle-free journey to and from Salalah for drivers and their families. We also advise drivers to make sure to check vehicle fluids before beginning the journey."

Commenting on the partnership, Sandeep Ghai, CEO of Precision Tune Auto Care, stated that he is pleased to collaborate with Al Maha Company to offer free safety checks as an initiative to support vehicle safety during long journeys towards Khareef Salalah. He added, "Precision Tune centres are fully-equipped and have the best-trained technicians who suggest the need for car repairs and maintenance before the long drive."



Omani firm appointed as Mena ambassador to present drones system

MUSCAT: Serb, a leading provider of innovative drone management solutions in Oman, is pleased to announce its appointment as the ambassador for the Global Uncrewed Traffic Management Association (Gutma) in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region.

This partnership marks a significant milestone in enhancing the development and integration of drone services within the Mena region. Gutma is an esteemed global association that represents organisations involved in cutting-edge drone services and smart mobility solutions.

With a mission to promote safe and efficient drone operations, Gutma engages in research, development, and technical, regulatory, and political processes to foster a global ecosystem for the drone services market.

As the ambassador for Gutma in the Mena region, Serb will play a crucial role in advocating for the adoption of UTM (Uncrewed Traffic Management) solutions and supporting the growth of the drone industry.

By leveraging its expertise in innovative drone management, SERB will collaborate closely with



regulators, industry stakeholders, and the Gutma community to drive forward advancements in drone regulations, safety standards, and operational efficiency.

"We are excited to have Serb as our ambassador in the Mena region," said Koen De Vos, Secretary-General at Gutma.

"Serb's expertise in drone management and their commitment to safety align perfectly with Gutma's mission. Together, we will drive the adoption of UTM solutions and contribute to the growth of the drone industry in the Mena region." "We are honored to be appointed as the ambassador for Gutma in the Mena region," said Anwaar al Hina, Co-Founder and CEO of

Serb. "This partnership reflects our commitment to shaping the future of drone operations and fostering a safe and dynamic ecosystem. Together with Gutma, we aim to empower drone operators, regulators, and managers in the region by delivering comprehensive UTM solutions and driving the adoption of best practices."

Serb's advanced UTM platform provides operators, managers, and regulators with the tools and capabilities to enable safe and efficient drone operations. With active collaborations and a strong focus on innovation, SERB is well-positioned to support the goals and objectives of Gutma in the Mena region.

ahlibank offers special discount for credit card holders at Snow Oman



MUSCAT: In line with its dedication to offering innovative solutions that cater to customer needs, ahlibank has partnered with Snow Oman, located in Mall of Oman, to provide an enticing offer. The offer is exclusively for its credit card holders.

Being the first-of-its-kind campaign in the Sultanate of Oman, ahlibank credit card holders can now enjoy a 15 per cent discount when purchasing tickets at Snow Oman.

The offer is valid for three days and is limited to a maximum of four tickets per transaction. Credit card holders can avail the discount on various ticket options, including Snow Park Pass, Full Park Pass, Snow Premium, and 2-Day Pass.

The offer can only be availed when purchasing tickets at the admissions counter at Snow Oman in Mall of Oman. The offer begins on July 12th, 2023 and will continue until July 14, 2023.

Muneer al Balushi, AGM — Head of Retail Distribution at ahlibank, said, "By providing our customers with such exciting offers, we are introducing new avenues of entertainment. We understand the importance of quality time with loved ones, and this offer allows our customers to relax and enjoy unforgettable experiences."

Snow Oman has gained immense popularity since its opening last year, and this exclusive offer is sure to entice our customers to visit and create lasting memories with their families. At ahlibank, we believe in the significance of offering the latest and most innovative digital banking solutions."

Alizz Islamic Bank introduces chatbot service for instant responses to inquiries

MUSCAT: Alizz Islamic Bank recently revealed their Chatbot service that responds to customer inquiries related to products & services and enables customers to communicate with the bank directly and around the clock on 24166000.

This comes as part of the bank's vision toward adopting digital transformation and enhancing customer experience.

The Alizz Islamic Bank Chatbot has been launched on WhatsApp and the bank's official Instagram page and it will also be introduced to the bank's corporate website very soon.

Customers can send a message via WhatsApp on 24166000 and experience instant responses to their questions on products, services, branch



locations, fees, cards, finances, accounts and much more. The same applies for the bank's

Instagram page, all customers have to do is send a direct message and the machine learning solution will

respond instantly. Additionally customers can show their interest for a particular product or service by providing their contact information, select the nearest branch to them and they will be contacted by the sales team.

Ali al Mani, General Manager of Alizz Islamic Bank, stated "Digital transformation is inevitable and not optional for any entity that provides direct services to its customers, especially the banking sector. Improving digital solutions naturally leads to enhancing the customer experience journey within the banking sector."

At Alizz Islamic Bank, we have continued to invest in our existing digital platforms and entered into various partnerships in order to provide the right customer

solutions. The Bank continues to work towards obtaining a digital business model to keep pace with changing customer requirements and technological advancement. This approach has led to a doubling of the number of our customers' using digital channels of all kinds."

Alizz Islamic Bank believes in putting the customer first and the modern customer is constantly changing their methods of communication. That is why adopting artificial intelligence (AI) is crucial towards meeting customer expectations.

The vast majority of the public continually resort to social media to search for information and receive answers to inquiries from the bank. It is no secret that artificial intelligence technologies are the future for various industries.



Enhanced public transport system to precede Muscat Metro roll-out

FROM PAGE 13

Public transport has been identified as one of the solutions to combatting carbon dioxide emissions within the transport sector which amounts to 18 per cent of total emissions in the country.

However, the use of public transit is still not common in Oman as passenger cars amount to 60 per cent of all emissions.

Speaking at the Green Mobility Forum last week, Under-Secretary of Transport Eng Khamis al Shamakhi, identified the low use of public transportation as a significant challenge to decarbonising the sector.

