

Ramadhan working hours announced

The official working hours in the month of Ramadhan have been announced by the Ministry of Labour. It was decided that official working hours at units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities during the holy month of Ramadhan for 1443 AH will be from 9 am to 2 pm. Meanwhile, working hours in private sector companies and establishments for Muslims during Ramadhan will be reduced to six hours per day, equivalent to 30 hours per week. – ONA



P11

OMAN, UAE WIN TO CLOSE OUT GCC WOMEN'S CUP



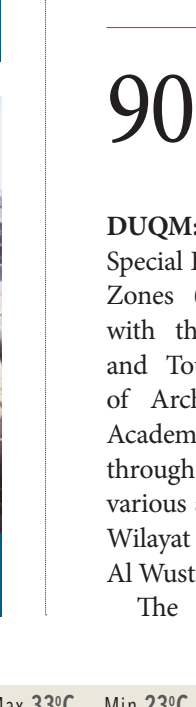
P13

FIRST OMANI RISK POOL FOR NATURAL DISASTERS TO LAUNCH IN 2H 2022



P20

FOR A GREAT DIVE IN A NATURE RESERVE



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SAUDI KING

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in reply to His Majesty's condolences cable on the death of Princess Nourah Faisal Abdulaziz al Saud. In his cable, King Salman expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sympathies and prayers, praying to Allah the Almighty to protect His Majesty the Sultan against all harm. — ONA

APP LAUNCHED FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANT

The Royal Hospital on Sunday launched an electronic educational application, 'Your Bestowal is a Life' for organ transplantation. The application explains the mechanism of expressing interest to donate organs in the Sultanate of Oman. Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, launched the application in the presence of health personnel and media representatives. While explaining mechanisms of organ donation, the application also highlights the harms and consequences of trading in human organs, corrects misconceptions about donation after death and confirms the conditions for organ donation by relatives. **DETAILS ON P3**



INSIDE



PALESTINIANS VOTE IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS



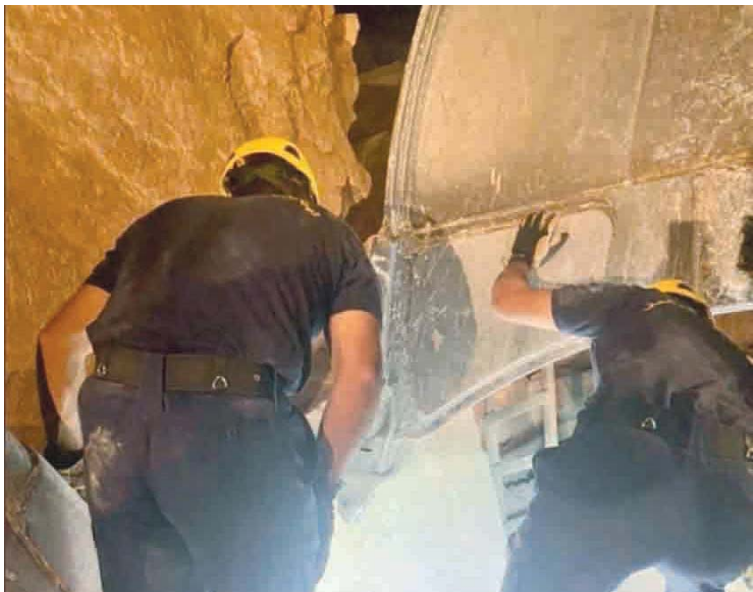
THE WORLD MUST AVOID ANOTHER FOOD CRISIS

A SWEET SUCCESS!



Al Najd farms in the Governorate of Dhofar has succeeded in producing 27,638 tonnes of watermelons and musk melons on an estimated area of 1,500 feddan (each feddan equals to 4,200 square metres). Dr Ahmed bin Suhail al Hadhari, Head of the Omani Agricultural Association in the Governorate of Dhofar, told Oman News Agency (ONA), that the cultivation of watermelon and muskmelon is widespread in Shasr and Hanfit in the Wilayat of Thamrait.

