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JABEUR RACES INTO QUARTERS, HADDAD MAIA WINS EPIC MATCH

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Omani-Egyptian Journalism Forum gets under way

CAIRO: The Omani-Egyptian Journalism Forum began at the National Museum of Egyptian Civilization (NMEC), in the Egyptian capital Cairo, on Monday. The 3-day forum is organised by the Omani Journalists Association (OJA) and the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Egypt in collaboration with Egypt's Journalists Syndicate (EJS) and with the participation of Omani Society for Writers and Literati, Oman Film Society and the National Records and Archives Authority.



MUSCAT

HM GREET'S KING OF SWEDEN

Muscat: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Carl XVI Gustaf of the Kingdom of Sweden on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere appreciation to King Carl XVI, wishing him good health and happiness. His Majesty also wished the people of Sweden further progress and prosperity.

ROYAL ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT MEETS

The Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management held its second meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court. Sayyid Khalid highlighted the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik when he patronised over the inauguration of the Academy, which consolidate developing human capital and leadership through systematic programmes and discussions. **SEE P2**

OMAN, SAUDI LAUNCH TOURISM INITIATIVES

MUSCAT: Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, on Monday received Ahmed Aqeel Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. During the meeting, it was agreed to launch joint tourism initiatives as a first stage covering the areas of promotion, marketing, tourism activation, tourism regulations, cooperation in the field of air connections and seasonal flights. **SEE P2**

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DESTINATION COOL

COOL WEATHER AREAS IN OMAN EXPECTED TO WITNESS MORE VISITORS



Ras Madrakah beach in Al Duqm, known for its soft, clean sands, azure waters, make it a perfect camp spot.

STAFF REPORTER

Muscat, June 5

Cool weather destinations in Oman are expected to witness more visitors as summer tourism season begins in the country. Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Jabal Shams, Dhofar, Al Sharqiyah South. Al Wusta now has mild weather and low temperatures. The upcoming Khareef season and its associated events in Dhofar will also bring more tourists to the governorate.

The network of hotel establishments in these tourist destinations provide a wide choice of accommodation and luxury while indulging in camping, hiking, sailing, windsurfing, swimming, and exploring fruit orchards and farms. Raia bint Salem al Maskeriyah, Assistant Director of Tourism Promotion and Marketing at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: "These destinations are receiving great attention from the ministry by promoting investments that contribute to keeping pace with the growing tourism traffic."

A visitor to Dhofar can also experience traditional markets that sell frankincense, sweets and fresh local farm produce. Al Wusta received a large share of the ministry's attention, whether through the investment offering to support infrastructure projects for the sector or efforts to promote its tourism potential. **TURN TO P5**

SHOPS FOUND SELLING FAKE FILTERS, WATER AS COOLANT

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

[@afrahalbalushia](#)

In a shocking disregard to safety and health of motorists, three auto parts shops in Al Dhahirah Governorate and another one in Barka were found selling fake engine filters and coloured water as coolant in the guise of branded products. In a statement on Monday, Consumer Protection Authority said, "The Department of Consumer Protection in Al Dhahirah Governorate charged three shops after they were caught tampering with vehicle engine filters by placing counterfeit filters in boxes meant to contain well-known brands."

The investigation revealed over 4,559 empty packages ready to be filled with fake products, exposing the deceptive practices of some unscrupulous traders.

Malik bin Suleiman al Maamari, Judicial Control Officer of CPA in Al Dhahirah Governorate, said, "These stores have been found filling motor oil with unidentified origin into boxes of reputed brands." **TURN TO P2**

Made-in-Oman chips mark a milestone

MUSCAT: In a major boost to the semiconductor sector of Oman, chips made by Omani designers were sent over to a global firm in Taiwan for testing and verification ahead of mass production.

Chips named Oman-1 and Oman-2 are part of the National Programme for Digital Economy and it was undertaken with the support of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Labour.

It is a step forward towards the implementation of an agreement concluded in June 2022 by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Labour (on one side) and Taiwan's Global Semiconductor Microelectronics Company.

The agreement was aimed at establishing the first investment project in the Sultanate of Oman to design and manufacture semiconductors and advanced electronic chips, besides training Omanis in this field.

The dispatch ceremony was held under the auspices of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology. It was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and officials.



The agreement was aimed at establishing the first investment project in the Sultanate of Oman to design and manufacture semiconductors and advanced electronic chips, besides training Omanis in this field

Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Under-Secretary of the MoTCIT for Communications and Information Technology said the step assumes significance in Oman's drive to make chips in the country and it demonstrates the capabilities and talents of young Omani engineers.

He added that the move paves the way for domestic and global investments in research, development and advanced chips manufacturing. **TURN TO P5**

Iranian embassy to reopen in Saudi Arabia today

RIYADH: Iran is set to reopen its embassy in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday following a seven year closure, Tehran and a diplomatic source said, sealing a Chinese-brokered rapprochement deal announced in March.

Saudi Arabia severed relations with Iran in 2016 after its embassy in Tehran and consulate in the northwestern city of Mashhad were attacked during protests over Riyadh's execution of cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

ENAYATI NEW ENVOY

Iran's diplomatic mission, which was expelled by Saudi authorities, will return under the leadership of Alireza Enayati, who previously served as Iran's ambassador to Kuwait. Tehran's foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani announced the reopening in a

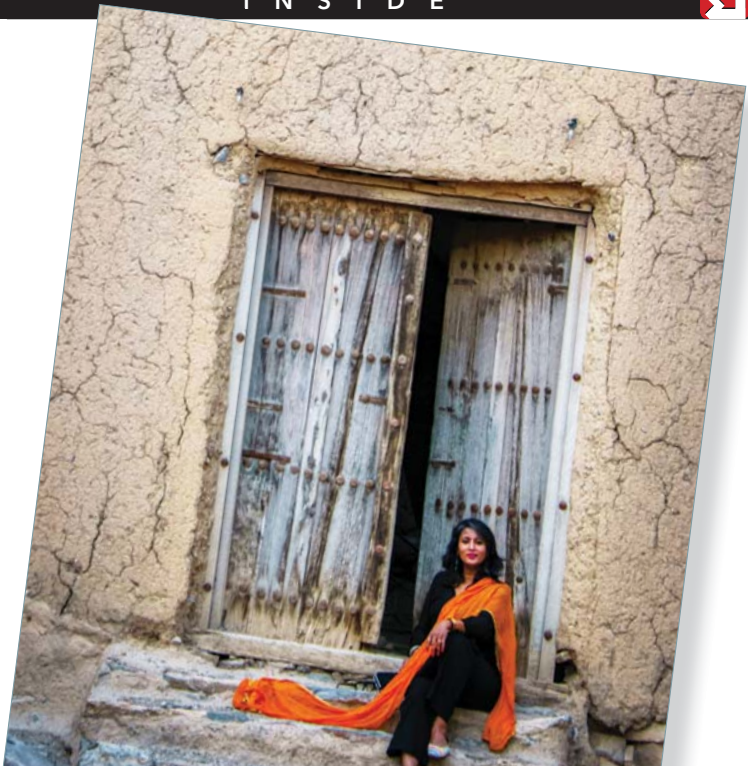
statement on Monday, confirming earlier comments by a diplomatic source in Riyadh.

Iran's Embassy in Riyadh, its consulate in Jeddah and its representative office to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) "will be officially reopened on Tuesday and Wednesday", Kanani said.

The diplomatic source had earlier told AFP that the opening "will take place on Tuesday at 6:00 pm local time (1500 GMT) with the presence of the newly appointed Iranian ambassador" to Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia has yet to confirm when it will reopen its embassy in Tehran or its pick for ambassador. Iranian media had named Enayati as the Islamic republic's Saudi envoy last month. — AFP

INSIDE



WHY AL HAMRA'S LIVING MUSEUM, BAIT AL SAFAH, CONTINUES TO STAND TODAY

P18

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 40°C Min 34°C SALALAH: Max 33°C Min 28°C NIZWA: Max 42°C Min 29°C

PRAYER TIMINGS

SUNRISE: 05:20 FAJR: 03:53 DHUHR: 12:10 ASR: 15:29 MAGHRIB: 18:56 ISHA: 20:18





Royal Academy of Management board discusses accomplishments

MUSCAT: The Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management held its second meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court.

Sayyid Khalid highlighted the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik when he patronised over the inauguration of the Academy, which consolidate developing human capital and leadership through systematic programmes and discussions.

The Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court also highlighted the directives to enhance communication and government integration, to develop intellectual content in a bid to enhance Oman's future readiness, and to position Oman among the top ranks of developed countries.



Board members discussed recent strategies and accomplishments as well as the launch of upcoming programmes. Emphasis was laid on grooming national leaders at various levels of management and providing the public and private sectors with empowered and qualified leaders.

The meeting also discussed

the process of moving employees to the new Royal Academy of Management building and ensuring a seamless transition.

In addition, the Board of Trustees also reviewed several topics in its agenda and took appropriate decisions.

The Royal Academy of Management is under the honorary patronage of His

Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. Established in January 2022, the Academy aims to develop national leaders at various levels of management in the public and private sectors through an integrated suite of specialised centres, initiatives, and programmes based on the latest concepts and trends in New Public Management. — ONA

Oman, Saudi launch joint tourism initiatives

MUSCAT: Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, on Monday received Ahmed Aqeel Al Khateeb, Minister of Tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

During the meeting, it was agreed to launch joint tourism initiatives as a first stage covering the areas of promotion, marketing, tourism activation, tourism regulations, cooperation in the field of air connections and seasonal flights.

The two sides also agreed on implementing joint



tourism programmes in the field of camping and adventure tourism, a calendar of joint tourism events and a programme to support small and medium enterprises in the

tourism sector.

Al Mahrouqi said that Oman and Saudi Arabia are two important tourist destinations in the region due to their natural and cultural

diversity. He stressed the need to consolidate integration and upgrade the capabilities of the two countries so that they could occupy a prominent place on the map of global tourism.

For his part, Al Khateeb underscored the significance of optimising tourism relations between the two countries. He said that a framework was drawn out during the meeting to implement the MoU inked by the two countries on the sidelines of the World Travel and Tourism Council Global Summit, held in Riyadh. — ONA

Shops found selling fake filters, water as coolant

FROM PAGE 1

"This kind of deception tricks consumers. Necessary legal actions have been taken, and charges have been issued."

The diligent efforts of the CPA's officers resulted in the successful apprehension of these fraudulent shops. This operation is part of the authority's broader campaign to monitor shops and combat practices that pose a threat to consumer health and safety.

Hisham bin Yahya al Fazari, Judicial Enforcement Officer of CPA in Al Batinah South Governorate, shed light on another finding made during the investigation. "We checked over 4,559 empty packages. We uncovered an unlicensed commercial establishment involved in the production of adulterated vehicle engine coolant in Barka."

Further investigations found fake anti-corrosion products for vehicles. The product was found

to be non-compliant with the required specifications and lacked the necessary licensing from the relevant authorities.

Imad bin Ahmed al Zadjali, another Judicial Enforcement Officer, revealed details about the manufacturing process of the adulterated coolant.

He stated, "A group of expatriate workers produced this adulterated anti-corrosion coolant, which is essentially plain

water coloured with red, green, and orange substances. The product carries expiry date seals and contains a sticker displaying information that deceives consumers into believing it is an anti-corrosion coolant."

All products were confiscated for violating Article 7 of the Protection Law, which prohibits the trading and advertising of adulterated, corrupted, imitated, or unauthorised commodities.

Gen Numani receives ambassadors of Austria, Sudan



MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office received on Monday Christian Brunmayr, Ambassador of the Republic of Austria to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.

The ambassador expressed his appreciation for the cooperation extended to him by all officials in the Sultanate of Oman. He also lauded the bilateral relations between the two countries.

On his turn, Al Numani thanked the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in boosting bilateral relations

during his tour of duty, wishing him success.

Gen Al Numani also received Salah Al Din Al Hajj Mohammed Al Kando, Ambassador of the Republic of Sudan to the Sultanate of Oman.

Gen Al Numani underscored the relations between Oman and Sudan, wishing that Sudan would enjoy security and stability.

On his turn, the Ambassador expressed his appreciation to the Sultanate of Oman. Moreover, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest.

— ONA



Low pressure gains momentum

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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The formation of low pressure continues under watchful eyes of weather experts as Oman goes through the transitional month of June.

The weather forecaster at Oman Meteorology said the latest satellite image and observations indicate that the low pressure could develop into a tropical depression in the next three days.

The weather forecaster also said that there is no direct impact on the Sultanate of

Oman's weather conditions for the next few days pointing out that it is still early to point out its direction.

For Tuesday, the forecaster stated that mainly clear skies with chance of clouds development and isolated rain are expected over Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas during the afternoon.

There are also chances for dust rising over desert and open areas. This is in addition to late night to early morning low-level clouds or fog patches over parts of coasts of Al Sharqiyah South, Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates.

Labour conference focuses on future of government work

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

The Ministry of Labour organised a conference on innovation and the future of government work to highlight innovation in government work, which seeks to build a culture of innovation and its role in developing the work environment.

The conference came in cooperation with the Media Thought Foundation and was held at the Sheraton Hotel, where Oman Vision 2040 put innovation as a major common factor for all its strategic objectives, as innovation is considered an important factor in government transformation and the success of future governments in the modern management of all state institutions.

On its first day, the conference reviewed the experience of Qatar



in hosting the 2022 World Cup, then the first session, entitled Knowledge Economy and Sustainable Development, was held with the participation of His Highness Sayyid Dr Fahad bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University; Dr Saeed bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, and Ahmed bin Saeed al Sharqi,

Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee of the Majlis Ash'shura.

The second session, titled 'The Role of Innovation in Empowering Oman's Vision 2040' had the participation of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation; Younis bin Ali al

Mandhari, Member of the Majlis Ash'shura and Chairman of the Youth and Human Resources Committee in the Majlis Ash'shura; Dr Saeed al Dahi, Director of the Center for Future Studies at the University of Dubai; Dr Manal al Khanbashi, General Supervisor of the Studies Team at the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, and Shaikh Saud bin Hamad al Hamouda, General

Director of Development and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Labour.

In the dialogue session, Shaikh Saud bin Hamad al Hamouda, General Director of Development and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Labour, reviewed the role of innovation in enabling Oman Vision 2040, the importance of institutional innovation in promoting institutional growth and institutional innovation in Oman Vision 2040, the system of institutional innovation, change management, institutional innovation and its relationship to institutional excellence.

He stated, "The Ministry of Labour is pleased to be a participant and supporter of this conference, which simulates the future in the field of institutional innovation. We, as a ministry, are currently implementing the system of institutional

innovation and change management, which is one of the possibilities for implementing the Oman Vision 2040. We have a contribution through the sessions to present the details of the system and the importance of its application in the government sector, where the system aims to attract successful administrative practices, research and studies and apply them on the ground in the government sector." The conference aims to achieve excellence in the government sector, disseminate innovations, exchange experiences, and promote knowledge economies, the role of innovation in sustainable development, economic diversification and its importance to the national economy, and the role of innovation and technology and their relationship to economic growth.



Collaborative approach must to ensure sea security

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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A maritime nation, the Sultanate of Oman's history and trade are interlinked with the Indian Ocean. The land enjoys natural harbours such as Suhar, from where Oman traders went south of China.

The IISS Shangri La Dialogue on Defense Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region held from June 2 to 4 in Singapore heard different viewpoints on maintaining security and the pressing challenges. Oman focused on security across the Indian Ocean.

Expressing the Sultanate of Oman's perspective, Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy said the Indian Ocean security depends on a collaborative approach.

He said the basis of maritime security is the combination of operational security and the rule of law.

Looking at the rule of law, the foreign minister said. "The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, UNCLOS, is just the latest example of humankind drawing up guiding principles of how to behave at sea. Such attempts began over a thousand years ago in Byzantium, focusing on cargo



theft, ship damage, and sailor remuneration."

He noted that several hundred years later, in the 17th century, the Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius developed a body of work that some regard as the foundation for UNCLOS. And today, signatories to UNCLOS number 182 countries.

He pointed out that the effectiveness of any law relies on the respect and cooperation of all parties to abide by it and police it. And the rule of law is not optional. It is the key ingredient to maritime security. Trade and prosperity depend on it.

He highlighted the importance of freedom of navigation by saying trade and prosperity depend on maintaining freedom of navigation within an effective network of

operational security: the practical resources that maintain peace at sea. Solving our collective maritime problems means emphasising operational security and, in particular, combining our skills, resources, and efforts in a collaborative manner.

He touched upon an important element of security — piracy. "Let us take the example of piracy, a problem which has faced governments and coastal communities for as long as we have gone to sea and still persists in the western Indian Ocean today. The solution has always been for navies to police the sea. Few states, if any, can conduct effective ocean-wide policing without the cooperation of other navies. The lesson is that partnership is essential for

operational security," he said.

To demonstrate this, the example he chose was the Omani port of Duqm. "Duqm's location, at the northwest corner of the Indian Ocean, perfectly positioned for shipping lanes, will grow into a vital trade hub. The port city will be a meeting point of east, west, north, and south. At its core, Duqm is an open port. Oman's fundamental values of good neighbourliness, openness, and outward focused pragmatism, which underly all the endeavours, are reflected in Duqm.

"It is our firm belief that the more we share openly, the better equipped we are to work together peacefully and effectively. This applies to global politics, maritime security, and the international shipping community. We believe that, by welcoming all in Duqm, we pave the way for stronger peace and security in shipping, and hence in the wider ocean environment," he reflected.

He emphasised that a partnership-based approach at sea builds trust and stability. "It is a policy to which we are wholly committed. And, for it to be successful, we rely on the commitment of our partners as well," he said.

Colorectal cancer: Study highlights molecular characteristics

MUSCAT: A number of doctors at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH) and the Royal Hospital conducted a joint systematic study on molecular characteristics of colorectal cancer.

Diagnosed colon cancer figures among the most common cancers in Oman after breast cancer and thyroid cancer. This disease is considered the main cause of many deaths worldwide, both in advanced and developing countries.

"Hardly any studies investigating colorectal cancer were conducted in Oman. Besides molecular characteristics of the disease, this study explores social, demographic and economic factors involved. It probes the prevalence of certain types of colon cancer in different regions of Oman," said Dr Mohammed bin Hilal al Azri, Head of the Department of Family Medicine and Public Health, Associate Professor at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, Senior Consultant at SQUH and a principal member of the team that conducted the study.

Al Azri said that the study was

mainly aimed at determining the collateral relationship between the disease's molecular characteristics and its propagation in terms of causative factors.