"Today, we face a challenge in our country as we do not use public transportation

preferring to use our own cars instead." "The change in mindset from individual transportation to public transportation is a challenge we have started working on, but we also need a set of policies to support it."

Al Shamakhi attributed the poor use of public transit to a lack of infrastructure and inefficient routes, areas which will be addressed in the upcoming public transport strategy.

As part of its efforts to establish a green public transport system, the ministry will utilise biofuels to reduce emissions in the short-term while opting for electric buses for short distances buses, and hydrogen fuel cells for long distance buses in the long term.

Huge increase in exports of Oman's refinery and petrochem products

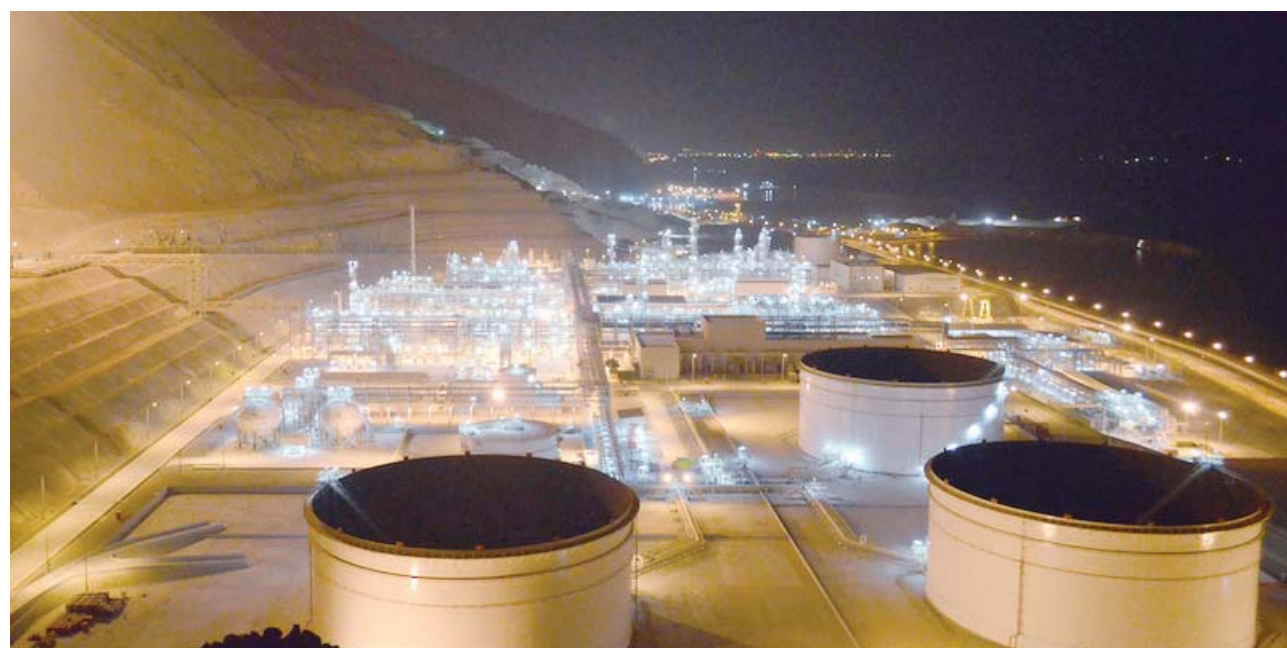
MUSCAT: The total production of refineries and petroleum industries in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 19.1 per cent until end of May 2023, compared to the same period of the previous year.

Liquefied petroleum gas and motor fuel M91 saw significant increase in exports, with 1,212.3 per cent, and 232.1 per cent growth, respectively, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Oman's exports of M95 fuel until end of May 2023 reached 226,400 barrels, a decrease of 91.8 per cent compared to the same period in 2022, while exports of gas oil (diesel) amounted to 8,912,200 barrels, up by 50 per cent, and 2,540,200 barrels of jet fuel, an increase of 57.6 per cent.

The statistics indicated an increase in the production of motor fuel M91 by 46.6 per cent, to 7,046,300 barrels, while its sales amounted to 5,843,100 barrels.

Meanwhile, M95 saw a decrease in the production by 29.6 per cent to



4,815,600 barrels, while its sales also decreased to 4,831,000 barrels.

The production of gas oil (diesel) increased by 22.5 per cent, recording 14,566,700 barrels, and its sales recorded 5,799,000 barrels.

Jet fuel production also increased by 57.6 per cent, recording 4,193,600 barrels, with sales of 1,678,500

barrels. Liquefied petroleum gas production increased by 43 per cent, reaching 3,433,300 barrels.

With regard to petrochemicals, gasoline production increased by 270.6 per cent, recording 63,000 metric tonnes, while paraxylene production reached 211,800 metric tonnes, an increase of 1,168.3 per

cent. Polypropylene production increased by 28 per cent, recording 111,200 metric tonnes. Paraxylene exports reached 210,200 metric tonnes and polypropylene exports increased by 41.3 per cent, recording 102,900 metric tonnes, while gasoline exports recorded 66,900 metric tonnes.

MoCIIP holds workshop to shape national investment strategy

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, JULY 10

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) held a key workshop on the Unified National Strategy for Investment Promotion on July 9, 2023.

The workshop, which was attended by government officials and representatives from various ministries and governorates, was aimed at charting a definitive course for the nation's investment landscape.

The workshop was opened by Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Faroujiah, Under-Secretary for Investment Promotion.

In her opening remarks, Al Faroujiah stressed the importance of the workshop in shaping the future of investment in Oman. She said that the workshop would provide a platform for stakeholders to discuss the latest trends in foreign direct investment (FDI) and to develop



a unified strategy for attracting and retaining investment in the country.

The workshop featured a number of presentations from experts on FDI and investment promotion. It also included a number of panel discussions focusing on topics such as the role of the government in attracting investment, the challenges facing investment promotion in Oman, and the opportunities for investment in the country.