6 die as rocks collapse at quarry in Ibri



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

Six people died, while several others were rescued following the collapse of rocks at a worksite (quarry) in the Al Aridh area of the Wilayat of Ibri.

In a statement, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said the search for missing people under

the debris was under way as rockslides were hampering the operations. It added that four people were treated for moderate to critical injuries.

According to local sources, there were 55 workers at the accident site, where excavation work was going on to extract marbles. Initially, CDAA said that five people lost lives, but the toll climbed to six by evening.

No plans to establish new commercial ports

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
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The government at present has no intention to finance the establishment of new commercial ports due to the efficiency of current commercial ports in Salalah, Suhar and Duqm and the current trend is to augment the economic benefit of the existing ports.

This was stated by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, as part of the ministry's statement during the ninth regular meeting of the third annual session (2021-2022) held under the chairmanship of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman, in presence of Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary-General of Majlis Ash'shura, on Sunday. He put stress on maximising economic activities at existing ports.

The statement came when



Many commercial and industrial ports are established in the country in the past years, based on the important role played by them in developing the economy

SAID BIN HAMOUD AL MAAWALI

the Majlis Ash'shura hosted the minister. "The Sultanate of Oman has witnessed the establishment of many commercial and industrial ports and sea harbours in the past years, based on the government's awareness of seaports and the important role in developing the Omani economy," he added.

The statement highlighted the programmes of the development plan of the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), which included programmes for developing port infrastructure, raising the contribution of foreign trade to economic activity, and efficient management programmes for economic development projects by promoting economic activity decentralisation.

The statement also threw light on some future projects of the ministry to develop the port sector and establish new facilities by offering them for investment to local and international companies.

900 archeological sites found in Duqm, 155 in Nufon

DUQM: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, identified, through excavation studies, various archaeological sites in the Wilayat of Duqm, Governorate of Al Wusta.

The teams of archaeologists

and specialists from the institute have been studying several archaeological sites and human settlements in Duqm in general and the village of Nufon, located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

ANCIENT SETTLEMENT
The identified archaeological sites reached 155 in Nufon and about 900 other sites all over Duqm,



discovered between 2015 and 2022.

The archaeological studies and research conducted by the specialised team that came from the Czech Republic, the USA, Ukraine, Italy, France and Germany, focused on the village of Nufon which is characterised by the existence of an ancient human settlement.

In addition, the archaeologist

team excavated the mass graves of the Iron Age and discovered the Trilith stone monuments and the coastal settlement of rocky hills.

Specialists also studied the stone tools used in the old Stone Age in the Wilayat of Duqm. OPAZ documented these settlements of ancient humans dating back to the Iron Age to provide the necessary protection for those archaeological monuments. — ONA



No plan to establish new ports

FROM P1
The ministry is working on the completion of some projects currently under implementation including the car parking and roads leading to the administration premises and infrastructure of Harmoul harbour at Sohar Port. This is in addition to future projects that are currently under study for upgrading the infrastructure of Sohar and Salalah ports, the statement said.

“As for maintenance and rehabilitation projects, the ministry is currently working on preparing tenders for the maintenance of the ports of Shannah and Masirah, as well as the implementation of a study on the need to raise the readiness for ports to deal with exceptional climatic conditions, and a comprehensive study and evaluation of port infrastructure”, the minister said.

He explained there were investment initiatives between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represented by the Omani side benefiting from the Saudi experience in establishing a Saudi Ports Authority and managing the logistics sector, establishing a port community platform that is operated by the Saudi Information Exchange Company,



drafting concession contracts through a group of global legal consulting companies. The Saudi side will benefit from the Omani experience in managing Omani ports through private sector companies, establishing and activating free zones adjacent to Omani ports, as well as sharing investment opportunities and future projects between the two countries.

REVISED LAWS

The statement touched on the reviewed laws, policies and legislation, such as the Communications Law, Electronic Transactions Law and Information Technology Crimes Law. Also, the ministry has

completed the preparation of the Communications and Information Technology Regulatory Law and Personal Data Protection Law.