The study also investigates common obstacles and challenges with a view to espousing a national programme for screening colorectal cancer in various segments of society, said Al Azri. He hoped that the study would benefit decision makers in Oman.

Al Azri pointed out that, in the same context, three more studies will be conducted to further investigate the causes, factors and challenges involved upon the prevalence of colon cancer.

He explained that the three studies will target different groups of the population, including colon cancer patients and healthcare providers operating in primary health centres.

Towards this objective, as many as 2,178 community members concerned will be examined at health centres located in Muscat Governorate, Al Azri added. — ONA



Dr Mohammed al Azri

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel Leads Industry Initiatives on Decarbonisation

On the occasion of International Environment Day, Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS), the largest privately-owned integrated steel producer in the GCC region, is proud to share its series of groundbreaking initiatives aimed at significantly reducing its carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions. These initiatives exemplify JSIS's commitment to environmental sustainability and the pursuit of clean and green business practices.

71% of global steel production emits an average of 2.32 tons of CO2 for every ton of steel produced due to the Blast Furnace (BF) - Basic Oxygen Furnace (BOF) route. JSIS is among the 7% of the world's primary steel producers (excluding scrap and Electric Arc Furnace (EAF) who are using DRI - EAF route (with non-scrap based steel production) which emits 30% lower CO2 emissions as compared to BF-BOF route. By using this steel making process route our emissions are 1.57 ton CO2 / ton of steel, thus saving 1.68 million tons of CO2 per year vis a vis the BF-BOF route on our annual production.

DRI is also a future ready technology which lends itself to the transition towards Green Steel by allowing to use Green Hydrogen as the reducing agent.

One of the key initiatives is the establishment of a Carbon Capture Unit (CCU) pilot plant. JSIS is collaborating with a renowned US company to set up a pilot plant capable of capturing 7.5 tons of CO2 per day from the flue gas. The successful implementation of the pilot plant will pave the way for a commercial-scale CO2 capture facility. The captured CO2 can be utilised in various ways, such as converting it into valuable resources like CO or Syngas, liquefaction for transport, utilisation in Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR), or sequestration in rocks beneath the earth's surface. These initiatives are projected to save 700,000 tons of CO2 per year by 2027 at full commercial scale.

JSIS has also revolutionised its production process with the introduction of the world's first Hot Link technology. This cutting-edge gravity feeding system enables the direct transfer of Hot Direct Reduced Iron (HDRI) into the Electric Arc Furnace (EAF), eliminating the need for pneumatic conveying or vessel transport. By optimising this



process, JSIS has achieved substantial power savings, resulting in an annual CO2 reduction of 220,000 tons in DRI and Steel Melting Shop (SMS).

Furthermore, JSIS has implemented measures to optimise natural gas (NG) consumption. Through meticulous monitoring and continuous improvement, the specific NG consumption has been well optimized and used efficiently. Various strategies have been employed, such as maximising HDRI production to control consumption, operating the DR Plant continuously to avoid NG losses during heat-up and reforming stages, utilising top gas fuel in the Reformer, and optimising NG quality. As a result, JSIS has already achieved a remarkable CO2 reduction of a further 18,000 tons per year.

JSIS is also dedicated to reducing power consumption throughout its operations. At the DRI Plant, strategies such as minimising HBI production, effective utilisation of equipment, upgrading illumination fixtures, and installing capacitor banks have resulted in substantial power savings. Similarly, at the SMS, increased oxygen injection, and the introduction of an EAF swing door have led to significant energy savings. To enhance energy efficiency, JSIS has also focused on electrode-specific consumption. By employing advanced techniques such as electrode coating and increased water spray cooling, JSIS has significantly reduced electrode consumption. These combined efforts have resulted in an impressive CO2 reduction of 45,000 tons per year.

One of the most unique features about JSIS is its strategic location with captive jetty allowing us to have a lean in-land logistics saving 22,000 tons of CO2 per year.

JSIS remains firmly dedicated to achieving its environmental goals and ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come. With a total CO2 saving of 325,000 tons per year and a CO2 intensity of 1.03 tons per ton of crude steel production (scope 1 and 2), JSIS continues to set new standards in the iron and steel industry in the region.

"These initiatives underline our unwavering commitment to environmental responsibility," said Harsha Shetty, CEO of JSIS. "By implementing groundbreaking technologies and adopting sustainable practices, we are proud to lead the way in reducing our carbon footprint within the iron and steel sector. We are committed to creating a cleaner and greener future, aligning with Oman Vision 2040 and the Sultanate's pledge to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050."

Harsha Shetty, CEO of JSIS, emphasised, "As we celebrate International Environment Day, JSIS reaffirms its commitment to a sustainable future. We understand that addressing climate change requires bold actions, and we are proud to be at the forefront of innovative solutions in the steel industry. Through our ongoing efforts to reduce CO2 emissions, we strive to create a positive impact on the environment while maintaining our position as a leading force in the market."

"In alignment with this year's theme of the World Environment Day 'Solutions to Plastic Pollution' we are working towards becoming a Plastic Neutral Organization by the year 2024 through recycling more than 95% of the total plastic waste we generate." He continued.

Harsha added, "At JSIS, we believe in the power of transparent communication and are thrilled to share our remarkable achievements in carbon reduction. Through our concerted efforts and tireless pursuit of innovative solutions, we aim to set new industry benchmarks, demonstrate our commitment to environmental stewardship, and inspire others to join us on the path to environmental sustainability."



REMOVE HAZARDOUS ITEMS FROM VEHICLES TO PREVENT FIRE RISKS



THE RISK OF LEAVING
CIGARETTE LIGHTERS
IN CARS, AS THE SMALL
AMOUNT OF GAS
THEY CONTAIN CAN
IGNITE A SIGNIFICANT
FIRE UNDER HIGH
TEMPERATURES

CAR OWNERS ARE STRONGLY URGED TO REMOVE ANY POTENTIALLY HAZARDOUS ITEMS FROM THEIR VEHICLES

AHMED
AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

WITH the temperatures rising during the summer season, safety authorities are reminding car drivers about the importance of not leaving hazardous materials inside their vehicles. Many individuals tend to store various items in their cars for easy access, with some even considering their vehicles as a second home or office. However, certain items left in cars can pose a severe threat, particularly in extremely hot temperatures. Youssef al Salmi, a chemical safety professional, highlighted several items that car owners commonly leave in their vehicles. Al Salmi emphasised the dangers associated with camping enthusiasts who store tools such as small and medium gas cylinders, kerosene, or other flammable materials used for igniting fire. These items are highly hazardous and should be promptly removed from cars, only to be taken along when necessary. Additionally, Al Salmi warned about the risk of leaving cigarette lighters in cars, as the small amount of gas they contain can ignite a significant fire under high temperatures. He further cautioned against storing perfumes on the cars, particularly near the glass, as the concentrated heat exposure can trigger their explosive properties, especially during summer months.

CAPABLE OF CAUSING FIRES

Al Salmi further advised against leaving water glasses inside vehicles, especially in direct sunlight. When exposed to intense heat, these glasses can act as lenses, concentrating sunlight into a high-energy beam capable of causing fires. Al Salmi also highlighted the potential danger of certain deodorants containing flammable substances, which, when exposed to extreme heat, may lead to explosions. Moreover, Al Salmi emphasised the risk associated with leaving eyeglasses inside cars, as the lenses can concentrate sunlight into a focal point, potentially sparking a fire within the vehicle. He also warned against leaving compressed packages, including air fresheners, insecticide packages, car polish, and rust removers, as these often contain flammable chemicals. High temperatures can cause carbonated beverages to expand within tightly-sealed packages, leading to explosions and shattered car windows as well. To mitigate heat-related risks and prevent potential incidents, Al Salmi recommended keeping car windows slightly open (semi-closed) while the vehicle is unattended. This practice allows for air circulation and leakage, ultimately helping to cool the car's interior upon return. In light of these safety concerns, car owners are strongly urged to remove any potentially hazardous items from their vehicles, especially during the summer season. It recommends exercising caution and adopting responsible practices to minimize the risk of fire incidents.



Foundation stone laid for Mahout Hospital

MAHOUT: Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health(MoH), unveiled on Monday the foundation stone for Mahout Hospital project in Al Wusta Governorate.

Shaikh Mudhid bin Mohammed al Yaqoubi, Governor of Al Wusta, Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial, and Planning Affairs, Wali of Mahout and number of Majlis Ash'ishura members at the governorate featured at the groundbreaking ceremony.

The ceremony included a presentation of the project's components and construction stages delivered by Eng. Jamal bin Salim al Shanfari, MoH's Director



General of Projects & Engineering Affairs.

The 54 bed-hospital will be built in a construction area of 18,300 square metres, serving approximately 20 thousand people in the Wilaya.

The hospital will include outpatient clinics, an accident and emergency department, an operating theatre, a delivery room, medical laboratories, pharmacy,

and a radiology department, in addition to internal wards, central sterile supply unit, a neonatal intensive care unit, and a service building.

The hospital will be equipped with electrical and mechanical services, air-conditioning works and networking, along with all supporting services in accordance to latest systems and applicable standards.

The ministry has announced last year the commencement of the construction works for this health project upon approval from the Tender Board with a total cost of RO 13 million. Construction Works are ongoing and are expected to be completed at the end of 2025. — ONA

Qatari police delegation visits Oman

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences on Monday received a delegation from the Police Academy of the State of Qatar chaired by Brigadier General Abdul Rahman Majid Al Sulaiti, President of the Police Academy.

The delegation members were briefed about the tasks and specialisations undertaken by the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences and its affiliated institutes as well as the role of the Women's Police Institute in the grooming of women police to perform their roles at the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The delegation toured the institute's facilities and viewed the scientific programmes and military training facilities.

The delegation also visited the Special Task Police Command in Seeb and viewed the operations carried out by the special task



police. The delegation members attended women's police training for maintaining order and conducting special operations and personal protection as well as self-defence tactics and taekwondo exercises.

Brigadier General Abdul Rahman Majid Al Sulaiti, President of the Police Academy,

praised the training level at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences and the Special Task Police. He commended the joint cooperation and exchange of practical expertise in the training fields between the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Interior of the State of Qatar.

— ONA

Made-in-Oman chips mark a milestone



FROM PAGE 1

Al Shidhani pointed out that this step will promote the growth of industries related to chips in general, and build an integrated ecosystem that supports this industry in Oman.

Farhat Jahangir, CEO of GSME Oman, affirmed that the registration of the first locally designed set of chips (Oman-1 and Oman-2) reflects a commitment from the company to promote technological growth and innovation in Oman by investing in the development of domestic talent and expertise.

The overall objective is to lay strong grounds for the

establishment of a trading centre for chip design and validation in Oman, Jahangir added.

Earlier, Oman Semiconductor and Electronics Company conducted a comprehensive chip design training programme that was attended by more than 90 engineers. The programme was aimed at furnishing a stimulating environment for international and local companies to make Oman a regional home for their operations and services.

The total global sales revenues of semiconductors in 2022 stood at about \$601.7 billion worldwide, up by 1.1 per cent, compared to \$595 billion in 2021. — ONA

Cool weather areas in Oman expected to witness more visitors

FROM PAGE 1

The coastal wilayats of Al Wusta are characterised by the beauty of their beaches and the diversity of their terrain that makes them a destination for adventure tourism, marine sports, recreational activities and stunning beaches.

Al Duqm, Mahout and Al Jazir abound with beautiful beaches extending along the Arabian Sea, from Ras Al Ruwais in the Wilayat of Mahout to Ras Suqra in the Wilayat of Al Jazir, in addition to the sand dunes and towering mountains bordering the Arabian Sea and its wonderful valleys that are adorned with Ghaf trees and many wild plants, as well as its natural reserves as (a protected for living and fungal organisms and a protected wetlands).

There are also many activities that the visitor can do during the summer, such as picnicking on the beaches, experiencing sailing, watching many flocks of birds, fishing, sailing through small boats in the mangrove forests, visiting the rock garden in Al Duqm, or practicing surfing and camping activities.



Shaikh Sultan bin Mansour al Ghufaili, Wali of of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, said that the summer tourism season in the wilayat witnesses large number of visitors from inside and out of Oman to enjoy the mild weather and the various natural ingredients that abound in the wilayat, which is one of the most important tourist destinations.

He said the wilayat is witnessing remarkable development that serves the population and visitors.

Al Ghufaili said the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival will be held in August which will attract more tourists to the wilayat.

Abuniet Singh, General Manager of Alila Jabal Akhdar Resort, said that Al Jabal Al

Akhdhar, being at least 15 degrees Celsius cooler at any time of the day, is the perfect destination to beat the heat in the region.

Abdullah bin Rashid al Hajri, Director of the Tourism Heritage Department in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South, said Al Ashkhara and Masirah Island may draw more tourists to enjoy cool fresh air that make you forget the flames of summer heat, which hangs over most parts of the Arabian Peninsula.

Al Ashkhara is one of the tourist attractions during the summer season due to its mild climate throughout the year. Its picturesque beaches as well as Ras Al Jinz Reserve attracts visitors to watch turtles and their nesting.

EA launches project to protect coral reefs in Musandam

KHASAB: Acting in cooperation with some private sector companies, the Environment Authority launched a project to install artificial structures to attract and protect coral reefs in the Wilayat of Khasab, Musandam Governorate.

The project, carried out in conjunction with the Environment Department in Musandam Governorate, involves placing 500 environmentally friendly concrete blocks at a site that was previously determined by specialists from the environmental department in the governorate.

The project provides for initiatives to be implemented over a period of five years, with a plan to lower 250 concrete molds in the site this year and 250 concrete molds in 2024, to help attract, develop and protect the growth of coral reefs.

— ONA

Musna'atna for science, AI begins



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Musna'atna Summer Programme for Science and Artificial Intelligence was launched under the slogan 'Fun and Benefit' on Sunday. Activities of modern technologies and the fourth industrial revolution

characterise the programme with a focus on science with experience, innovation, application and educational entertainment.

The programme from June 4-7 includes workshops for participants aged 7 years and above.

The workshops will present various and



entertaining experiments in different sciences, which aim to stimulate children's thinking and enthusiasm for experimentation and innovation in multiple sciences.

Overall, the workshops are meant to develop scientific temperament among the young participants.

As artificial intelligence has become an integral part of our daily lives, and children need to learn it, the workshops offered an opportunity to understand how AI products work.

The workshops also helped enhance participants' cognitive and communication skills.



شركة الصلح للصناعات الغذائية ش.م.ع.م
Al Sallan Food Industries Co. SAOC
ص.ب: ٩٧٠ صحر - الرمز البريدي: ٣١١ - سلطنة عمان - تلفون: ٢٦٧٥٠٦٢٣ - فاكس: ٢٦٧٥٠٩٤٠

Invitation for attending the Annual General Meeting & Extraordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of S Al-Sallan Food Industries SAOC is pleased to invite the shareholders of the Company to attend the **Annual General Meeting & Extraordinary General Meeting** to be held at 3:00 pm on Thursday 22/6/2023 via the electronic platform to attend the General meetings which can be accessed through the website of the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company (www.mcd.gov.om), if the quorum of the meeting is not completed, a second annual ordinary general meeting will be held at 3:10 on Sunday 25/6/2023, to discuss the following Agenda

First: Extraordinary General Meeting:

- To consider the company's financial situation and to approved the measures according to the proposal of the Board of Directors (as per the explanatory note)

Second : Annual General Meeting:

- To consider and approve the Board of Directors' Report for the year ended on 31/3/ 2023.
- To consider the Auditors Report and approve the Financial Position and Comprehensive Income for the year ended on 31/3/2023.
- To consider and approve the transactions entered into by the Company with related parties for the year ended 31/3/ 2023 (As per the Attachment).
- To consider and approve the transactions the company will enter into with related parties during the financial year ending 31/3/2024. (As per the Attachment).
- To elect a new Board of Directors for the Company from amongst Shareholders or non-Shareholders. Any person who wishes to be nominated to the Board of Directors of the company is required to fill in a Director's nomination form. Such form can be obtained from the company. The completed form should be delivered to the company at least five (5) working days prior to the date of the annual ordinary general meeting (by the end of business hours of **Wednesday 14/6/2023**. The company will not accept any nomination form received after this date.
- To appoint the auditors for the financial year ending 31/3/ 2024, and determine their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using electronic platform issued by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

- Juristic persons, only, has the right to appoint a natural person as a proxy to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MDCD.
- Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For more information and enquiries, shareholders may please contact **Mr. Ismail Roushdi** on Ph. 26750623.

Vice Chairman

Legal Advisor

Auditors



Smoke billows behind buildings from a reported fire in Khartoum.

Military factions battle for eighth week in Sudan’s capital

DUBAI: Shelling hit western areas of Sudan’s capital on Monday morning after rival military factions fought through the night, residents said, with reports of deepening lawlessness in Khartoum and in the western region of Darfur.

Fighting between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), who have been battling each other for more than seven weeks, intensified after the expiry late on Saturday of a ceasefire deal brokered by Saudi Arabia and the US. The conflict has uprooted more than 1.2 million people within Sudan and sent about 400,000 fleeing into neighbouring countries, inflicting heavy damage on the capital where remaining residents are at the mercy of battles, air strikes and lawlessness.

Late on Sunday, residents reported intense fighting across the three cities that make up the nation’s wider capital - Khartoum, Omdurman and Bahri - and smoke could be seen rising from several areas early on Monday.

In Khartoum East district, RSF troops who have spread out in neighbourhoods across the capital were in full control and were looting extensively, said

Waleed Adam, a resident of the area. The RSF says it has been working to protect civilians by arresting looters.

The war has also triggered unrest in Darfur in Sudan’s far west, a region that was already suffering from mass displacement due to earlier conflict and where residents in several cities and towns have reported attacks by militias linked to Arab nomadic tribes.

In recent days at least 40 people were killed and dozens more were wounded in Kutum in North Darfur State, according to activists who monitor the region. Residents have also reported widespread looting and insecurity in the area.

On Monday, the RSF released a video purporting to show that they had taken over the army headquarters in Kutum, a commercial hub and one of the larger towns in the state.

There was no immediate comment from the army, which had denied on Sunday that the RSF had taken the town.

There have been long communication blackouts in parts of Darfur, where aid groups have found it especially complicated to bring in new humanitarian supplies. — Reuters

Three-year-old Palestinian shot by Israeli forces dies in West Bank

RAMALLAH: A three-year-old Palestinian boy shot by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank last week died of his wounds on Monday, Israeli and Palestinian officials said.

The Israeli Sheba hospital, where he was being treated since he was shot on Thursday, said the child “died... despite extensive efforts of the medical team”.