The workshop concluded with a call to action for all stakeholders

to work together to implement the unified national strategy for investment promotion. The strategy, which is still in its early stages of development, is expected to be finalised in the coming months.

The unified national strategy for investment promotion is a harbinger of progress and prosperity for the nation. By attracting FDI and fostering economic diversification, the strategy seeks to transform Oman's landscape, cultivating growth across various sub-sectors.

Oman leverages strategic location and neutrality to boost economic growth

FROM PAGE 13

The minister also shared his vision for the energy transition and the green economy in Oman.

He said that the country has announced a target of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 and is working on various projects to reduce its emissions and promote renewable energy sources.

"Oman has a competitive advantage in producing green hydrogen, due to its abundant solar and wind resources."

He said that Oman is also implementing measures to encourage the use of electric vehicles, such as tax exemptions, import waivers and charging stations.

He also said that Oman is exploring new opportunities in the marine sector, such as providing services to the ships passing through the Strait of Hormuz, which is a vital waterway for global trade. "The Strait of Hormuz, which is being supervised by Oman, there are 16,000 ships in

The Strait of Hormuz, which is being supervised by Oman, there are 16,000 ships in and out every year. So that's 32,000 movements going in a very small stretch. We are now setting the right policies in line with international law, to provide the best services for the users of this Strait

ENG SAID AL MAAWALI

Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

and out every year. So that's 32,000 movements going in a very small stretch.

We have not tapped into this, but we are now setting the right

policies in line with international law, to provide the best services for the users of this Strait."

He also said that Oman is improving its road sector, by using AI and other technologies to optimise the efficiency and sustainability of trucking. He added that Oman is aiming to reduce the carbon emissions from road transport by introducing more regulations and incentives for green vehicles.

He said that Oman is also enhancing the environment for truckers and the trucking community by providing better facilities and services.

Al Maawali expressed his optimism about Oman's future and said that the country is well-positioned to take advantage of the opportunities and challenges in the post-pandemic world.

He said that Oman is open for business and welcomes investors from all over the world to join its journey of transformation and growth.

PDO, Shell sign pact for seismic acquisition in Block 11

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 10

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), through its subsidiary, and Shell Development Oman (SDO) have signed a contract for Seismic Acquisition in Block 11, signifying a major advancement in Oman's oil and gas industry.

Based on this agreement, SDO is purchasing fully-processed seismic data on Block 11 in line with Exploration and Production Sharing Agreement (EPSA).

The agreement, which is set to run until October 2024, was signed by PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister and SDO's Walid Hadi, SVP Oman and Country Chair.

PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister said: "We are delighted to sign this new contract with Shell Development Oman, a valued partner in Oman's oil



SPANNING 2,900 SQUARE KMS IN THE CENTRAL REGION OF OMAN, BLOCK 11 IS AN AREA THAT COULD HOLD SIGNIFICANT HYDROCARBON POTENTIAL. TO IDENTIFY AND EVALUATE PROSPECTIVE HYDROCARBON RESERVES, THE SEISMIC SURVEY EMPLOYS SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGIES, INCLUDING HIGH-RESOLUTION IMAGING AND ADVANCED DATA PROCESSING TECHNIQUES

and gas industry. This collaboration is a significant step forward in our ongoing efforts to unlock Oman's full hydrocarbon reserve potential.

"Indeed, the collaboration with SDO will enable us to build on our previous regional successes and continue delivering value to our stakeholders."

Spanning 2,900 square kms in the central region of Oman, Block 11 is an area

that could hold significant hydrocarbon potential.

To identify and evaluate prospective hydrocarbon reserves, the seismic survey employs sophisticated technologies, including high-resolution imaging and advanced data processing techniques.

Commenting on this signing, Walid Hadi Shell's Senior VP and Country Chairman in Oman said: "We are delighted to partner with PDO on this project, which is a reflection of our shared commitment to the sustainable development of Oman's oil and gas resources.

We hope that the seismic acquisition and processing project will provide crucial data to better understand the geology and hydrocarbon potential of the block and we are confident that, along with our partners TotalEnergies and OQ, we will be able to leverage our collective expertise and capabilities to deliver value for Oman."

Beijing’s autos intervention is a necessary evil

KATRINA HAMLIN

Beijing has engineered an unlikely truce in an attempt to end China’s car wars. On Thursday, regulators orchestrated an agreement between Tesla and 15 Chinese rivals to avoid “abnormal pricing”, sealing the deal at a signing ceremony in Shanghai, Bloomberg reported.

It’s a desperate effort to contain the damage. But it might just be worth it.

There were casualties along

the way. More than 30 carmakers slashed prices in the first quarter alone, according to Bill Russo at Shanghai-based consultancy Automobility. Some, including FAW Audi and BAIC Hyundai, doled out discounts of as much as 20% by June, research from Citi shows.

That weighed heavily on the bottom line for the country’s legions of electric-car makers. Nio, reported that its vehicle margin, which reflects revenue from new automobiles less the cost of sales, contracted to 5.1% in the first quarter, compared with 18.1% in 2022. Xpeng, said its equivalent margin dropped to negative 2.5% from 10.4% a year earlier.

Drawn-out discounting threatened to push weaker marques out of business in the longer term.

Many are already struggling: some 85% of China’s electric-car brands are unlikely to survive to 2030, consultants AlixPartners predicted on Wednesday, just a day before the truce was announced.

But the impact on traditional automakers was also severe. They were under pressure to off-load old inventory as China prepared to

start enforcing stricter emissions standards in July.

Perhaps as a result, sellers of internal combustion engines frequently offered steeper discounts compared to battery-powered rivals, Citi’s data show.

Despite that, many consumers opted to road-test new technology as battery-powered cars became more affordable. Legacy models continued losing market share as the price war dragged on.

New energy vehicles accounted for 26% of total sales in the world’s largest auto market in May, compared with 22% in January, according to Refinitiv data. Both Tesla and BYD achieved record deliveries of their China-made vehicles in the second quarter.