The ministry intends to start preparing the space law upon the completion of the preparation of the national policy and strategy for the space sector, the revision of the law regulating postal services in line with encouraging investment for the growth of e-commerce. Besides, the policy for the use of artificial intelligence systems, the cloud computing policy and the guideline for protecting children on the Internet were also issued.

On the issue of railways, the statement stated that the ministry is currently studying, in cooperation with the Ministry of

Finance, an investment offer to establish a railway to transport goods between Sohar Port and the logistics area in Khazaen.

“If the economic feasibility of the project is proven, it will be carried forward as one of the partnership projects with the private sector”, Al Maawali said.

MARITIME TRANSPORT

Given the importance of the activity of refuelling ships at the global level and its impact on the maritime transport industry, and in view of the intense competition between the ports of neighbouring countries to provide integrated marine services at sea, the ministry has worked on preparing the legislation regulating the practice of the activity of refuelling ships.

It issued the regulation for refuelling ships in Omani ports by virtue of Ministerial Resolution No (31/2020) on March 11, 2020. It also obligated companies working in port management in the Sultanate of Oman to contract with more than one company specialised in supplying ships with fuel. This is to ensure that all ships visiting Omani ports receive all marine services, as the number of companies licensed to supply ships with fuel in ports has reached seven.



Ministers visit economic zone site in Al Rowdha

FROM P1

The officials also made a field visit to the Niyabat of Al Rowdha and inspected a number of sites including locations proposed for agricultural projects. They also inspected Al Rowdha crossing (B) and discussed several customs-related issues and inspected the facilities of the crossing and the procedures to be handled after its opening.

The delegation comprised Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Dr Ali bin

Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones; Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources; Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning; Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy; Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Farsi, Wali of Mahdha; Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Maawali, Deputy Wali of Mahdha at Niyabat Al Rowdha and other officials. — ONA

Domestic air network to be expanded

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is going ahead with plans to provide air connectivity from different parts of this country, including iconic tourist destinations.

Speaking at the media briefing on Thursday, Nayef bin Ali al Abri, President of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said, “Two local companies have been licensed to start amphibious air services with a 100 per cent stake and there will be no interference from the authority.”

Speaking to the Observer, Aimen al Hosni, CEO, Oman

Airports, said the countries with expansive domestic networks recovered faster in the post-pandemic scenario.

He said the services will be launched in Musandam, Masirah, Al Halaniyat Islands and Ras al Hadd.

SalamAir recently indicated about starting flights to Duqm and Masirah.

The government also decided to go ahead with plans to expand the Khasab Airport in Musandam, and RO 80 million has been allocated for the first phase of this project. It aims to attract 1.2 million tourists annually by 2040 to the Musandam Governorate.

100 plus institutions taking part in GHEDEX 2022

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

The Global Higher Education Exhibition (GHEDEX) opened under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik al Said at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday.

GHEDEX is back after the pandemic break, with more than 100 colleges, universities and training institutes participating in the five-day event. One of the

strong themes this year is ‘Study in Oman’. The exhibition will continue till March 29.

The event is organised by OITE with the support of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Omani Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance.

The exhibition includes the 21st Global Higher Education

Exhibition (GHEDEX), the future skills and human resource development, the technical education and vocational training (Trinex), educational technology (EdTech), youth activities such as martial arts (Karate) and others.

All the local colleges and universities are being represented in addition to educational institutions from UK, USA, New Zealand, Ireland, India, Australia and other countries. For the first time, the event is being held at two locations

-- three days in Muscat and two days in Suhar. It also has an online option where visitors can explore the exhibition virtually.

“We are excited that this would give immense opportunity for students in North and South Al Batinah to explore higher education possibilities,” said Amr Baabood, CEO of GHEDEX.

A new aspect that is being looked upon this year is student tourism. There are also interesting activities lined up for the youth.

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Royal Hospital launches first-of-its-kind app to encourage organ donation



ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

The Royal Hospital on Sunday launched an electronic educational application, ‘Your Bestowal is a Life’ for organ transplantation. The application explains the mechanism of expressing interest to donate organs in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health, launched the application in the presence of health personnel and media representatives.