In a statement, the Palestinian health ministry said it was informed of the “death of the child Mohammed Haitham al-Tamimi, 3, from the village of Nabi Saleh.”

In a statement released soon after the confrontations in the village near Ramallah, the Israeli army said that “assailants fired in the direction of the community of Neveh Tzuf”.

Soldiers stationed nearby “responded by firing a number of bullets”, the statement said.

As a result of the army’s fire two Palestinians were wounded, one of whom was the three-year-old, it said.

Tamimi was taken to Sheba by helicopter for treatment, before being pronounced dead on Monday.

Tamimi’s father, Haitham was also wounded in the incident.

“I was with my child in my car, we wanted to visit family,” Haitham al-Tamimi said. “Suddenly they shot at me and my son, I thought it came from the (military) tower,”



A Palestinian boy sits at the window of his house in the al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza city. — AFP

he added from his hospital bed.

Meanwhile, an Israeli court sentenced a Palestinian to life in prison for the 2015 killing of an Israeli settler in the occupied West Bank, the military said on Monday.

The Israeli military court sentenced Moath Hamed, 39, to two life sentences for the attack, which he admitted to carrying out on behalf of the Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas, the army said.

On June 29, 2015 Hamed fired at a vehicle, killing Malachi Rosenfeld, 25, who was returning from a basketball game near Shilo, an illegal settlement in the West Bank.

Three other Israelis were also injured in the attack.

The Palestinian Prisoners’ Club said Hamed had been arrested by Israeli forces in April 2022 after being “pursued by the occupation

(Israel) for seven years”.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967.

Cases involving events in the West Bank are tried by Israeli military tribunals.

Nearly three million Palestinians live in the West Bank, as do around 490,000 Israelis in settlements that are considered illegal under international law. — AFP

US and India agree defence industry cooperation plan

NEW DELHI: The United States and India agreed a road-map for military industrial cooperation on Monday, as New Delhi seeks to reduce its reliance on key arms supplier Russia.

“We established an ambitious new road-map for defence industrial cooperation, which will fast track high priority co-development and co-production projects,” US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said as he wrapped up an overnight visit to New Delhi.

But analysts warned that such pledges needed to be backed up by concrete action.

India is looking to diversify, both by broadening its sources of imports and ramping up domestic production.

Western countries, including the United States and France, are negotiating multi-billion-dollar contracts, and diplomats say

India is placing a high priority on technology transfer as part of any deal.

The agreement will fast-track technology cooperation and co-production in areas including air combat and land mobility systems, the “undersea domain”, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, the US Defense Department said.

The initiative “aims to change the paradigm for cooperation between US and Indian defence sectors”, it said, and “could provide India access to cutting-edge technologies and support India’s defence modernisation plans”.

At the same time, Washington and Beijing are engaged in fierce competition on diplomatic, military, technological and economic fronts.

Analysts said they would wait to see whether the US-India road-



US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin shakes hands with India’s Defense Minister Rajnath Singh on the day of his ceremonial reception in New Delhi. — Reuters

map was anything more than rhetoric.

Expectations that Austin would talk about transferring engine technology to India and an armed

Predator drone deal had gone unfulfilled, said Indian defence analyst Rahul Bedi.

“We’ve heard this many times before from respective defence

“
We established an ambitious new road-map for defence industrial cooperation, which will fast track high priority co-development and co-production projects

LLOYD AUSTIN
US Secretary of Defense

assurances.”

Austin, speaking to reporters after meeting his counterpart Rajnath Singh, said boosting partnerships with India came against a backdrop of “bullying and coercion” from China, as well as Russian “aggression against Ukraine”.

India’s defence ministry said discussions had a “particular focus on identifying ways to strengthen industrial cooperation” with Washington, including the “co-development of new technologies and co-production of existing and new systems”.

Austin’s visit comes ahead of a trip by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington this month.

Austin is on a tour of Asia that previously took him to Japan and Singapore, part of a push to help counter China and an increasingly bellicose North Korea. — AFP

TRIPOLI

Political leaders to meet on electoral laws

Libyan leaders were due to meet in Morocco on Monday to finalise a deal on new electoral laws, but any agreement they announce on voting rules or a new interim government is likely to trigger opposition that may further delay the political process.

House of Representatives (HoR) head Aguila Saleh and High State Council (HSC) head Khaled al-Mishri left for Morocco early in the morning and were hoping to wrap up an agreement. The two would likely present any



deal as a major breakthrough after months of paralysis - UN envoy Adoulaye Bathily has said there could be national elections by the end of the year if a deal is reached this month. — Reuters

GENEVA

Qatar minister picked to head UN conference

Qatar’s labour minister was on Monday appointed without a vote to head the International Labour Organization’s annual decision-making conference.

Asian and Pacific nations, which according to a regional rotation had dubs this year on selecting the president of the two-week International Labour Conference, had proposed Ali Bin Samikh al Marri.



After his appointment, Al Marri himself pointed out to the conference that his country had introduced a minimum wage and improved conditions for domestic workers.

“We know there is still work to be done, and we are committed to doing it,” he said, stressing though that the social dialogue would need to be adapted to the “reality” in his country. — AFP

KANO

Armed men kill at least 30 in northern villages

Armed men killed 30 people in weekend raids on six villages in Nigeria’s north, a region regularly hit by criminal violence and clashes between communities, local police have said.

The bloodshed is the latest outbreak of inter-communal violence which the country’s newly sworn in president has said will be a priority to combat.

Attackers on motorcycles “killed eight people in Raka, seven in Bilingawa, six in Jaba, four in Dabagi, three in Raka



Dutse and two in Tsalewa villages,” Ahmad Rufai, Sokoto police spokesman said.

The bandits burnt two cars and six thatched huts in the attacks, he said. — AFP



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In brief

■ **ESMERALDAS**



MORE THAN 500 PEOPLE EVACUATED AFTER FLOODS

More than 500 people were evacuated from their homes in northern Ecuador following flooding caused by heavy rains, President Guillermo Lasso said.

No one had been reported dead or missing, he said.

Dozens of residents climbed onto the roofs or balconies of their homes to protect themselves from the rising waters, according to images released by the Ministry of Defense.

Rain had fallen for 12 hours without interruption, causing six rivers to overflow, Lasso said. Authorities evacuated around 500 people by boat and another 30 by helicopter, the Risk Management Secretariat said.

Around 11,750 people were affected by the floods and 16 lost their homes in the province of Esmeraldas, which borders Colombia. — **AFP**

■ **DUBLIN**



SENIOR CARTEL SUSPECT ARRESTED IN SPAIN

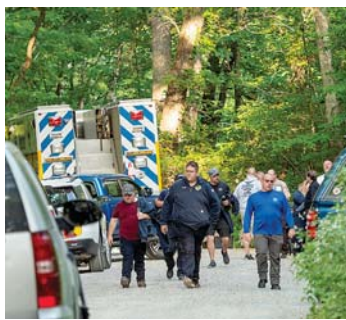
A senior member of an Irish transnational crime gang has been arrested in Spain for suspected gun running, Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) announced on Monday. Liam Byrne, 42, from Dublin — described by the UK law enforcement agency as “one of the most trusted members of the Kinahan organised crime group” — was arrested in Spain on Sunday evening.

The Kinahan cartel, led by Irishman Daniel Kinahan among others, has been linked by US and European authorities to a vast criminal enterprise encompassing drug smuggling and money laundering.

Byrne was arrested while he ate with family in a restaurant on the Spanish island of Mallorca.

— **AFP**

■ **WASHINGTON**



4 DEAD IN PLANE CRASH THAT SPARKED ALERT

US officials said on Monday there were no survivors from the Virginia crash of a small plane carrying four people, a day after the unresponsive aircraft prompted the scrambling of fighter jets from Washington.

The Cessna Citation slammed into mountainous terrain on Sunday afternoon some 170 miles southwest of the capital, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

F-16s earlier chased the aircraft at high speed — triggering a sonic boom across Washington and its suburbs, startling residents and rattling windows and walls for miles.

Virginia State Police said in a statement that first responders reached the site near the town of Staunton four hours after the crash.

“No survivors were located,” state police said. — **AFP**



A Ukrainian serviceman walks in a trench at a position near the frontline town of Bakhmut, in Donetsk region. — **Reuters**

Russia claims repelled ‘large-scale’ Ukraine offensive in Donetsk

MOSCOW: Russia said on Monday it had repelled “a large-scale offensive” by Ukrainian forces in the Moscow-occupied Donetsk region, while Kyiv remained silent about plans to claw back lost territory.

The claim came hours before Pope Francis’ peace envoy, Italian Cardinal Matteo Zuppi, arrived in Kiev for two days of negotiations.

Ukraine says it has been preparing a major offensive, after months of stalemate, to recapture territory lost since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops into the country in February last year.

But Kyiv, which has been reinforced by supplies of advanced Western weapons, said there would be no formal announcement about the start of the offensive.

On Sunday, Ukrainian Defence Minister Oleksiy Reznikov posted a cryptic tweet, quoting lyrics from Depeche Mode’s song “Enjoy the Silence.”

“Words are very unnecessary,”

he tweeted. “They can only do harm.”

The Ukraine conflict has escalated in recent weeks, with increased attacks on both sides of the border with Russia.

FULL-BLOWN OFFENSIVE

Military experts expect Ukrainian forces to test Russian defences for weaknesses before starting a full-blown offensive.

Early on Monday, Russia’s defence ministry said “the enemy launched a large-scale offensive in five sectors of the front” on Sunday in the south of the Donetsk region.

“A total of six mechanised and two tank battalions of the enemy were involved,” it said in a Telegram post.

The ministry posted what it said was a video of the battle, showing Ukrainian armoured vehicles coming under heavy fire.

Putin’s top commander in Ukraine, Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, “was at one of the advanced command posts”, the

ministry said.

A high-profile Russian war correspondent, Alexander Kots, said “battles have been going on” around Ugledar, in the south of the Donetsk region, and further north in Soledar and Bakhmut.

Wagner boss Yevgeny Prigozhin said that Ukraine’s troops had made gains near Bakhmut.

Russian troops, he said, were leaving the village of Berkhivka near Bakhmut.

A Moscow-installed official said Ukrainian troops were on the offensive in the southern region of Zaporizhzhia, home to Europe’s largest nuclear plant, which has been under the control of Russia’s forces since the start of Moscow’s offensive.

“It looks like the die has been cast and the next couple of months will clear up a lot. The fight will be serious because there is a lot at stake,” Vladimir Rogov said.

Large parts of Donetsk have been held by pro-Moscow separatists since 2014. — **AFP**

EU court strikes down more of Poland’s judicial overhaul

BRUSSELS: The top European Union court on Monday struck down more elements of Poland’s sweeping judicial overhaul for violating the bloc’s democracy tenets, adding to pressure on the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party which faces an election this autumn.

Poland, the largest ex-communist EU country, has lost its reputation as a poster child of democratic transition, as well as access to billions worth of EU funds in bitter rule-of-law battles with the liberal West since PiS came to power in 2015.

On Monday, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) said that publishing online declarations of judges’ memberships of associations, non-profit foundations or political parties violated their right to privacy and could be used to sway them.

The Luxembourg-based court listed that element along with several others in the PiS judicial overhaul that were damaging the independence of judges, and hence undermining the rule of law.

“The Polish justice reform of December 2019 infringes EU law,” the court said in a statement. “The value of the rule of law is an integral part of the very identity of the European Union.”

A hardline deputy justice minister of Poland, Sebastian Kaleta, swiftly dismissed the ruling as “farce”.

The case was brought by EU executive European Commission, which holds the bloc’s budget and is tasked with enforcing joint laws in all 27 member states.

The ruling is final, meaning Poland must now amend the elements of its judicial set-up assessed by the ECJ as illegal. Should Warsaw fail to do that, the ECJ could impose further financial penalties.

In 2021, the ECJ ruled that the broader system introduced by the PiS to police Polish judges also went against EU laws. It later imposed daily fines of 1 million euros for Warsaw’s failure to dissolve it before lowering them to 500,000 a day last April after Poland made some amends.

PiS critics at home and abroad, however, say the wide-ranging changes have exposed Polish courts and judges to direct political meddling. Upset with the PiS’ track-record on democracy, the European Commission blocked Warsaw’s access to 35.5 billion euros of Covid stimulus and billions more in funds meant to help poorer member countries catch up on development. — **Reuters**



The towers of the European Court of Justice are seen in Luxembourg. — **Reuters file photo.**

US, China join naval drills in Indonesia despite rifts

JAKARTA: The United States and China have sent warships to the multinational naval drills that began in Indonesia on Monday, despite the rifts between the two powers.

Washington and Beijing are engaged in fierce competition on diplomatic, military, technological and economic fronts.

The US military has stepped up its Asia-Pacific operations to counter an increasingly assertive China, which has recently staged several rounds of war drills.

But both dispatched warships to the 2023 Multilateral Naval Exercise (MNEK) hosted by Indonesia in its eastern waters off Sulawesi island from Monday to Thursday.

The US Navy has sent a littoral combat ship to the exercise, a US

embassy spokesperson in Jakarta said.

The drills will allow the United States to “join together with like-minded nations, our allies and our partners to work on solving common challenges” such as humanitarian and disaster response, the spokesperson said.

The Chinese Defence Ministry said last week that it would send a destroyer and a frigate at the invitation of the Indonesian navy.

Australia and Russia were also expected to send warships, according to an Indonesian military list.

Officials said there would be 17 foreign vessels involved in the drills, which will focus on non-military operations with key allies.

“MNEK is a non-war training which prioritises maritime coop-



Indonesian Navy stand on the deck of Naval ship during the International Fleet Review part of the Multilateral Naval Exercise Komodo, South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. — **Reuters**

eration in the region,” Indonesian navy spokesperson I Made Wira Hady said in a statement.

Washington and Beijing have

clashed this year over a number of Asia-Pacific issues, a self-ruled, US-backed island that China considers its territory.

They have also been involved in a diplomatic tussle over Pacific island nations.

Tensions skyrocketed when an alleged Chinese spy balloon traversed the United States before it was shot down.

US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin at a defence summit in Singapore last week that the two nations needed to renew dialogue to avoid “misunderstandings” that could lead to conflict.

Beijing had declined an invitation for its defence chief to meet Austin on the sidelines of that summit.

Indonesia’s navy said in a statement the routine drills were a “non-war” exercise that aims to “strengthen relationships between the navies” of 36 countries. — **Reuters**

An epitome of convenient housing



Ali Al Matani
ali.matani2@gmail.com

THE ultimate goal of leadership in this cherished country will remain maintaining a decent life for its citizens, and the provision of convenient housing will be the backbone to achieve this goal.

Previously, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, as well as other civil, military, and security authorities, attempted to issue housing allowances. Also, several government agencies have been striving to give interest-free housing grants, in addition to loans sponsored by the Oman Housing Bank, as well as land for diverse uses.

Today, however, we're witnessing the birth of another model to support the state's direction in this respect, Sultan Haitham City, themed "Treasure the Future."

It keeps pace with the necessities of modern living and its changing dwelling patterns. This is in accordance with the dreams of youths, who aspire to live in areas that provide decent and sophisticated lifestyle.

Sultan Haitham City blossoms like a sweet flower. The city aims to give a decent life for its residents in terms of its locations, components, and smart, modern, and high-level services. Furthermore, all services and facilities are constantly available to respond to remote control instructions from all directions, angles, and distances, demonstrating that the city is truly magnificent.

Such significant efforts indicate His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's willingness to provide a decent living for the people, and this really is a satisfactory move. His Majesty always gives directives and orders until the project is completed in line with the most precise specifications.

It has been noticed that after His Majesty inaugurated the city, he urged officials to pay attention to housing.

This was a heartfelt gesture with multiple meanings, coming from a loving father with a compassionate heart who loves his devoted citizens and works tirelessly to achieve their goals while providing them

PROJECTS
LIKE SULTAN
HAITHAM CITY
HAVE BECOME A
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A FOUNDATION
AND
COMPONENT
OF A DECENT
LIFE THAT HIS
MAJESTY DESIRES
TO PROVIDE NOT
JUST IN MUSCAT,
BUT ACROSS
ALL THE OMANI
CITIES

with means of comfort and psychological and family stability, so they can work, innovate, and flourish without boundaries.

Omani youth no longer have to fantasise about integrated cities like Al Mouj, Muscat Hills, Muscat Bay, and other integrated complexes with the launch of Sultan Haitham City.

Such complexes have become a new normal as a foundation and component of a decent life that His Majesty desires to provide not just in Muscat, but across all the Omani cities.

The enlightened leadership will continue to realise these ambitions until all of the people in our state enjoy a decent lifestyle based on the most recent models that mirror the future with all of its ramifications.

We hope that our efforts in this field will be rewarded with success, moving the revitalised renaissance wheel towards safety and prosperity. As His Majesty has mentioned, we hope that everyone works together to guarantee the success of these noble and creative endeavours.

Donald Trump boosted by bloated 2024 race

FRANKIE TAGGART

WITH three denizens of the Republican establishment launching presidential campaigns this week, the race for the 2024 nomination has begun to resemble the sprawling 2016 field that proved a huge boon to unfancied outsider Donald Trump.

This time the 76-year-old tycoon is the runaway frontrunner but the conventional wisdom remains the same: the larger the chasing pack, the more likely he is to win by dividing the anti-Trump vote.

Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, who was trounced by Trump in 2016, is expected to launch a fresh tilt at the White House on Tuesday, a day ahead of ex-vice president Mike Pence and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum. Christie, who will announce in New Hampshire, presents a novel challenge as the only contender so far willing to land genuinely damaging blows on Trump as he makes his case for four years in the Oval Office.

The 60-year-old Newark native has already begun needling his former friend, arguing last month that the former reality TV star and real estate tycoon was "afraid" of debating serious opponents. Trump has indicated that he may skip at least one of the first two debates, expressing a reluctance to share the limelight with lower-polling rivals.

The former federal prosecutor came in sixth in New Hampshire seven years ago and eventually endorsed Trump, serving as a key advisor before the pair had a high-profile falling out.

Christie has since assailed Trump on all manner of issues, highlighting the escalating criminal probes targeting the embattled billionaire, trashing his false claims of election fraud and dubbing him "Putin's puppet" over his isolationist stance on Russia's attack of Ukraine.

Trump revealed that he relishes the chaos of a crowded field when he welcomed his first serious opponent, former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley, to the race in February, telling Fox News: "The more the merrier."

By midweek there will be 10 major candidates in the Republican primary and another four also-rans, but Trump has a 30-plus point lead over his closest rival, Ron DeSantis, the Florida governor.