Government interference is not always welcome, nor effective. In this case, at least, it appears to be trying to keep competition healthy, targeting only “abnormal pricing”.

Defining that could prove tricky, though, and the non-binding, vaguely worded compact only applies to 16 companies. If nothing else, Beijing’s intervention offers a welcome pause in hostilities. — Reuters

Africa explores vast hydrogen potential



PAUL DAY

The author is based in Toronto, Canada and writes about nuclear power and hydrogen.

The launch of the Africa Green Hydrogen Alliance (AGHA) by Kenya, South Africa, Namibia, Egypt, Morocco, and Mauritania came on the same day that the European Union published its ‘REPowerEU Plan’ to accelerate renewable energy deployment and end its reliance on Russian oil and gas.

The simultaneous arrival of the two initiatives shows that Africa may play a role in Europe’s drive for greater energy independence and a dramatic reduction in carbon emissions.

The European plan includes strategies to develop a clean (green) hydrogen network and by 2030 it aims to produce 10 million tonnes (MT) per year domestically and import 10 MT.

Africa could be a key supplier, especially northern countries.

“North Africa is ideally placed to help serve the growing European demand, leveraging on existing bilateral energy relations, exceptional solar irradiation conditions, existing export infrastructures (including port terminals), and new pipeline connection projects for the 2030s,” consultants Deloitte said in their 2023 Global Green Hydrogen Outlook report.

North Africa will have “12 MT of pipeline capacity availability from 2035,” the report said.

Falling costs and wide availability of renewable energy means many developing economies, such as those in the African continent, could produce clean hydrogen at one-quarter the cost of European production, according to the

consultant.

By 2050, four regions worldwide will account for almost half of global hydrogen production and 90% of trade, Deloitte predicts, predicting North Africa’s export potential at 44 MT of hydrogen, or derivative equivalent, followed by North America (24MT), Australia (16MT) and the Middle East (13MT) Sub-Saharan Africa and South America make up the other 10% of traded volumes, the analysis said.

Export revenues from the African continent could top \$110 billion by 2050 as it captures almost 40% of trade revenues, more than 10 times its share in total market size.

Africa’s massive stretches of unclaimed, sunbaked land make it ideal for setting up large scale renewable projects, with more than 80% of territory in Algeria, Morocco, and South Africa available for development compared to less than 10% in Japan and South Korea, Deloitte says.

Africa is one of the world’s largest and least populated continents, making large-scale renewable energy deployment more feasible than in more densely populated regions.

Relatively low industrial development means Africa’s move toward emission-free energy generation leapfrogs some of the larger environmental missteps made by more economically developed nations.

In much the same way, African telecommunications jumped land lines and went straight to mobile networks.

“For many African countries, the question is not how to reduce their carbon footprint, because the continent’s overall contribution to global GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions is already low at less than 4 per cent,” United Nation’s OSAA cluster lead for Energy and Climate Bitsat Yohannes said.

“Instead, we must examine how the continent can sustainably harness its existing resources to meet the growing demand for energy needed for economic development and to lift citizens out of poverty, while following a sustainable path to a net-zero future.”

— Reuters

De-dollarisation debunked



PAUL KRUGMAN

The author, a New York Times opinion columnist, writes about macroeconomics, trade, health care, social policy and politics.

The US dollar is, in a real sense, the money of moneys — that is, in many ways it is to other national currencies what money in general is to other goods and assets.

Most of us rarely engage in barter; we sell stuff for dollars, then use those dollars to buy other stuff.

Similarly, a large share of international transactions, especially in financial markets, involves payments in dollars rather than in local currencies.

How much does this special role matter? It’s important for the global economy that there be some currency that is widely accepted the way the dollar is.

It’s much less clear that America derives large advantages from the fact that our currency happens to be the chosen one.

I’ve tried elsewhere to debunk some of the myths about the centrality of dollar dominance to US power.

In general, one’s belief in the crucial importance of the dollar’s international role tends to be inversely proportional to how much you actually know about the subject.

Still, is the special role of the dollar declining? There’s a lot of buzz to that effect. Every hint that some international transactions might bypass the dollar, such as Saudi Arabia’s suggestion that it might accept Chinese yuan in payment for oil, receives tremendous hype.

Elon Musk has endorsed the view that by “weaponising” the dollar against Russian President Vladimir Putin, America has guaranteed rapid de-dollarisation, because of course he has.

But how about bringing some actual data to bear? A new report from the Federal Reserve examines several measures of dollar dominance and finds that this dominance has “remained stable over the past 20 years” and



STILL, IS THE SPECIAL ROLE OF THE DOLLAR DECLINING? THERE’S A LOT OF BUZZ TO THAT EFFECT. EVERY HINT THAT SOME INTERNATIONAL TRANSACTIONS MIGHT BYPASS THE DOLLAR, SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA’S SUGGESTION THAT IT MIGHT ACCEPT CHINESE YUAN IN PAYMENT FOR OIL, RECEIVES TREMENDOUS HYPE.

that “diminution of the dollar’s status seems unlikely in the near term.”

The Fed paper combines various measures into a single index of international currency usage — an index that basically shows no challenge at all to the dollar’s dominance.

Why would anyone think otherwise? A lot of discussion focuses on the dollar’s share of foreign exchange reserves — cash hoards that nations maintain to deal with various economic shocks.

The dollar’s share of such reserves has indeed declined gradually over time, from 71% in 2000 to 58% in 2022. However, this decline mainly reflects diversification into smaller currencies such as the Canadian and Australian dollars, rather than a move to serious dollar rivals.

Furthermore, official reserve holdings are a small part of the dollar’s international dominance. Its role in private business — as the currency in which exports are invoiced, bank claims and liabilities are denominated and so on — is much more important.

One of my favourite indicators is the share of dollars in foreign exchange transactions, which has been stable at around 88%.

What about the backlash against dollar “weaponisation”? As the paper points out, just about all prominent reserve currencies are issued by close US allies, who have also participated in sanctions against Russia.

As a result, “geopolitical adversaries do not have many

attractive alternatives to the US dollar.”

Why is the dollar so dominant, and why is this dominance so persistent?

I like the example of foreign exchange transactions, which is relatively easy to explain. Imagine that you want to exchange two relatively small currencies — say, convert Bolivian bolivianos into Malaysian ringgit. Will you search for a counterparty who wants to make the reverse transaction?

That might take a long time. Far simpler and cheaper to convert bolivianos into dollars, then use those dollars to buy ringgit.

And the dollar’s role in such transactions is self-reinforcing: The more transactions people do in dollars, the more liquid dollar markets become, adding to their advantage.

Similar self-reinforcing effects promote and perpetuate the dollar’s dominance in other roles.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology economist Charles Kindleberger once wrote a great essay comparing the international role of the dollar with the international role of English.

In their home countries, most people communicate in their native languages and do business in their national currencies. But when doing business abroad, they generally speak English and use dollars, because that’s what everyone else does.

This analogy may, among other things, throw some cold water on the notion that the Chinese yuan may soon pose a serious threat to the dollar.

Yes, China is a bona fide economic superpower, which exports more than we do and whose gross domestic product is by some measures bigger than ours.

But how soon do you imagine that Mandarin, which has relatively few second-language speakers compared with English, will become the dominant language of international commerce?

Well, not many people outside China use its currency, so yuan internationalisation faces similar barriers.

And there are also some China-specific problems that inhibit its currency’s global role.

Any suggestion that the yuan might soon become a major international currency runs up against the reality that China maintains capital controls: Money can’t be freely moved in or out of the country.

Capital controls aren’t always a bad idea, but they’re a major barrier for a nation that wants to own a global currency: Who will want to hold lots of assets when they never know whether they’ll be able to withdraw them as needed?

And for that matter, while you might want to learn Mandarin to do business in China, how much business do you want to do in a country that seems increasingly willing to arrest foreigners on charges of espionage?

But back to the international role of the dollar. The greenback’s dominance won’t last forever, because nothing does. But the hype about de-dollarisation is much ado about almost nothing.

For now, the dollar dominates because there just aren’t any good alternatives.

— The New York Times

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

Be Careful, Be Responsible!

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW YORK: António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen.

In a virtual video call to countries backing the global ceasefire initiative, Guterres said that the international community is grateful to the Sultanate of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts aimed at establishing peace and security in Yemen.

"The United Nations values this vital and positive role," he said.

Guterres added that the "Sultanate represents a unique model, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world." He urged other countries to follow the example of the Sultanate in advocating and supporting peace and stability. — OHA

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the memory of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulation this month.

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. TURN TO P4

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Fattah al-Wahabi, who stopped his car to

escape away a group of people at a university in Ruwi. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19.

While expressing his ire, Hamed said, "The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can scare them away."

TURN TO P4



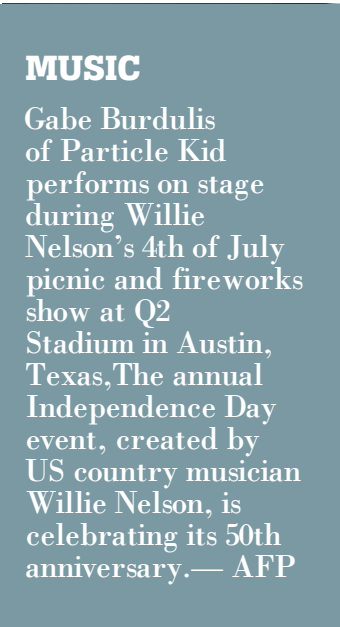
FOOD SCENE
Cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene poses for a picture in his cellar with his “Tamgout” cheese wheels in the village of Tamassit in northern Algeria.— AFP



MUSIC
British musician PJ Harvey performs on the main stage at the “Sziget” Island Festival in the Hajogyar (Shipyard) Island in Budapest. A new song evokes a saviour with a long-awaited return; for the rock sphere, it’s all seen, PJ Harvey returns and the countdown begins before her oracles on record and on stage. — AFP



FASHION
A model presents a creation by Spanish designer Juana Martin during the Women’s Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP



MUSIC
Gabe Burdulis of Particle Kid performs on stage during Willie Nelson’s 4th of July picnic and fireworks show at Q2 Stadium in Austin, Texas. The annual Independence Day event, created by US country musician Willie Nelson, is celebrating its 50th anniversary.— AFP



ENTERTAINMENT
Fans cheer as British singer Chris Martin of British band Coldplay performs at Parken Stadium in Copenhagen. The concert is part of the Music of the Spheres World Tour. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | JULY 11, 2023 | DHUL HIJJAH 23, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER f t i y u w www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



Tur jewellery's ethical mining journey

MUSIC

Elton John hails fans at emotional final farewell show

SURROUNDED BY EMOTIONAL fans from around the globe, Elton John hailed them as his “lifeline” as he gave his final farewell concert in Stockholm after more than 50 years of live performances. “You know how much I like to play live. It’s been my lifeblood to play for you guys, and you’ve been absolutely magnificent,” he told the delighted audience at the arena in the Swedish capital. Wearing a tailcoat accented with rhinestones and a red pair of his trademark large glasses, the 76-year-old pop superstar sat down at the piano shortly after 8:00 pm to cheers to open his

farewell show with one of his most popular songs, “Bennie and the Jets.” He then continued with “Philadelphia Freedom” and “I Guess That’s Why They Call It the Blues” to a rapt audience, many of whom were wearing sparkling blue or red glasses. Playing for more than two hours, John interspersed the songs with moments when he would get up and leave the piano to thank not only his fans but also his band and his crew, some of whom have been with him for more than 40 years. “I want to pay tribute to these musicians... They’re really incred-