Pence, Trump's unwaveringly loyal vice president turned reluctant critic, is expected to launch his campaign on Wednesday, ahead of a CNN Town Hall in Iowa.

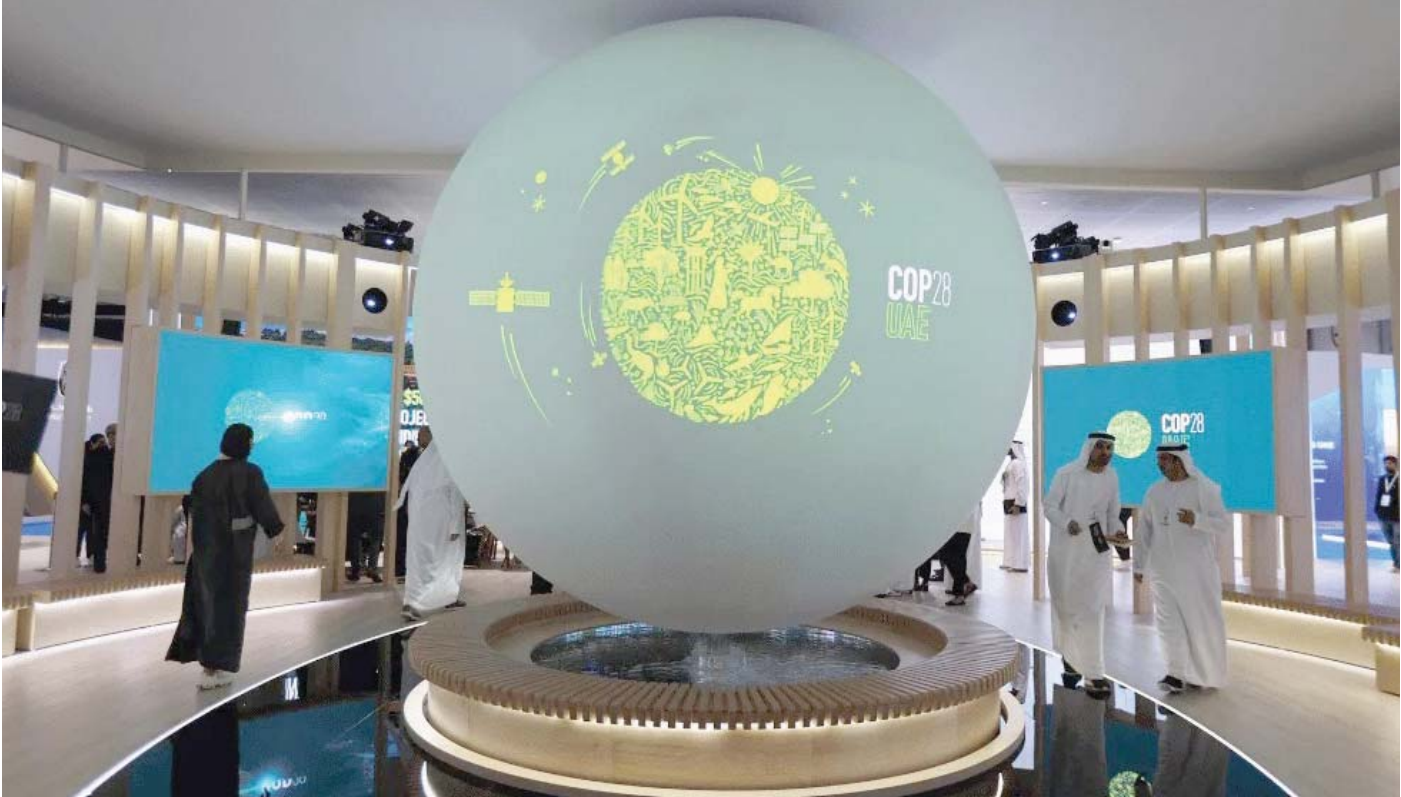
His launch, along with Christie's, complicates the race less for Trump than for DeSantis, who has been on a charm offensive in the first-in-the-nation voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire as he bids to remain competitive. — AFP



ALI RASHID
AL NUAIMI

Ali bin Rashid al Nuaimi is a member of the United Arab Emirates Federal National Council and Chairman of the Defense, Interior, and Foreign Affairs Committee at the Council.

ANY
DISCUSSION
ABOUT THE
ENERGY
TRANSITION
REQUIRES
NUANCE AND
A SINCERE
COMMITMENT
TO JOINT
ACTION.
BUT THAT IS
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WHEN CERTAIN
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COMMITTED
TO CATCHY
SOUNDBITES
AND MAKING
A NAME FOR
THEMSELVES



IT should be common knowledge by now that climate change is a complex problem with outsize consequences for the Global South. By 2030, most Small Island Developing States (SIDS) will lose up to 100 per cent of their GDP to climate disasters. Similarly, Africa's 54 countries will suffer some of the worst consequences of a warming planet, even though they are least responsible for the crisis, contributing less than 4 per cent of global greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions.

Rising temperatures are likewise threatening life in the Arab world, resulting in water scarcity in Jordan and extreme heat waves in the Gulf countries. The need for a great transformation at the regional, as well as the global, level was one of the main reasons why Egypt hosted last year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP27), and why the United Arab Emirates will host this year's meeting.

Building on its strategic decision to promote and invest in renewables, conservation, and climate technology, the UAE selected Sultan al Jaber as the COP28 president-designate. The choice has received ample attention: in addition to being the chairman of Masdar – the world's first carbon-neutral city and home to the International Renewable Energy Agency – and the minister of industry and advanced technology, Al Jaber is managing director and group CEO of

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

Accelerating climate action, meeting the challenges of the energy transition, and maintaining the world's demand for oil must be addressed comprehensively. Recognising this reality, the UAE has chosen as its official to oversee talks someone who has extensive experience in renewable-energy projects, as a special envoy for climate change, and in positions responsible for reducing industrial emissions.

A small but loud group of politicians in the United States and Europe, together with some activists, have questioned why an "oil executive" is leading COP28. Many of these policymakers insist on reducing climate negotiations to a zero-sum game. By distracting people from the challenge of implementing realistic climate solutions and focusing instead on Al Jaber's appointment, they seem to view the fight against global warming as a political stick to wield, rather than a global imperative that requires close collaboration.

Last week, members of the US Congress and the European Parliament sent a letter to US President Joe Biden, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres urging the removal of Al Jaber as COP28 president-designate. Their demand was not based on any wrongdoing or a lack of commitment to the role, but rather was a means to score political points at the expense of a united global effort

to tackle climate change and maintain economic growth.

Legislators should ensure the best possible outcomes for their constituents and their children, not embrace positions based on political biases without any effort at genuine engagement. Worse still, the US and European legislators are advocating international intervention in a sovereign decision – the latest in a long line of Western efforts to dictate to Global South governments for domestic political gain.

Moreover, the tendency to prescribe policy solutions to Global South countries – which are often the worst hit by climate change and have endured injustice after injustice, including colonialism and resource extraction – is widening the gap between approaches to global warming.

Any discussion about the energy transition requires nuance and a sincere commitment to joint action. But that is impossible when certain politicians are more committed to catchy soundbites and making a name for themselves. The world has largely agreed on the need to reduce GHG emissions. We cannot let a minority change the framing of the problem and, in the process, slow momentum. The climate crisis is real, as is the political drama that impedes tangible and practical solutions. We must avoid the trap of division and distraction if we want to address global warming before it is too late.

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Life is a dance, not just a chance

“Good to see you are still hustling around,” said a person with a lot of creativity. The word ‘Hustle’ has been evolving.

These days so many words have different meanings that one has to pause and think in which context the word ought to be taken.

The way to go about it would be the age and the personality of the speaker, which would take us on the track to know from where it is sourcing out from.

Hustle in the past was negative, but today it defines inspiration and work. Everyone is talking about side hustles too.

Lifestyle across the globe has changed and a side hustle seems to be the in thing — making the extra income.

In the past in certain cultures it was unthinkable to do certain jobs or think of having a part time job. Now it is all about feeling good about utilising your skills as well as time and getting reward for.

So then ‘hustling’ is a compliment. But now it is about the word ‘still’ in front of the word ‘hustling’.

What do you do when you are enjoying something you do? Should you worry about what others might be thinking?

You see, everyone can be thinking and having an opinion on something and everything. Only the individual would know what is right for them. An adventure is awesome as a holiday but when you want life long adventures it can be tiresome at times. Then again it depends on the person’s outlook.

Over the years I have had the pleasure of interviewing people who chose to do things differently.

In the 90s, I had interviewed a Bushpilot who flew through 70 countries, and in recent years a long distance hiker who walked from Europe to the GCC to visit Mecca. The explorers have an instinct, but not sure if they have a vision first and then follow it up. But they go with the flow. It seems when you are in the right



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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HUSTLE IN THE PAST WAS NEGATIVE, BUT TODAY IT DEFINES INSPIRATION AND WORK. EVERYONE IS TALKING ABOUT SIDE HUSTLES TOO

frame of mind you can easily detect the opportunities and you are open to them.

Now would it not be lovely if all of us could have the attitude of exploring, thriving with the spirit of an explorer - taking each day with excitement, counting each experience as precious. Let us reflect on our own life and we realise how vividly we remember certain chapters in our lives that are emotional.

Bush pilot Tom Claytor had been flying through Africa and then reached Yemen. And from there he came to Oman and had the opportunity to interview the person who believed in ‘Wisdom of the Wilderness.’ Environment and wildlife were his focus.

As for long distance hikers, Thair Abud, who has now completed 43,000 km on foot continues to walk with a cause and an objective. He has been walking from Nordkapp to Cape Town since 2018 supporting children with cancer.

What struck me the most were their passion, focus and determination. The undivided focus almost makes them a different species. And to them it does not matter what others think. They must have met thousands of people but they are more than faces because they will leave with them a spark - a spark that is extraordinary.

That reminds of the point late Shaikh Khalfan al Esry used to say, “Be extraordinary!” “There are too many ordinary people.”

Emotions are strong and they can inspire or distract. Distract because if not contained emotions can defeat oneself taking one away from the goal. It is important that we connect with our emotions because it can bring out creativity too. Nevertheless, it is important to bounce back to normalcy to continue your path because life is a gift bestowed upon us.

So let’s look inside and see what truly connects us. The world has just observed Environment Day and how about stopping the use of one time use of plastic products?

WATERBOMBING



A helicopter drops water on the Danny Fire as it burns over 1,500 acres of Lancaster, California, US, on Monday. – Reuters

It’s the end of programming as we know it

FARHAD MANJOO

THOUGH I did find it fascinating to learn to think the way computers do, there seemed to be something fundamentally backward about programming a computer that I just couldn’t get over: Wasn’t it odd that the machines needed us humans to learn their maddeningly precise secret languages in order to get the most out of them? If they’re so smart, shouldn’t they try to understand what we’re saying, rather than us learning how to talk to them?

Now that may finally be happening. In a kind of poetic irony, software engineering is looking like one of the fields that could be most thoroughly altered by the rise of artificial intelligence. Over the next few years, AI could transform computer programming from a rarefied, highly-compensated occupation into a widely accessible skill that people can easily pick up and use as part of their jobs across a wide variety of fields. This won’t necessarily be terrible for computer programmers — the world will still need people with advanced coding skills — but it will be great for the rest of us. Computers that we can all “programme,” computers that don’t require specialised training in order to adjust and improve their functionality and that don’t speak in code: That future is rapidly becoming the present.

AI tools based on large language models — like Open AI Codex, from

PROGRAMMING MIGHT STILL BE A WORTHWHILE SKILL TO LEARN, IF ONLY AS AN INTELLECTUAL EXERCISE, BUT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SILLY TO THINK OF IT AS AN ENDEAVOUR INSULATED FROM THE VERY AUTOMATION IT WAS ENABLING

the company that brought you ChatGPT, or AlphaCode, from Google’s DeepMind division — have already begun to change the way many professional coders do their jobs. At the moment, these tools work mainly as assistants — they can find bugs, write explanations for snippets of poorly documented code and offer suggestions for code to perform routine tasks (not unlike how Gmail offers ideas for email replies — “Sounds good”; “Got it”).

“Programming will be obsolete,” Matt Welsh, a former engineer at Google and Apple, predicted recently. Welsh now runs an AI startup, but his prediction, while perhaps self-serving, doesn’t sound implausible:

“I believe the conventional idea of “writing a programme” is headed for extinction, and indeed, for all but very specialised applications, most software, as we know it, will be replaced by AI systems that are trained rather than programmed. In situations where one needs a “simple” programme ... those programmes will, themselves, be generated by an AI rather than coded by hand.”

An AI “doesn’t care how you programme it — it will try to understand what you mean,” Jensen Huang, the chief executive of the chip-making company Nvidia, said in a speech this week

at the Computex conference in Taiwan. He added: “We have closed the digital divide. Everyone is a programmer now — you just have to say something to the computer.”

Wait a second, though — wasn’t coding supposed to be one of the can’t-miss careers of the digital age? In the decades since I puttered around with my Spectrum, computer programming grew from a nerdy hobby into a vocational near-imperative, the one skill to acquire to survive technological dislocation, no matter how absurd or callous-sounding the advice. Joe Biden to coal miners: Learn to code! Twitter trolls to laid-off journalists: Learn to code! Tim Cook to French kids: Apprendre à programmer!



Programming might still be a worthwhile skill to learn, if only as an intellectual exercise, but it would have been silly to think of it as an endeavour insulated from the very automation it was enabling. Over much of the history of computing, coding has been on a path toward increasing simplicity. Once, only the small priesthood of scientists who understood binary bits of 1s or 0s could manipulate computers.

Over time, from the development of assembly language through more human-readable languages like C and Python and Java, programming has climbed what computer scientists call increasing levels of abstraction — at each step growing more removed from the electronic guts of computing and

more approachable to the people who use them.

AI might now be enabling the final layer of abstraction: The level on which you can tell a computer to do something the same way you’d tell another human.

So far, programmers seem to be on board with how AI is changing their jobs. GitHub, the coder’s repository owned by Microsoft, surveyed 2,000 programmers last year about how they’re using GitHub’s AI coding assistant, Copilot. A majority said Copilot helped them feel less frustrated and more fulfilled in their jobs; 88 per cent said it improved their productivity.

Researchers at Google found that among the company’s programmers, AI reduced “coding iteration time” by 6 per cent.

I’ve tried to introduce my two kids to programming the way my dad did for me, but both found it a snooze.

Their disinterest in coding has been one of my disappointments as a father, not to mention a source of anxiety that they could be out of step with the future. (I live in Silicon Valley, where kids seem to learn to code before they learn to read.) But now I’m a bit less worried. By the time they’re looking for careers, coding might be as antiquated as my first PC.

— The New York Times

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RUUD ROARS PAST JARRY

J A B E U R R A C E S I N T O Q U A R T E R S , H A D D A D M A I A W I N S E P I C M A T C H

PARIS: Casper Ruud continued his bid to reach back-to-back finals at the French Open by fending off Chile’s Nicolas Jarry in a 7-6(3), 7-5, 7-5 fourth-round win on Monday as Tunisian trailblazer Ons Jabeur also stayed on course for a maiden Grand Slam crown.

Ruud, who has only dropped two sets in four matches so far, faced a tricky test against lanky claycourt specialist Jarry but pulled through in three hours and 20 minutes as his opponent failed to make his chances count in the last two sets.

“If we had gone five sets I don’t know how long we would have played,” said Ruud on court Philippe Chatrier. “I have to thank my team for pushing me in practice. I did the work and physically I was ready for more.”

He next faces either Dane Holger Rune in a re-match of last year’s quarterfinal, or Argentina’s Francisco Cerundolo.

Jabeur moved into the quarterfinals at Roland Garros for the first time with a 6-3, 6-1 win over American Bernarda Pera and hoped that the romantic atmosphere of Paris will help her quest for a maiden Grand Slam title.

“Paris is always romantic, day or night. Winning here will definitely be an amazing memory for me,” said Jabeur, who became the first African player to reach the quarters at each of the four majors in the Open Era.

The Tunisian had reached the Australian Open quarterfinal in 2020 and finished runner-up to Elena Rybakina and Iga Swiatek in the Wimbledon and US Open title clashes last year.

The 28-year-old is not getting complacent ahead of her clash with 14th seed Beatriz Haddad Maia, who beat Sara Sorribes Tormo 6-7(3), 6-3, 7-5 to become the first Brazilian woman since Maria Bueno in 1968 to make the quarterfinals of a major.

“For now, I just want to take it one match at a time,” added Jabeur. “I will have a very difficult quarterfinal. I was just taking it one match at a time, trying to make it to the second week. Now I’m going to push more for the next few matches.”

HADDAD MAIA PREVAILS

Haddad Maia became only the second Brazilian woman to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final in the Open Era after Bueno



Tunisia’s Ons Jabeur plays a shot during her fourth round match against Bernarda Pera of the US. – Reuters



Brazil’s Beatriz Haddad Maia celebrates a point against Spain’s Sara Sorribes Tormo during their fourth round match. – AFP

and she got there in three hours and 51 minutes — the longest women’s match of the tournament.

Russian Daria Kasatkina said she left the tournament with a sense of bitterness after being booed off by the crowd following her fourth-round defeat by Ukraine’s Elina Svitolina on Sunday.

“Leaving Paris with a very bitter feeling. All these days, after every match I’ve played in Paris I always appreciated and thanked the crowd for their support and being there for the players,” Kasatkina wrote on Twitter.

“But yesterday I was booed for just being respectful on my opponent’s position not to shake hands. Me and Elina showed respect to each other after a tough match but leaving the court like that was the worst part of yesterday.

“Be better, love each other. Don’t spread hate.”

Belarusian world number two Aryna Sabalenka, who has snubbed the media after being grilled about Russia’s “special military operation” in Ukraine, can expect a hostile reception from the fickle Parisian crowd when she plays Svitolina on Tuesday.

— Reuters



LOCAL FLAVOUR

Team India crowned champions at Nations Cup



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Team India became the winners for a second year in a row in the Nations Cup tennis tournament organised by the Diplomatic Club Oman on Saturday by 2-0 against Oman.

For India, it was a game of defending the trophy that they have won last year while it was a play of power for Oman.

Sivan Govind defeated Wail 9-4 in the first singles. Young and upcoming player Wail gave a good fight to seasoned Sivan. He prevailed with his experience

and tact in a well fought victory. In the doubles match, Shrikanth and Sivan outclassed Warith and Abdullah 9-4.

It was a splendid match and Abdullah and Warith gave a tough fight to Sivan and Shrikanth with good serve and volleys.

The winning Indian team players were led by captain Suhail Khan, Sivan Govind, Girish KK, Shlok Ail and Shrikanth S.

The Oman team comprised, under the captaincy of Abdullah, Wail and Warith who fought their level best throughout the tournament.

MINISTRY HONOURS OUTSTANDING ATHLETES OF 2022



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Under the patronage of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth commemorated the exceptional achievements of sports athletes for the year 2022.

The ministry bestowed recognition upon athletes who secured prominent positions and demonstrated outstanding accomplishments, earning gold, silver, and bronze medals in international forums.

Additionally, several sports federations, committees, and the technical and administrative staff were honoured for their invaluable contributions. A total of 293 athletes, 9 sports federations, and 10 sports committees were acknowledged, having achieved a remarkable tally of 196 gold, silver and bronze medals. This tribute pays homage to their unwavering dedication and relentless pursuit of excellence, resulting in remarkable achievements that have proudly raised the flag of the Sultanate of Oman on the international stage.

The ceremony featured a captivating visual presentation showcasing the athletes' achievements in various championships at the global,

continental and Arab levels, including the West Asian Championships and regional tournaments.

Basil bin Ahmed al Rowas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Sports and Youth, emphasised that this commendation solidifies the ministry's commitment to supporting Omani youth and their accomplishments in the sporting domain through international participation, exceptional rankings, and noteworthy achievements. The Sultanate of Oman takes immense pride in bestowing 196 gold, silver and bronze medals, as these achievements signify a source of great pride within the sports realm.

Furthermore, Al Rowas highlighted the ministry's efforts in 2022 to enhance athlete preparation systems. The current vision aims to bolster the endeavours of sports federations and committees by expanding the base of sports practice under their supervision. This initiative is carried out through the 'Athletes Preparation Centres' support programme and the 'Support and Care for Athletes: Promising' programme, which has admitted a number of Omani athletes who fulfilled the admission

requirements and possessed the scientific and physical indicators necessary to attain remarkable success at continental and international levels.

In pursuit of a comprehensive database encompassing Omani athletes, which can be utilised to leverage research and scientific advancements in developing athletes' physiological and physical capabilities, an electronic programme to follow up on sports performance' is currently being designed and implemented. The programme's launch is expected in June, providing an extensive record for all athletes in the Sultanate of Oman and delivering crucial data to technical personnel across various sports disciplines. Al Rowas added that this electronic programme will be accessible to all sports organisations, including sports federations, committees, public and private schools and academies.

Hisham bin Juma al Sanani, Director General of Sports Welfare and Development at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, expressed that the celebration of honouring remarkable achievements in the sports field for the year 2022 reflects the tireless efforts of sports federations, committees, and

the administrative and technical personnel of various national teams. Their collective dedication has cultivated an environment that motivates athletes to reach their desired goals. This celebration also signifies the high regard shown by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the directives of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, as emphasised in the pillars of the Omani sports strategy.

Al Sanani further elaborated on the ministry's initiatives, highlighting the launch of several projects and programmes aimed at advancing Omani sports, including strategic programmes such as supporting sports preparation centres, sponsoring promising athletes, developing national technical personnel and establishing an electronic platform for sports performance follow-up.

The ministry's unwavering support, coupled with the development of athlete preparation systems, investment in sports infrastructure, and the implementation of comprehensive programmes, will undoubtedly contribute to the continued growth and success of Omani athletes on both regional and international platforms.

Ambo Ali passes international coaching course in Hungary

MUSCAT: Oman national coach Mahmoud bin Ali Ambo Ali, passed the International Coaching Course organised by the Hungarian University of Sport Sciences in cooperation with the International Olympic Solidarity in Budapest, Hungary, during the period from April 3 to June 1.

The course comes as part of the programmes to support the technical staff supported by the International Olympic Solidarity, where the programme witnessed a wide participation of technical cadres specialised in international coaching programmes. Twelve coaches from different countries in various sports took part.

Coach Mahmoud, the candidate of Oman Basketball Association, finished the course with 'Excellent' grade of 4.79 out of 5.

The course included 12 theoretical courses, in addition to a specialised course in basketball that included theoretical lectures and practical applications in general adaptation, sports injuries, ethics in sports, sports science, and biomechanics in sports, in addition to sports sociology, physiological exercises, sports management, and sports science. Sports psychology, sports nutrition and sports theories.

Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), through the Olympic



Solidarity Department, has put forward a number of training and rehabilitation programmes and opportunities provided by the International Olympic Solidarity within the Plan 2021/2024, through the Olympic Solidarity platform on OOC website to support the national coaches system.

Muscat Academies Youth League to begin in October

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

As many as 400 expected junior footballers will take part in the first edition of the Muscat Academies Youth League which will begin in next October and will run to March next year. The youth league for private football academies will be hosted and facilitated by the Cheltenham Muscat school.

Coach Chuck Martini, former English Premier League footballer and head of Muscat Football Academy, told sports reporters during a press meet at the Cheltenham Muscat school that this league will be a special occasion to run a professional youth league.

"The tournament will attract many young players from different ages including under-9, under-11, under-13, under-15 and under-17. The league will be for both genders while for girls the categories will be up to under-14. We are expecting participation of many private academies in Oman and as per the initial plan the number of academies will be in



a range of 8 to 10 teams in each category. There will be a registration fees of RO 100 for each team to pay ahead of the league," he added.

Organised by Muscat Football Academy in cooperation with Muscat Media Group, the league for age-group teams, will be played at the lush green

grounds of Cheltenham Muscat.

The head of Muscat Football Academy clarified that the playing format of the league will be special for each category. "The under-9 league will have seven players in a side while U11, U13 and U15 will be eight players in a side. In U17 league, it will be nine players a side. The

youth league will be a best environment for discovering and developing the talented players as there will be competitive games and matches," he said.

Martini, a former Moroccan international, revealed that the Muscat Academies Youth League will also be open to age-group teams from OFA-recognised clubs.

He said: "We have got a good response so far. We have around 16 private football academies and schools in operations in Oman. We are hopeful that the inaugural edition will feature at least eight academies and around 400 kids across all categories."

Coach Martini sought more support from the Oman Football Association (OFA). "As private football academies, we are facing some challenges to organise these kind of leagues for youth categories. We hope to have a collaboration very soon with the OFA and the private academies supported by the domestic clubs. Besides that, many private academies in Muscat managed to provide golden opportunities for many talented players to play in professional leagues in Europe including

Tariq al Saadi, Suhaib al Kharusi, Ali al Hashmi and Mohammed al Numani," he ended.

Graeme Fisher, director of Cheltenham Muscat, said: "We are a new school in Oman, having launched our operations two years back. We have always believed in all-round development of children and sports activities which are part and parcel of our curriculum. We are proud to be partners of Muscat Football Academy for the league, which will bring together kids from different schools and academies. It gives us a sense of community involvement and we are happy to be associated with it."

Sultan al Harassi, former national youth team player, who was also present on the occasion said, "there is a need for better coordination between private football academies and Oman Football Association. This initiative is praiseworthy as it will give a good platform for children to compete over months and help them gain exposure to play against different teams. I am looking forward to a successful inaugural league for the youths."

Modric and Lloris among ‘more than 10’ Saudi targets

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is hoping to lure a swathe of world-famous footballers including Luka Modric and Hugo Lloris, a source close to the negotiations said, after snagging Cristiano Ronaldo and launching bids for Lionel Messi and Karim Benzema.

“More than 10” seasoned players including N’Golo Kante and Roberto Firmino have been approached, the source said, by the kingdom which has ambitions of hosting the World Cup.

According to Saudi sources and state media this weekend, delegations flew to Paris and Madrid to secure the signatures of Messi and Benzema after their final games for Paris Saint-Germain and Real Madrid.

But the Saudis are also “in contact with more than 10 players, many of them won the World Cup or the Champions League, to join the Saudi league next season”, said the source close to the talks, on condition of anonymity.

In addition to Messi, “the list includes Benzema, (Sergio) Ramos, (Angel) Di Maria, Modric, Hugo Lloris, Kante, Firmino, (Jordi) Alba and (Sergio) Busquets”.

“Besides receiving quite lucrative offers they will play in a very competitive league,” the source said, adding that the Saudis aimed to “seal most of the deals” before the new season starts on August 11.

Such a wishlist would have seemed unthinkable before the Saudis pulled off the signing of Ronaldo, 37, in January on a two-and-a-half-year deal said to be worth more than 400 million euros. Last month, a source close to the Messi negotiations said that his signature was a “done deal”, describing the terms of the agreement as “huge”.

Sovereign wealth fund

All the players listed are major stars at the tail-end of their careers, Firmino being the youngest at 31. Apart from French goalkeeper Lloris, who has a year left at Spurs, all are out of contract this month.

According to the sources, the contracts are being bankrolled by the Saudis’ Public Investment Fund, one of the world’s biggest sovereign wealth vehicles with more than \$620 billion in assets.

If the players sign, they will be divided between five Saudi clubs: Al Hilal, Al Nassr, Al Shabab, Al Ittihad and Al Ahly, the sources added. Modric, Ramos, Kante, Alba and Busquets appear the closest to signing, they said.

Modric, Real Madrid’s influential midfielder, and Ramos, who is leaving Paris Saint-Germain, would join Ronaldo at Al Nassr, while Kante would play at Saudi champions Al Ittihad, the sources added.

The Saudi Pro League, which next season is expanding to 18 teams allowed to field eight foreign players each, is also set for a structural revamp with plans to privatise the clubs from September. The clubs, currently public property under the supervision of the sports ministry, will be sold to private companies or businesspeople as part of plans to more than double the league’s value to eight billion riyals (\$2.13 billion) by 2030.

“The Saudi Pro League... will be supported in its ambition to be amongst the top 10 leagues in the world,” the official Saudi Press Agency said on Monday. A Saudi government official also confirmed that the authorities are holding negotiations with “world-class players”. “The objective is to establish a very strong and competitive league and elevate the Saudi clubs’ levels,” the official said. — AFP



Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric attends a training session at the Real Madrid City training complex in Valdebebas, outskirts of Madrid. — AFP





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30 transport regulations to be overhauled: MoTCIT

KEY PLATFORM: OCCI convenes high-level dialogue on Transport and Logistics Challenges

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) organised on Sunday a high-level dialogue session to address the pressing challenges faced by the transport and logistics sectors.

Prominent attendees included Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the OCCI, Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) for Transport, and Rashid bin Saeed al Ghaithi, Vice Chairman of the OCCI's Logistics Sector Committee.

During his opening speech, Faisal al Rawas emphasised the pivotal role played by the transport and logistics sectors in



propelling the Omani economy. He highlighted their significance in fostering economic growth, job creation, and trade promotion.

Addressing the challenges faced by these sectors, such as high costs, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of skilled labour, was identified as a crucial priority. Al Shamakhi, Transport Under-Secretary, took the opportunity

to outline the ministry's plans for tackling the challenges confronting the transport and logistics sectors.

The ministry aims to develop a comprehensive national logistics strategy, enhance the efficiency of the road network, and advocate for sustainable transportation modes.

Following the dialogue session, a question-and-answer segment provided participants with the

opportunity to discuss various issues pertaining to the transport and logistics sectors. While acknowledging the significant challenges at hand, participants expressed optimism for the future.

Regulatory overhaul in a bid to establish a well-organised and sustainable transport and logistics system, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information

Technology has unveiled an ambitious agenda for the current year. The primary objective of the ministry is to develop and update more than 30 legislation and regulations within the transport and logistics sector.

Key initiatives include the overhaul of the Roads Law, the implementation of a comprehensive policy and plan to ensure compliance with safety requirements in road projects, and the enforcement of rigorous quality control and monitoring protocols.

The ministry also intends to launch a digital meter application for taxi vehicles to enhance efficiency and transparency in the transit system.

Furthermore, the ministry will formulate educational transport regulations, devise a comprehensive strategy for land ports and logistical centres, and issue international public transport regulations.

In addition, there will be an in-depth analysis of human capital in the land transport sector and the updating of data pertaining to the

land transport fleet in the Sultanate of Oman. The establishment of a user-friendly digital platform for electronic ticket issuance is also on the agenda.

In the maritime domain, the ministry will introduce a new maritime law and issue a set of regulations. Additionally, they will develop a design guide and standard specifications for marine facilities in the Sultanate of Oman.

A strategic study to assess port conditions in the country and the implementation of a comprehensive multimodal transport law are also included in the ministry's plans.

To ensure the effectiveness of existing legislation, the ministry will review and evaluate laws pertaining to the logistics sector.

They will also publish a reference framework delineating logistical professions, required skills, qualifications, and training opportunities. The ministry acknowledges the importance of revisiting local content policies and assignable contracts for logistics sector companies.

National Intellectual Property Strategy under finalisation

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) partnered with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and the Omani Intellectual Property Association in the organisation of a significant workshop titled, 'High-level Dialogue between the Sultanate of Oman and WIPO'.

This two-day event, held at the Intercity Hotel in Muscat, aims to explore and enhance Oman's intellectual property system while fostering collaboration with WIPO.

Eng Khalid al Hinai, Director of the National Intellectual Property Office at the (MoCIIP), said steps are being taken to complete the national strategy for intellectual property.

This strategy is built upon several key pillars, including intellectual property management, the generation of intellectual property assets, awareness and training, and the enforcement of intellectual property rights. There is also an initiative to support inventors and creators from society, individuals, and institutions.

Dr Sherif Saadallah (pictured), Director of the WIPO Academy at the World Intellectual Property



Organisation, emphasised the importance of this dialogue to review the cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and WIPO.

The forum will review various areas of cooperation, including the modernisation of the intellectual property office in the (MoCIIP), collaboration to protect Omani frankincense, cooperation with the Omani judiciary, and Sultan Qaboos University.

Approximately 17 government agencies and supporting associations are involved in these cooperative efforts, leading to the adoption of many new projects between Oman and WIPO.

Key topics on the agenda include the establishment of a national training centre specialising in intellectual property, the functioning of intellectual property offices, and the identification of opportunities and challenges in this field.

OQGN signs MoU with Hydrom on green hydrogen

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the sole transporter of natural gas in the Sultanate of Oman and owner of the natural gas transportation network, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), to study the development of green hydrogen network infrastructure in the Sultanate of Oman.

This partnership establishes a strong collaboration and is the first step towards the development of an optimal, efficient, and cost-effective solution for green hydrogen transportation in Oman.

OQGN will leverage on its expertise and capabilities to provide shared infrastructure plans allowing green hydrogen developers to capitalise on the substantial technical and economical synergies and benefits of a shared infrastructure.

OQGN is well placed to be at the centre of the development of green hydrogen network initiatives.

The company will help explore the best options for the development and construction of green hydrogen pipeline network infrastructure to transport green hydrogen from Hydrom's renewables and clean hydrogen blocks to the downstream plants at the special economic zones and ports, as well as linking the network across governorates and



explore potential interconnection with neighbouring countries — as part of Hydrom's master plan.

Further, the partnership will help to facilitate study outcomes, which will enable local company talents to develop optimal, efficient, and cost-effective solutions for green hydrogen transportation in Oman, advancing the green hydrogen economy and attracting international investments.

The agreement was formalised as part of OQGN's efforts to drive clean energy initiatives and is a direct reflection of OQGN's deep commitment to developing clean energy infrastructure, as well as an acknowledgment of OQGN's capabilities and expertise by key stakeholders in the hydrogen ecosystem.

Mansoor bin Ali al Abdali, Managing Director, OQGN, commented: "OQGN's core focus is on clean energy infrastructure. This MoU reflects both the importance

of green hydrogen for the Sultanate of Oman and our intention to play a leading role in green hydrogen transportation. We are delighted to be formalising our relationship with Hydrom, which has already achieved a great deal in its first year of existence."

Dr Firas bin Ali al Abduwani, Acting Managing Director at Hydrom, added: "The huge potential and rich natural resources for green hydrogen in Oman can only truly be captured through the development of robust and reliable infrastructure.

We are therefore delighted to be signing this MoU with OQGN.

We are confident there are many other similar opportunities that we are hoping to explore with other national and international infrastructure providers, which will benefit the green hydrogen developers by providing reliable cornerstones, supporting Hydrom's vision of creating a green hydrogen hub in the Sultanate of Oman."

Oman extends voluntary oil production cut to end of 2024

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, has announced its decision to extend its voluntary cut of 40,000 barrels of oil per day until December 2024 as a precautionary measure.

This decision, the ministry said, was made in coordination with the countries participating in the Opec+ agreement, which includes both Opec members and non-Opec oil-producing countries.

Opec described the move as aiming to "achieve and sustain a stable oil market, and to provide long-term guidance for the market, and in line with the successful approach of being precautionous, proactive and preemptive."

The extension of the voluntary cut is seen as a positive move by analysts, who believe that it will help stabilise the global oil market and ensure that oil prices remain within a reasonable range.

Last April, Opec+ announced surprise oil output cuts of around 1.16 million barrels per day.

Mala’a wins excellence award for credit information services



MUSCAT: Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre (Mala’a) received an Award for Excellence in Credit Information Services at the New Age Banking Summit by OER Magazine. Mala’a is the official source for credit and financial information through credit reports and credit scores.

The credit parameters make for crucial criterion that determines eligibility to obtain credit services such as loans, credit cards, etc. Oman Credit and Financial Information Centre is noted for its interest in preserving the confidentiality of information and protecting the privacy of customers.

Bassam al Jamali, General

Manager of Mala’a, expressed the importance of receiving this award and what it indicates for the future of credit services in Oman: “Winning this award motivates us to further enhance our services and provide market driven solutions and products within the banking and financial sector in addition to supporting other beneficiary sectors.

Current digital times require access to reliable and efficient data which Mala’a works hard to provide through further growing the information network. We also aspire to be positioned as the facilitating arm in the Digital Transformation process that the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing in every sector.”

Sidrah 2.0 to cultivate and enhance the skills of young Omani women

MUSCAT: Sidrah 2.0, the second edition of the youth leadership programme for young Omani women announced the launch of the programme. Following the resounding success of its inaugural in 2022, the programme aims to cultivate and enhance the skills of Oman’s talented youth.

Co-designed and co-run by Lahunna Oman and Outward Bound Oman, Sidrah 2.0 brings together a diverse group of young women aged 20-30 from across the Sultanate of Oman, that is all inclusive for students, fresh graduates, job-seekers, and young professionals.

The programme is designed to equip participants with the confidence, resilience, and leadership qualities needed to become the next generation of transformational leaders. Through a combination of experiential learning, workshops, mentorship, community building and career coaching, Sidrah 2.0 aims to create a transformative learning experience that seeps into their hearts and ignites a life-long thirst for continuous learning.