ible, they’ve been with me so long, some of them. And they are the best, I tell you, the best,” he said. Shortly after a rendition of “Border Song” which he dedicated to Aretha Franklin, John’s “I’m Still Standing” brought the 30,000 fans at the Tele2 Arena to their feet. Before he took his encore, John screened a message from Cold play, who were playing in the

western Swedish city of Gothenburg, in which singer Chris Martin thanked him for his career and commitment. “It was amazing. I have no words right now because I haven’t processed all the show, but it was amazing,” said Anton Pohjonen, a 25-year-old bank worker from Finland. “You almost start tearing up on his account. But then it feels great

to be here,” added Swedish teacher Conny Johansson, who bought tickets for the show four years ago. Excited fans were looking forward to an emotional end to the superstar’s glittering live career even before the curtain went up. “It’s going to be very emotional tonight,” said Kate Bugaj, 25, a Polish student who admitted she had delayed her Master’s exams to follow her musical hero’s tour. Describing herself as a “huge fan”, she said it all began the first time she watched “The Lion King”, the 1994 Walt Disney film which gave John one of his two Oscar music wins. Fifty-year-old Jeanie Kincer traveled from Kentucky in the United States for the show. “I wanted to be here for the end because I was too young to be here in the beginning,” she said. To mark the occasion, she was dressed in red shorts with braces and a red, yellow and brown

T-shirt -- almost the exact same outfit John wore for his first concert in Stockholm in 1971. Sweden’s daily Expressen called the final show “an important chapter in the history of rock ‘n’ roll which is about to end”. The star has been winding down his decades-long live career with a global farewell tour. He played his last concerts in the United States in May and brought the curtain down on Britain’s annual Glastonbury Festival last month. Saturday’s farewell concert was the second consecutive evening the Stockholm stadium hosted the legendary British singer-songwriter for the last leg of his final tour, which began five years ago and was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and a hip operation in 2021. On his “Farewell Yellow Brick Road” tour, John will have given 330 concerts, crisscrossing Europe, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada and Britain, before closing in Stockholm. Overall, the tour has seen him perform in front of 6.25 million fans.— AFP



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Jewellery made with intensive attention to detail

By Zuwaina al Sulaimani

Tur jewellery, is an exquisite fine jewellery brand founded by Safa al Buraiki, a gemologist graduate and diamond expert with the aim of evolving change in awareness of jewellery wear and ethical mining. The brand is a part of an NGO organisation Fair-minded based in South America. They are proud to be the first brand in MENA that provides and urges to be ethical and sustainable in promoting social development.

Their Jewellery infuse the beauty of nature into their creations, drawing inspiration from Oman's rich tradition and culture. With a profound respect for their heritage, the business conveys a story via each piece, exhibiting excellent jewellery that has been embellished and maintained in Oman. This dedication in maintaining heritage while embracing innovation distinguishes Tur jewellery in the market.

As a start-up business, they present Omani jewellery with an innovative approach which achieved through a unique position in the jewellery market in hand with the 1 of 1 bespoke customised piece that is embellished to fit their client's satisfaction.

Tur jewellery gives intensive attention to detail, recognising the importance of each client's persona, lifestyle, and goals, ensuring that everyone's experience is distinctive. Their working techniques not only evoke sentimental relations with the client but also demonstrates their commitment to creating great craftsmanship.

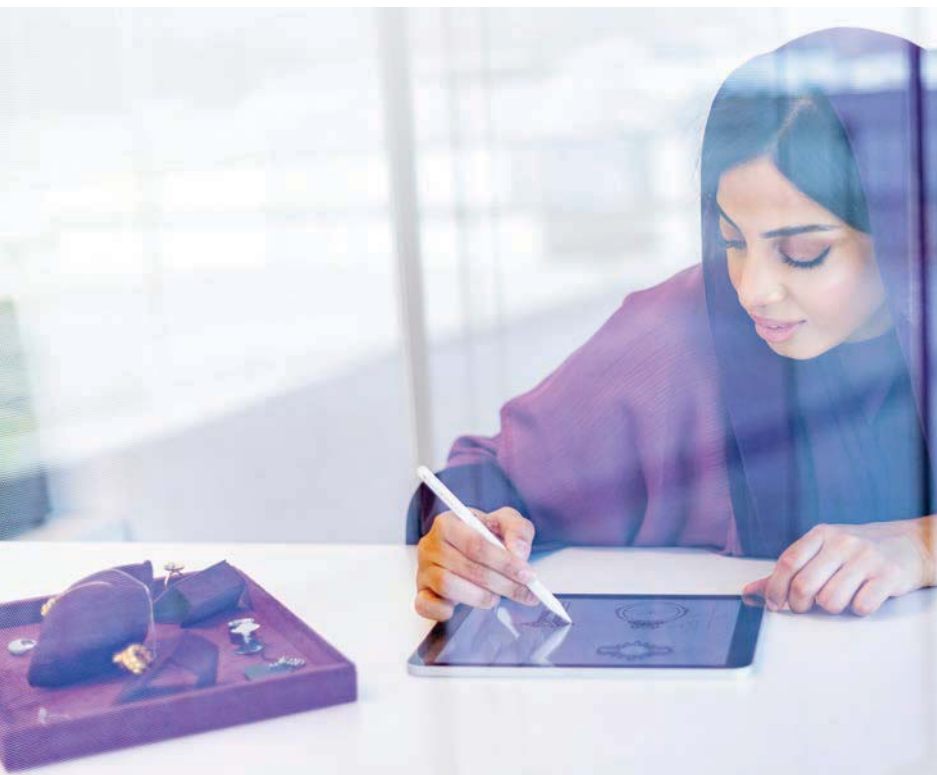
They are inspired by the historic monuments or motifs which are considered as a testament to appreciating Omani roots and heritage, as they storytell through the art pieces they manufacture via visuals of heritage presenting



fine jewellery that are adorned and restored, inherited down to younger generations.