Over the 6-month course of the programme, participants will engage in activities and



workshops that foster self-awareness, self-reliance, perseverance, networking, and effective collaboration. This will instil a sense of higher purpose and service-oriented mind-sets, enabling participants to make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

Sidrah 2.0 has been enhanced with a coaching initiative in partnership with the International Coaching Federation (ICF) – Oman Chapter. Participants will benefit from 3-6 months of group

and one-to-one career coaching sessions, providing invaluable support and guidance as they navigate their personal and professional journeys.

Shatha bint Salim al Maskiriyah, Lahunna’s Founder, said: “After the success of our inaugural edition, we aim to offer our young Omani women a profound journey that inspires them to own and shape their own future. After setting such a wonderful precedent last year with our partner Outward Bound Oman, we have expanded

the programme’s scope to allow us to properly invest in the next generation of leaders who will carry the torch of progress and play a vibrant role in serving the national priorities of Oman’s Vision 2040.”

She added, “Bringing onboard ICF coaches is a crucial step to serve as guiding lights by providing the participants with invaluable support to illuminate their path and unlock their true potential as they embark on a lifelong impactful experience.”

Meethaq Islamic Banking continues supporting SMEs to strengthen national economy

MUSCAT: As the leading Islamic financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat continues to play an important role in supporting the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSME) sector, which has a huge potential for improving economic diversification and creating employment opportunities.

As part of the importance given to the sector, Meethaq had earlier launched a dedicated desk for MSMEs & Corporates at Meethaq branches located in prominent business hubs including Al Khuwair, Al Khoudh, Salalah and the Head Office.

Meethaq has managed to extend its support to its customers by offering a complete range of Sharia complaint products & services



available to them through its extended network of 26 Meethaq branches spread across Oman.

Ali bin Ahmed al Lawati (**pictured**), Assistant General Manager, Meethaq - Corporate Banking, spoke about the importance of MSME sector for the national economy and prosperity to the community.

“Meethaq’s Shariah-compliant MSME solutions are designed to support our customers grow their businesses by availing both funded and non-funded financing. Meethaq

has also been playing a key role in the development of key sectors in the Sultanate of Oman including Manufacturing, Logistics, Telecommunication, Fisheries, Mining and Energy. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for the tremendous confidence they have placed in Meethaq, and promise to continue developing our products and services so as to serve them better, everyday.”

It may be noted that every Meethaq product goes through Shariah compliance certification by the bank’s Shariah Supervisory Board and is created in line with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

The large suite of Islamic banking offerings include project financing, working capital facilities, trade financing, access to the largest Islamic

banking branch network in Oman and digital banking facilities.

Other essential solutions offered by Meethaq include bank guarantees to third parties and Letters of Credit. The services also cover current accounts, deposits and call accounts and corporate purchase cards.

All of these are designed in accordance with Islamic Sharia-compliant contracts such as Murabaha, Musharaka, Ijarah and Wakala amongst others.

Meethaq is continuously working on improving its services and supporting the MSME & corporates sector in enhancing its competitiveness by providing a variety of banking facilities. Most importantly, banking support for the MSME sector is backed by an easy, convenient processes and assistance from dedicated Relationship Managers.

MHD becomes official distributor of Stellantis brands

MUSCAT: MHD the foremost automotive distributor in the Sultanate of Oman, is delighted to announce its collaboration with Stellantis, the world’s fourth-largest car maker. This exciting partnership will see MHD add several iconic brands from the Stellantis lineup to its esteemed portfolio.

MHD Automobiles LLC will now proudly serve as the official distributor for Jeep, RAM, Dodge, and Alfa Romeo. These automotive brands have already garnered immense popularity and admiration among discerning car owners in Oman.

This strategic partnership marks a significant milestone for MHD, solidifying its standing as a leading automotive distributor in the country.

Samir Cherfan, Chief Operating Officer at Stellantis Middle East & Africa, commented: “At Stellantis, we are proud to partner with a company with such strong foundations and a reputation for excellence.

Mohsin Haider Darwish’s extensive network, local market knowledge, and deep understanding of the automotive industry in Oman is the perfect complement to our iconic brands, cutting-edge vehicles and commitment to innovation.

We look forward to a mutually beneficial partnership characterised by collaboration, dedication, and an unwavering focus on our valued customers in Oman.”

Concurred Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, Chief Executive Officer – MHD Automobiles LLC, “We are thrilled to partner with Stellantis and be the sole distributor of these iconic brands.

This collaboration solidifies our position as a leading automotive distributor in Oman, and we are excited to deliver unparalleled experiences to our future customers. By joining forces, we are confident that we will achieve new levels of success and contribute to the growth of the automotive industry in the country.”

Shell Oman, OAA sign MoU for enhancing mobility

MUSCAT: Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), aimed at delivering an exceptional experience for customers of both organisations.

The MoU will offer OAA visitors and members with Oman’s first of its kind Electric Vehicles (EV) charging hub, as well as the first smart service station. Moreover, the partnership will focus on actively contributing to the decarbonisation and net-zero emissions target in line with

Oman Vision 2040 , and the economic development in the country.

The MoU encompasses a range of collaboration opportunities, including access to EV charging, quality fuels and non-fuel retail products and services, development of new service stations, CSR initiatives and supporting OAA’s events and motorsport programmes.

The partnership is meant to support road safety, environmental initiatives while contributing to the national economy through tourism,



youth empowerment, and entrepreneurship. By pooling their resources and expertise, Shell Oman and OAA will

provide innovative solutions that meet evolving customer needs and promote sustainable practices. The collaboration

also aims to establish an EV Recharge network by deploying EV charging units provided by Shell Oman at OAA premises and other locations. It will commence with pilot projects to evaluate performance and optimise operational processes, paving the way for future expansion.

Dr Mohammed al Balushi, CEO of Shell Oman, commented on this partnership stating, “As a prominent player in the energy industry, we leverage our knowledge in energy transition to support the national strategy for an orderly transition to net-

zero by 2050 in line with our Powering Progress strategy. Our strategic partnership with OAA underscores our shared dedication to enhancing customer experiences and convenience especially for motorsports enthusiasts. This collaboration also marks the commencement of an exciting new chapter with a focus on establishing an EV hub for the first time in Oman.

This comes as a stepping stone to Shell Oman’s EV infrastructure and network expansion strategy which will connect EV drivers across the Sultanate of Oman.”

Press Announcement under Article 18(a) of the Takeover & Acquisition Regulation (Capital Market Authority Decision 2/2019)

Oman Cement Company SAOG (the “Company”) discloses that on the 5th of June 2023, it received a written notice from Abra Holdings Limited containing information relating to an acquisition offer to acquire 15.42% of the issued share capital of Oman Cement Company SAOG in accordance with the Takeover & Acquisition Regulation (Capital Market Authority Decision No. 2/2019) (the “**Takeover Regulation**”). This press announcement is made by the Company pursuant to Article 18(a) of the Takeover Regulation.

OFFEROR OR ABRA

Abra Holdings Ltd, a private company registered in Mauritius having its registered office at No. 5, President John Kennedy Street, Rogers House, Port Louis, Mauritius.

OFFER

The offer by the Offeror to all of the Company’s shareholders to acquire an additional 15.42 per cent of the Issued Capital which would increase the Offeror’s shareholding in the Company to 75 per cent of the Issued Capital (being 51,017,895 fully paid-up Company shares as at the Record Date (as defined below).

OFFER DATES

Offer Opens: 14th June 2023 (“Offer Opening Date”)
Offer Closes: 25th June 2023 (“Offer Closing Date”)

RECORD DATE (FOR PURPOSE OF THE OFFER) (“RECORD DATE”)

13th June 2023

OFFER PRICE

A cash-only offer of OMR 0.379 per Company Share which is the price that Abra paid for the 59.58% of the Issued Capital that it acquired from Investment Authority SPC on 5 April 2023, i.e. OMR 0.366 paid at Closing plus the post- Closing adjustment of OMR 0.013 per share. The Offer Price of OMR 0.379 per Company share represents a (1) 17.3% premium versus the Volume Weighted Average Price (“VWAP”) since 1 January 2023; (2) 16.4% premium versus the last three months’ VWAP; and (3) 13.5% premium versus the closing price of 4 June 2023.

OFFER ACCEPTANCE QUALIFICATION

In the event that the Company’s shareholders (together the “Selling Company shareholders” and each a “Selling Company shareholder”) accept the Offer for in aggregate less than or equal to 15.42 per cent of the Issued Capital in accordance with the terms of the Offer Document (which is expected to be delivered by the Offeror to the Company on 8th June), Abra shall be satisfied with those acceptances and shall not withdraw its offer.

In the event that Selling Company shareholders accept the Offer for in aggregate more than 15.42 per cent of the Issued Capital in accordance with the terms of the Offer Document, Abra will acquire the percentage of the Issued Capital from each Selling Company shareholder on a pro rata basis calculated as follows (rounded up or down to the nearest whole Company share but equalling not more in aggregate than 15.42 per cent. of the Issued Capital):

$$\frac{15.42}{A} \times B$$

Where:

A = total percentage of the Issued Capital accepted to be sold to Abra by all Selling Company shareholders
B = percentage of the Issued Capital accepted to be sold by the relevant Selling Company shareholder

ENCUMBRANCES

Only a Company shareholder whose Company shares are not subject to an Encumbrance may accept the Offer.

COMPULSORY ACQUISITION

Due to the Offer being for only 15.42 per cent. of the Issued Capital which would increase Abra Holdings Ltd’s shareholding in the Company to 75.0 per cent. of the Issued Capital, Abra Holdings Ltd will not exercise the “squeeze-out” provisions of Articles 62 to 65 (inclusive) of the Takeover Regulation.

OFFER COMPLETION

The completion of the Offer which shall occur on the date the Offer Price is paid to the Selling Company shareholders post the Offer Closing Date.

OFFER RATIONALE

Abra makes this offer to comply with the requirements of the Takeover Code after it acquired 59.58% of the Company from Investment Authority SPC, a subsidiary of Oman Investment Authority.

OFFER MANAGER

Ubhar Capital SAOC, a closed joint stock company incorporated in Oman and registered office at PO Box 1137, PC 111, Oman.
Ph.: +968 24 949 051
Email: talal@u-capital.net

OTHER DETAILS

SHARES IN THE COMPANY ALREADY HELD BY ABRA

Abra holds 59.58 per cent of the Issued Capital of the Company as of the date of this Press Announcement.

OFFEROR’S INTENTION WITH REGARD TO THE COMPANY

Abra has expressed its intention to contribute to the development of operations at the Company, increase its efficiency in production lines, and enhance its competitiveness locally and regionally, in addition to enhancing the positive image of the Omani industrial sector in general.

OTHER INFORMATION

The Company has not issued any outstanding convertible securities and Abra does not hold any such securities in the Company.

Abra has disclosed that as of this Press Announcement, details of the number and percentage holding of voting Company shares held directly or indirectly by the following persons are as set out below:

- (A) Abra: 197,136,637 Company shares 59.58 per cent.
- (B) the Abra Directors: Nil Company shares, Nil per cent.
- (C) the ultimate shareholders of Abra: Nil Company shares, Nil per cent.

The parties under paragraphs A, B and C above have not dealt in the voting shares in question during the period commencing six months prior to the beginning of the Offer Period and ending with the date of this Press Announcement, with the exception of Abra’s acquisition of 59.58% on 5 April 2023.

COMPETING OFFER (IF ANY)

The Board of Directors of the Company will not be seeking another person to make a competing offer for the shares of the Company.

INDICATIVE OFFER TIMELINE

	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	Offer Announcement	5th June 2023
2	Offer Document sent out to the Company Board and the Company shareholders	8th June 2023
3	The Offer Period opens	14th June 2023
4	The Offer Period closes	25th June 2023
5	Abra to pay the Offer Price for the shares to be acquired	10th July 2023

NOTE: The above timeline is indicative only and may be subject to change, following review, input, and approval from the Competent Authorities.

Acceptance of Offer – Terms, Conditions, & Procedure

SUBMISSION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER

- A copy of this announcement and the Offer Document (once issued) will be emailed to the Company’s shareholders based on MCD data and be available on Ubhar Capital SAOC and CMA websites.
- Selling Company shareholders must send their acceptance by email to the Offer Manager.
- Selling Company shareholders must also contact the Offer Manager to register and/or verify their contact details.

ACCEPTANCE FORM

The acceptance form to be used by the Company’s shareholders to submit their acceptance of the Offer pursuant to the terms of this Press Announcement. These forms will be sent to each Company shareholder through email based on MCD data. The acceptance form will also be available on Offer Manager and CMA websites.

PROCEDURE FOR ACCEPTANCE OF OFFER BY THE COMPANY SHAREHOLDERS

In order to accept the Offer, the Company’s shareholders are required to send an email including a scan of the duly completed and signed Acceptance Form along with scans of the requisite documents (as set out below) before 2 p.m. (Oman time) on the Offer Closing Date to one of the following email addresses:

hunaina@u-capital.net; or
talal@u-capital.net

- A completed Acceptance Form is binding once submitted and cannot be revoked by a Company shareholder.
- The Offer will remain open for acceptance for 12 working days starting from 14th June 2023 to 25th June 2023 (both days inclusive), between 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. (Oman Time). Acceptances received after working hours on Offer Closing Date shall be rejected.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Acceptance Forms furnished by the Company shareholder(s) that do not strictly comply with the requirements set out in the relevant documents may be rejected by the Offer Manager as being incomplete and invalid.

The Acceptance Form must be accompanied by the following documents:

FOR INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS:

- A copy of Omani ID for Omani national Company shareholders or Passport copy for Non-Omani national Company shareholders.
- Birth Certificate of the minor Company shareholder, if father is accepting on behalf of his minor children.
- A copy of valid power of attorney duly endorsed by the competent legal authorities must be included in the event the acceptance is on behalf of another person (with the exception of an acceptance made by a father on behalf of his minor children).

FOR CORPORATE APPLICANTS:

- Commercial registration certificate (or equivalent).
- A certified true copy of the board or shareholders resolution authorizing persons to accept the Offer with specimen signatures of such authorized persons.

ACCEPTANCE BY ABRA

The acceptance by Abra of the Company shares tendered by the Company shareholders and the settlement are subject to the following conditions:

- Approval of the CMA for the final Offer result;
- The settlement for the tendered Company shares does not contravene any applicable laws and regulations;
- Acceptance Form being duly and validly completed along with the required documents and submitted to the Offer Manager before 2 pm (Oman Time) on or before the Offer Closing Date; and
- The person accepting the Offer is a valid shareholder of the Company and the shares held by such shareholders are free from encumbrances.

TIMING OF PAYMENT OF THE OFFER PRICE

Upon receipt of a valid Acceptance Form along with the requisite documents and subject to satisfactory verification, the Offer Manager will notify the eligible Company shareholders regarding the acceptance of the Offer – either in full or reduced pro rata as per section “Offer Acceptance Qualification” above - and arrange to make payment by bank draft/pay order/cheque/bank transfer in favour of the relevant Company shareholder within 10 (ten) days of the Offer Closing Date. No interest, mark-up, surcharge, tax or other increment will be payable for any cause or reason on the aggregate price for the Company shares purchased by Abra from any Company shareholder for any cause or reason.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONCERNING OFFER

Further information in respect of the above will be duly disclosed on the Muscat Stock Exchange website in accordance with the requirements of applicable laws and regulations.

Offer Related Parties & Contact Persons

Offeror	Abra Holdings Ltd	
	Contact:	Zhigang Ke
		No. 426, Gaoxin Avenue Hongshan District, Wuhan, Hubei, China 430070 Tel: 86 15102784185 Email: kezhang@huaxincem.com
Target	Oman Cement Co. SAOG	
	Contact:	Zhu Yaping Chief Executive Officer PO Box 560, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2443 7779 Email: admin@omancement.com
Offer Manager	Ubhar Capital SAOC	
	Contact:	Talal Al Balushi Vice President - Brokerage PO Box 1137, PC 111, CPO, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 24 949 051 / 97709990 Email: talal@u-capital.net Hunaina Banatwala Vice President – Institutional Sales PO Box 1137, PC 111, CPO, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 24 949 053 / 99378351 Email: hunaina@u-capital.net
Legal Advisor to the Offeror	Dentons & Co, Oman Branch	
	Contact:	Jamie Gibson Partner PO Box 3552, PC 112, Ruwi Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 24573010 Email: jamie.gibson@dentons.com

Indian ports will test tycoons’ safe harbour



PRANAV KIRAN

The author is an editorial assistant for Reuters Breakingviews, based in Bangalore.