Awareness in jewellery begins with educating the audience with the help of an expert team, to style, wear and invest in the right pieces such as gemstones, diamond and other high-end jewellery

pieces. Tur jewellery's experienced team delivers useful thoughts on styling, wearing, and investing in the perfect pieces, whether it's gemstones, diamonds, or other high-end jewellery, with the goal of educating their audience on the art of jewellery. They offer a better appreciation for the fine craftsmanship that goes



into each item by providing their clients with valuable information about fine jewellery.

The brand uses modern technologies such as 3D designing and printing using software that aid in manufacturing high quality jewellery according to international standards. With modern technolo-

gies in specific 3D designs and printing, it helped in maximising the resources with minimum labour interference adding value to developing skills of the brand by hosting 3D jewellery design workshops to train individuals and national craftsmen & women the essential tools in the digital world to attain their skill pace.

FILM

Serbian director Srdan Koljevic dead at the age of 56

SERBIAN FILM DIRECTOR and screen writer Srdan Koljevic died at the age of 56 after succumbing to a long and serious illness on Friday night, the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade said on Saturday.

Koljevic had taught at the faculty where he had been trained as a dramatist.

The film-maker, who was born in Sarajevo in what is today Bosnia and Herzegovina, was involved as a director or scriptwriter in the making of 15 feature films and two documentaries and several television series.

Koljevic received the film prize presented by the German state of Hesse in 2004 for "The Red Coloured Grey Truck" and the main prize at the Zurich Film Festival in 2010 for



"The Woman with a Broken Nose."

His film "The Man Who Defended Gavrilo Princip" (2014) dealt with the Sarajevo assassination as a gripping courtroom drama. Princip's assassination attempt on the Austrian heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie on June 28, 1914, is

considered the trigger for World War I.

"With the films he directed or for which he wrote scripts, he left behind a body of work that inspired generations and brought them closer to the language of our world," the drama faculty wrote in their obituary.— **dpa**

FASHION

Berlin Fashion Week launched with latest collections

Berlin Fashion Week launched with latest collections International and local designers were gathering in the German capital on Monday to show off their latest collections at the annual Berlin Fashion Week.

The first day kicks off with many designers presenting their collections, among them Marcel Ostertag, Melisa Minca and Kilian Kerner.

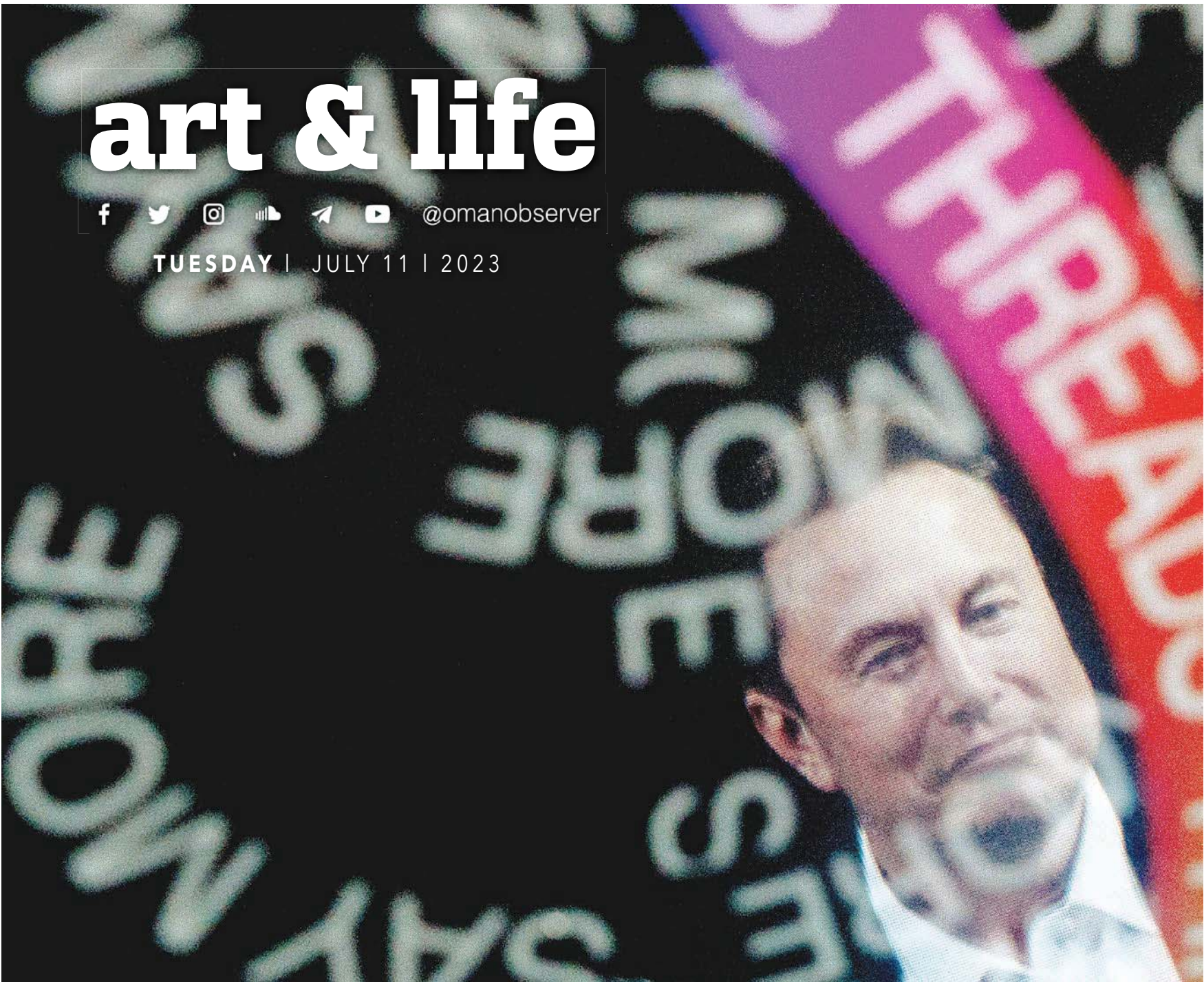
In the Berlin Salon at the Kronprinzenpalais, there is a group exhibition of fashion designers and jewellery designers including Ukrainian labels like Bobkova or Litkovska.