The ideal shipping port is in calm waters. Those operated by Gautam Adani offered a choppy way for investors to ride a part of India’s infrastructure boom but an initial public offering from billionaire Sajjan Jindal will test their appetite for something more anchored. The chairman of JSW group, is taking India’s second-largest commercial port operator public in Mumbai just months after \$20 billion Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone lost about 40% of

its market value and then mostly recovered from a short attack. Adani denied allegations of stock manipulation and fraud made by Hindenburg Research but scrutiny on the company will intensify after its auditor, an affiliate of Deloitte, this week sounded a note of caution on some of the company’s transactions and gave its books a “qualified opinion”. For the public market wannabe, it tees up a tricky benchmark in a global industry with few listed giants. JSW Infrastructure is closely aligned to India’s growth story. It owns and operates nine port concessions including in Goa and Tamil Nadu, some lasting up to 50 years. It helps move iron ore for the group’s flagship steel business, JSW Steel, and serves private customers too. It will use proceeds from the \$340 million share offer to pay down debt and for the expansion of a liquefied petroleum gas terminal at its Jaigarh Port, among other things. Ports generate long-term stable cash flows and would typically be attractive to global investors seeking refuge from high inflation in the West. More than half of cargo handled at Indian ports last year was coal, petroleum oil and lubricants. And while the global energy transition is disrupting infrastructure investments, India’s growing energy demand means it will continue to import some of these items in increasing quantities. Though Adani is mired in a governance controversy, its underlying ports business is compelling. JSW Infrastructure grew revenue 92% in the three years to March 2022, three times as fast as its rival. But Adani handles five times the cargo traffic and its net profit margin was 12 percentage points higher by the end of that period because a bigger share of its customers are third-parties whom it can charge higher rates. On its peer’s 34 times earnings for the year to March 2022, JSW would be worth \$1.4 billion. Where Jindal’s deal eventually prices will deliver a fresh market verdict of sorts on Adani’s recovery too. — Reuters

Poland defies big polluter expectations with coal use cuts

GAVIN MAGUIRE

Poland is expected to soon surpass Germany as Europe’s top power polluter due to aggressive planned reductions in fossil fuel use across Germany and assumptions that Poland will have no choice but remain Europe’s most coal-reliant nation for years to come. But so far in 2023 Poland has defied expectations by cutting coal use and pollution to the lowest since at least 2014, and by raising clean power output to record highs just as Germany cut its clean generation by shutting nuclear reactors. So instead of emerging as a climate laggard compared to wealthier European peers, Poland is keeping pace with the cuts to coal use and power emissions seen elsewhere, and may soon force emissions forecasters to trim their future pollution projections across the region. Emissions forecasters using planned power generation data from major economies estimate that Europe’s total carbon dioxide emissions will drop by 47% from 2022’s total by 2030, largely due to planned steep cuts to coal use in Germany. Germany, currently Europe’s top overall CO2 emitter, is seen cutting CO2 discharge by nearly 70% by 2030 from over 200 million tonnes in 2022 to less than 65 million tonnes. All major European economies are also expected to notch up double-digit declines in CO2 pollution, but Germany’s cuts are expected to be by far the steepest, and will help push Germany to second in Europe’s pollution rankings behind Poland by 2028. However, those future pollution tables are based on assumptions that Poland will be far slower than other countries in reducing coal emissions, as Poland is not expected to be able to afford the extensive energy system upgrades that are planned in wealthier Western Europe. Poland’s gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is

roughly 35% of Germany’s, and less than half of the average for the European Union. That places the country’s government, utilities and businesses at a significant disadvantage to peers when it comes to marshalling the funds and subsidies needed to pay for power system upgrades and overhauls. The heavy manufacturing bias to Poland’s economy also makes it the most energy intensive country in Europe, according to Ember, which means it can ill afford any drops to energy supplies or jumps in power costs that may undermine economic activity. Nonetheless, Poland has managed to boost clean electricity supply capacity by 156% since 2018, which in percentage terms is nearly seven times more than Europe’s average over the same period, and four times more than the global average. A nearly 4,000% jump in solar power generation in January to May 2023 from the same period in 2018, along with an 80% increase in wind power, have been the drivers of Poland’s clean power advances. Over the same time frame, Poland’s electricity generation from coal has dropped by roughly 20%, resulting in an equal magnitude drop in coal-fired emissions. So far in 2023, Poland’s total emissions from electricity generation have dropped to new lows, falling even below the diminished levels of mid-2020 when Poland’s economy was stalled by Covid-19 lockdowns. Patchy global demand for some of the goods produced in Poland — led by motor vehicles, electric batteries, furniture and electronics — have also resulted in a slight slowdown in factory production and energy demand in recent months. However, Poland’s peak period for air conditioner use — which is a key source of electricity demand in every country — looms over the coming months, and should result in a rise in overall power demand through September. — Reuters

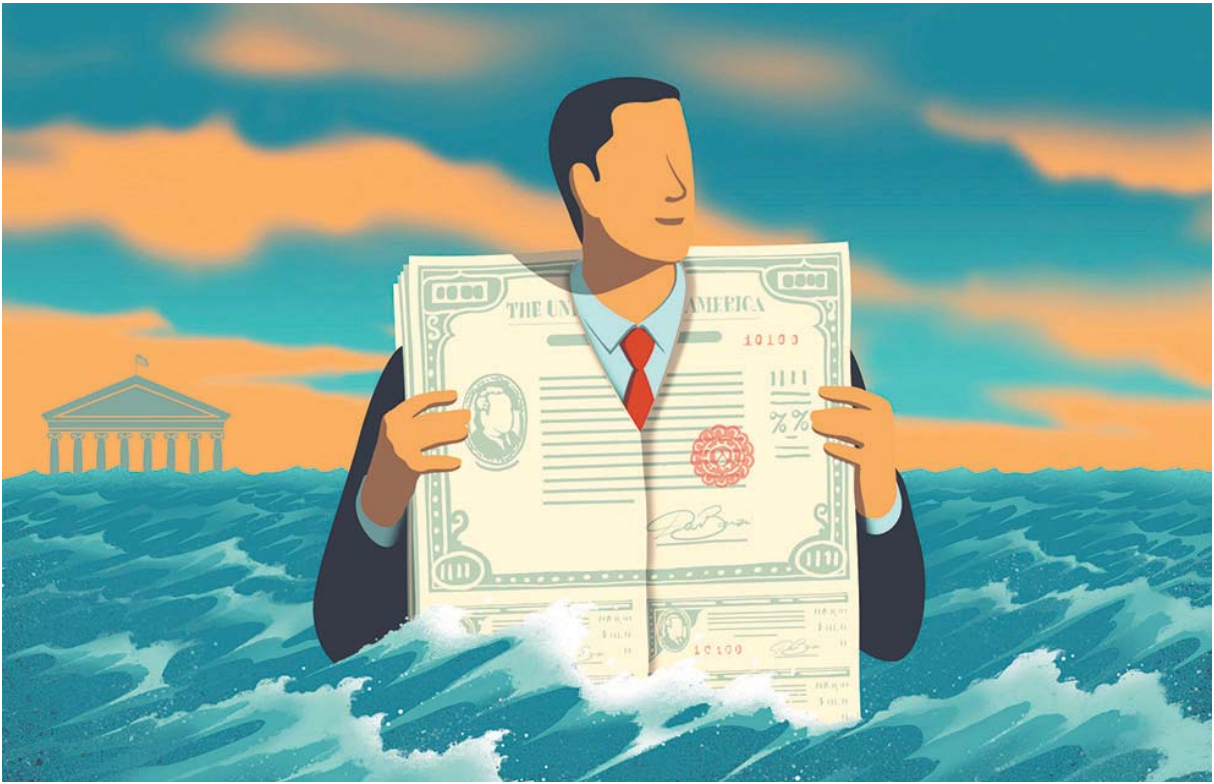
The Treasury paradox



JEFF SOMMER

The author writes Strategies, a column on markets, finance and the economy for the New York Times.

Treasury bonds have been at the heart of the debt ceiling drama. For decades, they have been viewed as the ultimate safe asset — the bedrock of the global financial system. But as the deadline for an agreement to avert a US debt default loomed, Treasury bills due in early June were priced as the near equivalent of junk bonds. In the credit default swaps market, Treasury bonds were suddenly deemed riskier than the sovereign debt of countries like Mexico, Bulgaria and Greece. President Joe Biden and Speaker Kevin McCarthy reached a deal to raise the debt ceiling — and set federal spending limits — but it was left to Congress to enact legislation before the United States ran out of money, which could have happened this week. With that deadline-beating deal, the United States averted a formal default, but it has been another wild, unnerving ride. What should wary investors take away from this close call with disaster? Paradoxically, the best answer may be exactly what it was before this crisis: For safety, buy Treasuries. That has been the time-tested solution to investment agita in the past. And it’s probably — though not certainly — going to be the solid answer to some basic investing problems now and for the foreseeable future, too. The enduring appeal of Treasuries Through countless crises in the United States and abroad, investors have flocked to the \$24 trillion Treasury market just about whenever they have needed a haven. For one thing, it is the deepest market in the world. Even with the sanctions and tariffs and money-laundering controls imposed by the United States in the past few decades, the US Treasury market remains quite open and easily accessible, by



Treasury bonds have been threatened by a possible US debt default, yet they remain more attractive than just about everything else, our columnist says. — The New York Times

international standards. If you want to buy and sell securities quickly and painlessly and at low cost, Treasuries, and the US dollar, have been very good bets. No other global asset class offers the same advantages. The most important feature of Treasuries is the one that was so evidently vulnerable during the debt standoff: safety and stability. Treasury bonds have often been a balm. When everything else seemed unsafe, you could count on getting your money back if you stashed it in a Treasury bond and held it to maturity. Even now, the “full faith and credit of the United States” has never been breached. It has been guaranteed by the Constitution; by the nation’s long history as a stable country ruled by law; and by the combination of economic, military and political power that has made the United States unique. The great caveat If you could rely on anything on this planet since World War II, it has been the ability of the United States to pay its bills. But each time the country has faced a debt ceiling standoff, that assumption has seemed naive. It has never been a question of having sufficient resources. What’s been in doubt is whether the political system would function well enough for the US government to raise enough money to keep operating. Putting money into Treasuries when the crisis emanates from the United States may be counterintuitive, but it has happened many times. It’s “Ghostbusters” logic: Where else are you going to go? This may have the air of inevitability, but it hasn’t been a sure thing. The fissures that became visible in the Treasury bill and credit default swaps market in May were real, and many financial contingency plans included a small probability of a dire event: a US default. Further downgrades of US debt could be coming if the country’s politics become increasingly fractious and dysfunctional, and scepticism about the solidity of Treasuries could still dim their luster. Financial services companies like Goldman Sachs and MSCI included bear markets for Treasuries in their low-probability, high-risk scenarios for the latest crisis. The bond outlook For now, the prospects for the Treasury market look rather bright. Recall that on May 24, the yield on Treasury bills with early June maturation dates shot above 7%, a sign that traders demanded a hefty risk premium for buying them. Those yields dropped to the 5% range after Memorial Day, according to data from FactSet. Prices, which move in the opposite direction of yields, soared. And in the credit default market, the price for insuring Treasury debt has fallen to roughly one-third of its peak during this latest crisis. Beyond the debt ceiling, other factors dominate the bond market. Foremost are the Federal Reserve’s long struggle to bring inflation under control by tightening monetary policy, the possibility of a recession and the pressure on regional banks resulting from rising interest rates. Will the Fed raise short-term rates at its next meeting, in mid-June? Traders are now betting that it won’t. In addition, many indicators suggest that a recession is on the way. Those factors make the argument for bonds — high-quality corporates as well Treasuries — quite compelling. Bond yields have already risen sharply over the last year, and those yields are a reasonably good predictor of bond market returns. Consider that if you hold a one-year Treasury bill for a full year, you can count on a return of more than 5%, which is a high threshold for riskier investments. Compared with stocks, short-term Treasuries are attractive. The case is a bit weaker for longer-term bonds because their yields are a lower. In bond market jargon, the yield curve is inverted. That suggests that traders are expecting a recession, in which the Fed would be compelled to lower short-term interest rates to stimulate the economy. Recessions are typically bad for most people — and for the stock market — but they tend to be great for Treasury bonds, because investors will seek their old standby, and as market yields fall, Treasury prices rise. In short, the past several weeks have threatened Treasuries. The risks of holding these supposedly risk-free assets have been all too evident lately. Yet with a little luck, Treasuries are again likely to emerge from a debt crisis as essentially what they have always been. In a world where nothing is entirely safe, Treasuries remain a relatively safe place to park your money. — The New York Times

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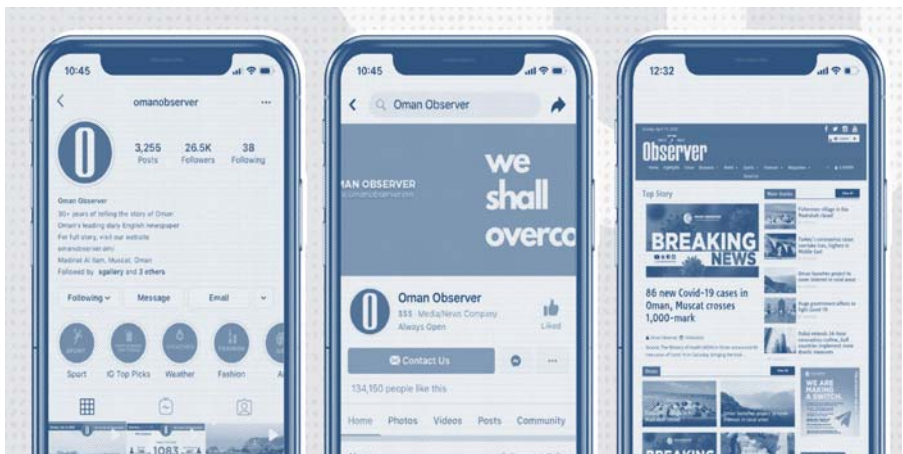
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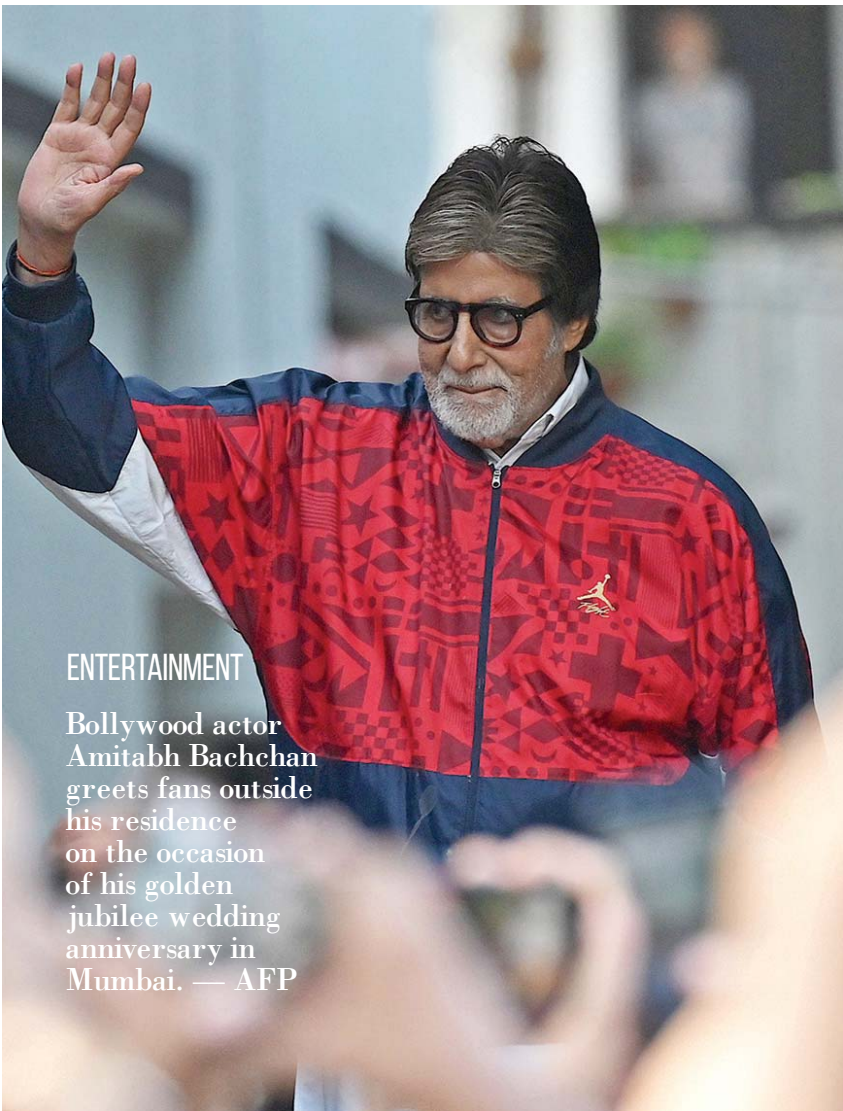
CONSERVATION

Women plant a tree to mark the Environment Day in Lhoknga, Aceh. — AFP



FASHION

A child takes part in a fashion show of “hanfu”, traditional Chinese clothing, in Shenyang, in China’s northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor Amitabh Bachchan greets fans outside his residence on the occasion of his golden jubilee wedding anniversary in Mumbai. — AFP



ART

Netherlands’ Princess Beatrix (C) receives a sunflower from Janne Heling, the chairman of the Vincent van Gogh Foundation, in the presence of director Emilie Gordenker (R) at the Van Gogh Museum, in Amsterdam as the museum celebrate its 50th anniversary. — AFP



CULTURE

A carpenter from the Albaola Shipyard-Museum looks at a life-size chocolate replica of a 16th century Basque whaling shallop, made by the Basque Artisan Confectioners association ‘GOZOA’, prior to its launching in the Spanish Basque town of Pasaia. — AFP



art & life

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Why Al Hamra's living museum, Bait Al Safah, continues to stand today

Al Hamra is famous for its abandoned mud village, whereas Bait Al Safah is among the few that are still operational and well-maintained. Here are the reason why it continues to stand today

ENTERTAINMENT

Putting the K in hip-hop: South Korea's Jay Park

K-POP IDOL. Used tyre salesman. Hip-hop mogul. The course of true success has never run smoothly, but Korean-American entertainer Jay Park has had an unusually bumpy ride to stardom. The 36-year-old is now one of South Korea's most recognisable entertainers: he's founded two of the country's largest hip-hop labels, released a string of hits, has his own soju liquor brand and was the first Asian-American to sign with Jay-Z's Roc Nation. But this success was hard fought, he said in an exclusive interview, with his first shot at fame — debuting as the leader of a K-pop band — imploding in a scandal that led him to flee Seoul for his native Seattle. “I faced a lot of backlash,” Park said,

adding he was once “kind of blacklisted from the industry”. The problem started with a few throwaway comments posted online by Park — then in his late teens — criticising the intense idol training regime, the K-pop industry and South Korea itself. A Korean media frenzy ensued, with the fallout forcing Park to quit 2PM, a seven-member boy band under major label JYP Entertainment. He moved back to Seattle and worked at a used tyre shop, but he kept his musical dreams alive, eventually posting a cover of “Nothin’ on You” — a B.O.B and Bruno Mars song — on his YouTube channel. “I just wanted to show my fans that I’m doing well, and also I wanted to



show people what type of music I’m into, what type of artist I am. So I just put up a cover and it just kind of blew up,” he said. Racking up more than two million views in a day, the song catapulted him back into the music industry and

marked “a new start” for Park. It also allowed him to recalibrate his musical style and shift from pop to rap — a move that would eventually help transform South Korea’s nascent hip-hop scene. It was not a calculated decision or

grand plan, he said, but an attempt to move past restrictive labels. “If I say I’m a rapper, then I can only rap. But I like to rap, I like to dance, I like to sing,” he said, adding that he would be “always grateful to the hip-hop culture” for helping him relaunch his career. **STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL** Park’s story is unusual: it is rare for a K-pop failure to go on to have a successful musical career after leaving one of the big agencies around which the industry is structured. “It didn’t happen overnight. Obviously it took a lot of work,” Park said of his musical comeback. Hundreds of thousands of aspiring K-pop stars go through the gruelling idol training system, notorious for high stress and long hours, analysts say. Only 60 per cent of trainees make it to “debut”, industry figures show, and almost all of those that do are signed to big agencies like BTS’s HYBE, or its major rival SM Entertainment. Without that backing, “the chances for survival are really low”, said music critic Kim Do-heon. “There are so many groups that disband,” he said. After Park quit 2PM, he was left to navigate the industry on his own, and has spoken of his struggles with, for example, finding musicians willing to be featured on his first solo album.

But even when the industry odds are stacked against you, Park said, it is still possible to succeed with the right mindset. “There is a limit to what agencies can do for you, and it seems that grit and determination are what can fill in,” he said. **CHANGE THE INDUSTRY** Now Park is trying to change the industry — or his small segment of it — for the better. He has already founded two of South Korea’s most prominent hip-hop labels. And now his career has come full circle with his establishment of a third label aimed at producing a boy band. But he’s doing it his way: rather than the exacting training and obsessive levels of control pioneered by the major agencies, Park says he believes real relationships and “free-styling together” are the key to success. His new trainees will have Park as a mentor — something he says he longed for when he started in the industry at 18. “I’m not bitter over anything. I don’t hate anybody. I don’t dislike anybody. I don’t have time for that. I don’t have time for thinking about stuff in the past,” he said. “I can’t change the past, so what I can change is the future, so that’s what I work on.” — **AFP**



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As one of the most remarkable living museums in Oman, Bait Al Safah is not only the perfect place to learn about Omani traditions and old lifestyles, but being situated in historic Al Hamra, which is said to be more than 400 years old, it is a great place to better understand the architectural history of Oman.

Elaborate processes have taken place to create the village to which Bait Al Safah belongs, beyond the ingenuity of forgotten and unnamed architects, the day-to-day chores of the villagers actually helped shape the place that it is now.

Al Hamra is famous for its abandoned mud village, whereas Bait Al Safah is among the few that are still operational and well-maintained.

Owned by Sulaiman al Abri, this Omani gentleman decided to convert the home where he grew up into a living museum not only to preserve important memories but also to allow tourists to witness different Omani traditions as well as gain an understanding of how an Omani home is structured. This beautiful 2-storeyed mud house is open to tourists, and all the rooms can be accessed to see the overall architecture and the concepts.

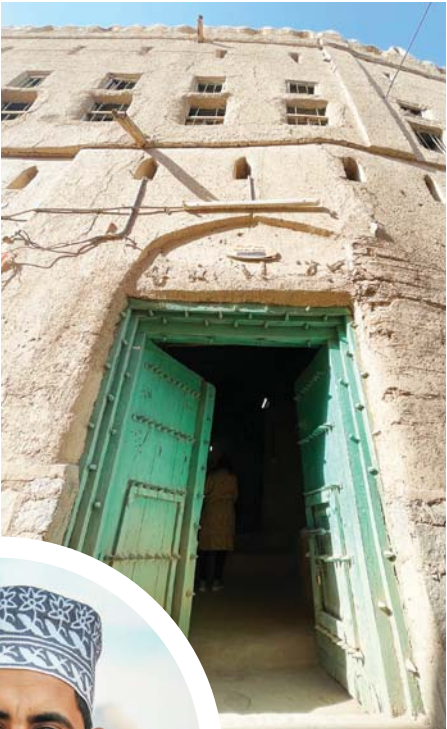
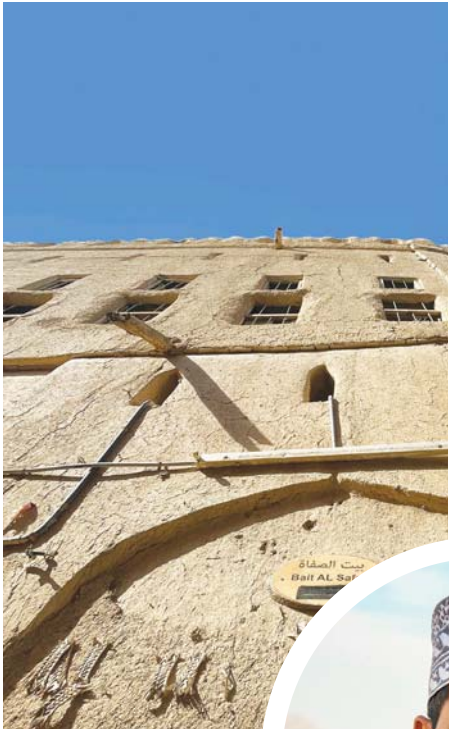
Al Abri shared some important information about how the house is built.

FOUNDATION

The most important part of the house, great care and attention have been given to the foundation of Bait Al Safah which is why it remains standing today. In the old days, the foundation mixture was prepared manually. The traditional architecture of Oman is characterised by the few naturally occurring building materials and their practical simplicity, as people did not have access to a wide variety of building materials. The mountain houses stood on a foundation of stone to protect them from effluent rainwater. A good mix of mud, wheat grass, and clay was the main material used for the foundation of these mud houses. All the mixing used to take place manually, with hands. To make it simpler, easier, and more fun-filled, the elderly people from that era used to hide coins in the mud so that kids would be tempted to find them and, in the process, help in mixing well the materials that would become the foundation.

STRUCTURAL DESIGN

This 2-storeyed mud house is well planned and meticulously segregated into different parts based on the needs of the inhabitants. The ground floor is mainly for the storage of crops, utility items, animals, cattle, and kitchens. The first floor is for majlis (separate for men and women), living rooms, and other rooms used as bedrooms, dressing rooms, and toilets. In addition, the second floor usu-



air to move inside the house.

DOORS

Omani doors are always impressive, and they are visual treats. The wooden door is well structured and designed in traditional ways. Most of the designs carry tales from that era. For Bait Al Safah, the owner's name as well as the date of construction had been inscribed on the main door. All the doors have hinges to hang the locks. On the ground floor, mainly in the storage rooms, the doors normally have a 10-diameter circle cut out of it. This is specially dedicated to cats who are allowed access to the crops and kill the rats that attack the produce.

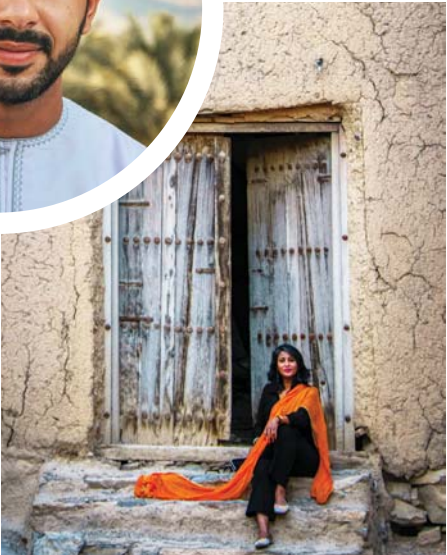
TERRACE

From the open terrace, the magnificent view of the Al Hamra mountains can take your breath away. A part of the terrace is also kept open to let in sunlight and fresh air. It is designed in such a way that when it rains, the water doesn't come inside the house. They have carefully monitored the wind and rain direction.

SAFETY LOCKER

In Bait Al Safah, they also have a specially made safe that's kept as a secret and used for storing away coins, pieces of jewellery, and other important items. A literal hole in the wall, they can be about 8-9 cm deep and are covered with a cap that was painted the same colour as the wall.

Bait Al Safah is one of the most visited places in Al Hamra and is loved for its authenticity. The owner preserved the house so well that it is capable of taking you back to 100 years ago. To visit Bait Al Safah, you can book an appointment or reach them through their Instagram: @baitalsafah



ally comes with a terrace and extra rooms for guests.

While designing the building, they carefully thought about the exits, including those dedicated to fire emergencies. There was an exit from the second floor that led straight out of the house. Every room was also prepped with a ventilation system through which sunlight comes and proper air circulation takes place.

CEILINGS

The ceiling of Bait Al Safah, typical for the era, extensively used palm fronds and other

palm materials. What a lot of people don't know is that there are usually three layers to provide proper support.

The first layer is usually made out of palm leaves, below it, a mat made from the same leaves, weaved together by the experts in the village. These are then covered with mud, clay, and wheat grass.

This mixture is usually applied manually, using hands to give it a smooth surface. To decorate the ceilings, they hand-painted the palm fronds with various traditional designs, which are visible from the floor beneath. To

protect the woods from termites, frankincense powder was also extensively used.

WALLS

The height of the ground floor is almost 5.8 meters, whereas the first-floor height is a little less than 5.3 meters. The other rooms are mostly 2.5-3 meters, depending on the design. The wall of the house consists of mud, clay, wheat grass, and some very small stones and is almost 1.5 meters thick. The walls are also painted with the liquids from the expired dates. Every wall has windows to allow fresh

FASHION

Edward Enninful resigns as chief editor of Britain's Vogue magazine

BRITISH VOGUE editor-in-chief Edward Enninful has announced he will be stepping down from his role at the top of the fashion magazine after six years.

The 51-year-old will take up a newly created role beginning next year as editorial advisor at British Vogue and global creator and cultural advisor to Vogue — aimed at growing the brand globally.

The new role was created by Enninful, US Vogue editor Dame Anna Wintour and Roger Lynch, chief executive of Conde Nast, the PA news agency has been told.

Enninful told staff in a memo that he had been in discussions with Dame Anna and Lynch about how he can play a "broader role in enhancing Vogue globally".

The memo read: "I am excited to share that from next year I will be stepping into the newly appointed



position of Editorial Advisor at British Vogue and Global Creative and Cultural Advisor, Vogue, where I will continue to contribute to the creative and cultural success of the Vogue brand globally whilst having the freedom to take on broader creative projects.

"To optimise my increased global responsibilities, and to give British Vogue the new focus it will deserve, we saw the opportunity to hire, in concert with our global editorial structure, a Head of Editorial Content for British

Vogue. "The position will partner very closely with you all and Anna, and will initially report to me until we have on boarded them."

"For now everything remains the same, and I'm so excited about what the future holds for us. I would like to thank Roger and Anna for their continued support."

Ghanaian-British Enninful took over as editor-in-chief in August 2017, as the first black man to hold the top job at the British fashion magazine, and in December 2020 was promoted to European editorial director of Vogue.

During his six years at the top of the fashion magazine, he has continued to break boundaries and been a champion for greater inclusivity in the industry.

Enninful recently described the May issue of the publication, which focused on inclusivity and featured five disabled people on its cover, as "one of the proudest moments of my career".

Inside, 19 disabled people from the worlds of fashion, sport, culture and activism were featured through interviews and a personal essay.

The issue was made available in a physical braille edition as well as a recorded audio description for the first time in the magazine's history.

— PA Media/dpa

ENTERTAINMENT

Latest Spider-Man spins silver screen gold

"SPIDER-MAN: Across the Spider-Verse," Sony's newest chapter in the webslinger series, soared to North American box office domination in its weekend debut, on Sunday estimates showed, cementing the resilience of one of Hollywood's biggest superhero juggernauts.

The animated offering featuring the voices of Shameik Moore, Haile Steinfeld and Issa Rae netted a cool \$120 million domestically for the Friday-through-Sunday period, and another \$88 million internationally, according to industry watcher Exhibitor Relations.

"This is an exceptionally good opening for an animation follow-up sequel," said analyst David A. Gross, adding the sequel has an "entirely fresh" look and is an example of "inspired commercial film-making."

The film picks up the story of half-



Black, half-Latino Miles Morales, using an eye-popping blend of decades-old 2D comic book drawing techniques with the latest computer-generated visual effects.

Spidey dethroned Disney's live-action version of "The Little Mermaid," which raked in a similar amount in its debut the previous weekend and followed up with \$40.6 million.

The remake of the 1989 animated tale of an underwater princess who gives up her voice in pursuit of true love on land stars pop singer Halle Bailey, Jonah Hauer-King as Prince Eric, and Melissa McCarthy as the villainous Ursula.

"The Boogeyman" debuted in third with \$12.3 million. The 20th Century

Studios horror/mystery feature is the latest in a long line of films adapted from a Stephen King book, and one of its producers shepherded the hit show "Stranger Things" onto the small screen.

Slipping one spot to fourth was Disney's "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3" which added \$10 million to its cumulative worldwide total of some \$780 million. Universal's action film "Fast X," part of the "Fast & Furious" franchise, held fifth spot, earning \$9.2 million.

Rounding out the top 10 were: "The Super Mario Bros Movie" (\$3.3 million); "About My Father" (\$2.1 million); "The Machine" (\$1.7 million); "You Hurt My Feelings" (\$1.7 million); "Kandahar" (\$1.7 million) — **AFP**



art & life

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TUESDAY | JUNE 6 | 2023

CULTURE

Village bin man helped unearth ancient bronze statues in Tuscany

ONE OF ITALY'S MOST remarkable archaeological finds in decades goes on show this month - Etruscan and Roman statues pulled from the mud in Tuscany thanks in part to the intuition of a retired garbage man.

About two dozen bronze statues from the third century BC to the first century AD, extracted from the ruins of an ancient spa, will go on display in Rome's Quirinale Palace from June 22, after months of restoration.

When the discovery was announced in November, experts called it the biggest collection of ancient bronze statues ever found in Italy and hailed it as a breakthrough that would "rewrite history".

The statues were found in 2021 and 2022 in the hilltop village of San Casciano dei Bagni, still home to popular thermal baths, where archaeologists had long suspected ancient ruins could be discovered.

Initial attempts to locate them, however, were unsuccessful.

Digging started in 2019 on a small plot of land next to the village's Renaissance-era public baths, but weeks of excavations revealed "only traces of some walls", San Casciano Mayor Agnese Carletti said.

Then former bin man and amateur local historian Stefano Petrini had "a flash" of intuition, remembering that years earlier he had seen bits of ancient Roman columns on a wall on the other side of the public baths.

The columns could only be seen from an abandoned garden that had once belonged to his friend, San Casciano's late greengrocer, who grew fruit and vegetables there to sell in the village shop.

When Petrini took archaeologists there, they knew they had found the right spot.

"It all started from there, from the columns," Petrini said.

'SCRAWNY BOY' PULLED FROM MUD

Emanuele Mariotti, head of the San Casciano archaeological project, said his team was getting "quite desperate" before receiving the tip that led to the discovery of a shrine at the centre of the ancient spa complex.

The statues found there were offerings from Romans and Etruscans who looked to the gods for good health, as were the coins



and sculptures of body parts like ears and feet also recovered from the site.

One of the most spectacular finds was the "scrawny boy" bronze, a statue about 90 cms (35 inches) high, of a young Roman with an apparent bone disease. An inscription has his name as "Marcius Grabillo".

"When he appeared from the mud, and was therefore partially covered, it looked like the bronze of an athlete ... but once cleaned up and seen properly it was clear that it was that of a sick person," said Ada Salvi, a Culture Ministry archaeologist for the Tuscan provinces of Siena,

Grosseto and Arezzo.

Salvi said traces of more unusual offerings were also recovered, including egg shells, pine cones, kernels from peaches and plums, surgical tools and a 2,000-year-old lock of curly hair.

"It opens a window into how Romans and Etruscans experienced the nexus between health, religion and spirituality," she said. "There's a whole world of meaning that has to be understood and studied."

MORE TREASURES TO BE FOUND

The shrine was sealed at the beginning of the fifth century AD,



when the ancient spa complex was abandoned, leaving its statues preserved for centuries by the warm mud of the baths.

Excavation will resume in late June. Mariotti said "it is a certainty" that more will be found in the coming years, possibly even the other six or 12 statues that an inscription says were left behind by Marcius Grabillo.

"We've only just lifted the lid," he said.

After the Rome exhibition, the statues and other artefacts are to find a new home in a museum that authorities hope to open in San Casciano within the next couple of years.

Petrini hopes the treasures will bring "jobs, culture and knowledge" to his 1,500-strong village, which is struggling with depopulation like much of rural Italy.

But he is reluctant to take credit for their discovery.

"Important things always happen thanks to several people, never thanks to only one," he said. "Never."

— Reuters

LIFE AT THE ACADEME



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI

Student Behaviour and Discipline

THE NATIONAL CENTER on Safe Supportive Learning Environment (2023) defines discipline as: "the rules and strategies applied in school to manage student behaviour and practices used to encourage self-discipline". It is arguable that this definition is concerned with overseeing and guiding student behaviour, as well as preventive measures if necessary, and appropriate intervention. Yet, school discipline seeks to cultivate self-discipline among all students in the school community.

Moving on from the previous details, (Li et al., 2021) stated that there have been wide variations in the approaches school authorities adopt to manage their students' behaviour, ranging from strict and demanding behavioural conformity to autonomy-granting and independent decision-making.

In addition, several studies showed that structure and support are two major school discipline components that facilitate students' school and social-emotional functioning. Moreover, structure and support, in the teacher-student relationship have also been considered a crucial way to enhance students' school and social-emotional functioning.

According to the study conducted by (Ngwokabuenui, 2015), the author found that students exhibit or demonstrate certain behaviours, for instance: "boycotting lessons, lies telling, violence, dishonesty, disobedient to teachers, prefects, and school administration, alcohol consumption, confronting and stabbing teachers in schools, vandalism, lateness to school, drug abuse, insulting/assaulting, stealing, rioting".

Consequently, to manage student behaviour and promote positive discipline teachers should make preventative plans for most students' problems and action for common problems with students.

Walters& Frei (2007) suggests a range of preventive measures, including 1. Negotiate: teachers need to negotiate with students to reach common understandings, such as when and how assignments need to be done. When students could express their voices in classroom processes, they share in decision-making and the construction of knowledge. 2. Deal with Problems Quickly: It's imperative to deal with problems promptly, for example, teachers could train their students to recognise one word as a code. Saying "focus" is a quick way to tell students to stop. Some teachers will create a classroom mantra, and the students will know that if the teacher points silently to it, they are to read it silently, reflect on the class commitment to that word, and resume their work. 3. Use Direct Language: Teachers should inform their students exactly what they want, using a specific mention of the behaviour they want to see or the behaviour they do not want to see. For instance, teachers don't rely on "knock that off" or "cut that out." It's better to say, "Put your sharpener away and read the chapter." 4. The Bottom Line: All teachers need to know where they draw the line between working with a student and deciding that the student has misbehaved enough. Teachers should be aware of school policy and have a plan for when to call the parents, when to send a student to the principal, or even when to call the police. 5. Follow-Up: Finally, It's the responsibility of teachers to follow up on the issue. Once a crisis has passed, teachers make a point of talking to the offending student during the day. Correspondingly, with every problem, it is important to keep a log. This will help a teacher if problems involve more parties in the future.

To summarise, the schools recognise the importance of maintaining discipline and promoting a safe learning environment. Through developing students' behaviour and their ability to manage their own behaviour. As for teachers, it's important to plan and manage the classroom effectively to prevent students who are performing well in terms of their behaviour from being affected by others' negative behaviour.

Dr Zainab al Ajmi is very passionate about the growth of the education system in Oman and wants the country to produce globally competitive workforce. Her column tackles movements and developments within the education sector.

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