The events throughout the next few days are spread all around the city with shows at upmarket addresses such as the Adlon Hotel, or new ven-



ues such as the Alte National galerie or the Verti Music Hall near the Mercedes-Benz Arena. Franziska Giffey, who is responsible for economic affairs in the city, said: "Fashion Week showcases the creative and economic power that emerges here throughout the year." Berlin's fashion industry employs 25,000 people throughout 5,000 companies.

In total, the industry has an annual turnover of 5 billion (\$5.4billion). This year, Berlin Fashion Week was given 2 million in funding from the city government's coffers. Most shows can be attended by invitation only, but Berlin Fashion Week is also visible throughout the city. Many shops in Berlin are offering discounts, events or pop-ups as part of the Studio2Retail project.— **dpa**



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TUESDAY | JULY 11 | 2023

ENTERTAINMENT

Twitter rival Threads signs up 100 million users in five days



THE THREADS APP launched by Instagram as a rival to Twitter has signed up more than 100 million users in less than five days, data tracking websites said on Monday, smashing the record of AI tool ChatGPT for fastest-growing consumer app.

While ChatGPT took two months to hit the 100 million user mark and video-sharing app TikTok took nine months, Instagram itself took two and a half years to reach that mark after its 2010 launch.

Threads went live on Apple and Android app stores in 100 countries on Wednesday and Thursday, though it is not available in Europe because parent company Meta is unsure how to navigate the European Union's data privacy legislation.

Twitter is thought to have around 200 million regular users but it has suffered repeated technical failures since Tesla tycoon Elon Musk bought the platform last year and sacked thousands of

staff.

Musk, also the boss of SpaceX, has alienated many users by introducing charges for previously free services and allowing banned right-wing accounts back on the platform.

Several rivals have emerged but most are niche platforms without the capacity to grow at the necessary scale to dethrone Twitter.

Threads is finding it easier because it is linked to Instagram, which has more than one billion regular users.

Good policy

Online data service Quiver Quantitative reported that the app passed 100 million users at 0700 GMT on Monday.

Other websites using a count of the "badges" received by Instagram users who have downloaded Threads reckoned the mark had passed earlier.

But Europe's legislation around data privacy is giving Meta a

severe headache.

The firm already faces regular fines for breaching the EU's data privacy regime (GDPR).

Now the forthcoming Digital Markets Act explicitly bans firms like Meta — which also owns Facebook and WhatsApp — from combining data across its platforms.

Its business model revolves around sucking up personal data to use for targeted ads and Threads accounts are linked to Instagram accounts.

In his first public reaction to Threads, the EU's industry commissioner Thierry Breton told French radio Franceinfo that Meta was right to try to make sure its apps conformed with the law.

"Taking a little time to do so seems to me to be probably good policy," he said, adding that there were plenty of solutions.

Heated rivalry

Meanwhile, Musk has threat-

ened to sue Meta for stealing trade secrets and intellectual property, claims denied by the company.

The billionaire tycoon is also locked in a personal and increasingly juvenile rivalry with Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg.

The two men have been bickering for years, but things have become heated since it became clear Meta intended to compete with Twitter.

Last month, the two men called each other out for a cage fight, and when launching Threads, Zuckerberg tweeted for the first time in a decade.

He posted a popular meme of two Spider-Men looking at each other, taken as a reference to the similarity between Threads and Twitter.

On Monday, Musk took his beef with Zuckerberg to a new level, proposing that the two men engage in a "literal" penis-measuring contest. — **AFP**

LIFESTYLE



K-pop megastars BTS release memoir

K-POP MEGASTARS BTS released their hotly anticipated memoir in South Korea on Sunday, marking their 10th anniversary as a group.

"Beyond the Story: 10-Year Record of BTS" is the septet's first official book, and contains a chronological summary of their musical career as well as hints at their future endeavours, according to their agency BIGHIT MUSIC.

Crowds were kept away by heavy rain on Sunday morning, but some diehard fans braved the weather to gather in front of the Kyobo bookstore in Gwanghwamun, one of the biggest in Seoul.

Sri Lankan fan Lakshi said that if her excitement were measured on a "one to 10



scale, then it is about a million".

Aqilah, a fan from Malaysia, gushed: "I came here since 9 am and I finally got this book!"

The book, which is also being released in the United States, shot to the top of the Amazon and Barnes and Noble bestseller lists in May on the strength of its pre-orders.

It was co-written by South Korean journalist Kang Myeong-seok and members of the band, according to its US publisher Flatiron Books.



The release date of the memoir, July 9, is a nod to a significant date in the septet's history: it is the day the megastars' loyal international fan base, known as ARMY, first came into being 10 years ago.

"(BTS) Thank you for saving me when I needed it," said Audrey, another fan from Malaysia who scheduled a holiday in Seoul to coincide with the memoir's release.

"I wish I could say more, but I am going to cry now," she added.

Over the course of its decade in the limelight, BTS has become a global cultural phenomenon, selling out stadiums and dominating charts around the world while raking in billions for South Korea's economy.

The band is currently on a "hiatus", with members pursuing solo projects while two of the group complete South Korea's mandatory military service.

All able-bodied men in South Korea must serve at least 18 months in the military and, after a years-long debate about whether BTS deserved an exemption, Jin, the oldest member of the group, enlisted last year.

His bandmate J-Hope started his mandatory service in April, South Korean media reported at the time.

Before the hiatus, BTS bagged six No. 1 hits on the Hot 100 and all seven members of the boyband have reached the top songs chart with solo tracks, Billboard said. — **AFP**