While explaining mechanisms of organ donation, the application also highlights the harms and consequences of trading in human organs, corrects misconceptions about

donation after death, and confirms the conditions for organ donation by relatives.

The idea behind the app is to provide all possible medical information concerning the transplantation of kidneys and liver, answer frequent inquiries related to special groups such as children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers. The application also gives a lot of information to make a correct decision about organ transplantation.

Dr Ahmed al Saeedi said the electronic educational application about organ transplantation is the first of its kind app in the Arab world and will contribute to addressing rumours and errors related to organ transplantation.

“It is necessary to create awareness about organ transplant in the community, noting that organs donated by a brain-dead person can save lives of eight people and that some organs, including liver and kidney, can be donated during the life of a person,” he said.

Al Saeedi mentioned, “In the Sultanate of Oman, more than 3,000 people suffer from kidney failure and undergo continuous dialysis, which is very tiring from a psychological and health point of view.” He stressed that liver and kidney transplantation in Oman is one of the successful operations, calling on citizens and residents to view the application and benefit from it.



“The main factor for the lack of organ transplants in the Sultanate of Oman is the lack of organ donors,” he said, noting that the Royal Hospital has started performing kidney transplants since 1988. The programme is continuing and developing.

According to MoH, on October 24 last year, the first successful liver transplant was performed on a five-year-old child at the Royal Hospital.

However, in January this year 2022, the transplant team at the Royal Hospital performed four kidney transplants on patients with chronic kidney failure; two of them were children and two adults. The procedures were done within a week.



Oman, Lanka discuss ways to boost trade cooperation

MUSCAT: Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, received on Sunday Dr Bandula Gunawardena, Minister of Trade of Sri Lanka.

The two sides explored aspects of the joint cooperation, economic diversification sectors and the investment and trade environment in both countries, as well as augmenting trade exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and Sri Lanka.

The two sides also discussed aspects of cooperation in the economy and industry sectors, logistics, ports and investment opportunities in both countries. They also discussed exchanging expertise between the two sides, as well as seeking to benefit from the opportunities and potentials available in the two countries.

The two sides also reviewed the products that can be exported and imported.

The meeting also explored the incentives provided by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to investors, the economic diversification sectors targeted by Oman Vision 2040 and the available investment opportunities.

TOURISM COOPERATION

Salim bin Mohammed bin Said al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, also received in his office Sri Lankan minister and his delegation, currently visiting the country.

The two sides discussed the aspects of cooperation in the tourism fields and take advantage of the available opportunities by organising workshops and tourism promotion exhibitions.

— ONA

OCCI receives Czech delegation

MUSCAT: Eng Ridha bin Juma al Saleh, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), on Sunday received a business delegation from the Czech Republic, headed by Dr Petr Mixa, Deputy Director General of the Czech Geological Survey (CGS).

The meeting discussed means of enhancing trade and reviewed fields of cooperation and partnership in the investment sectors, such as the mining sector, as well as exchanging expertise and knowledge transfer in light of Oman Vision 2040.

The OCCI Chairman explained that the meeting came to strengthen relations and expand their horizons

to serve the interests of the two countries, besides promoting trade and investment relations. He added that the meeting aimed to accelerate signing commercial partnerships and qualitative investments to serve the economic sectors.

The OCCI Chairman also pointed out that the economy of the Sultanate of Oman and that of the Czech Republic include many promising opportunities. He added that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries in 2021 reached more than RO 6.659 million, while the volume of imports amounted to more than RO 797,600.

— ONA

119 doctors graduate at OMSB

OHOOO AL JAILANIYAH
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) celebrated the graduation of 119 doctors in 16 medical specialties, on Sunday.

The celebration was held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health and Chairman of OMSB Board of Trustees.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Executive President of OMSB affirmed that the training curricula of OMSB seeks to keep pace with the educational and training developments and provides an impetus for doctors to stand out in the medical profession.

Addressing the graduates, Dr Al Sabti said: “You have put in a lot of diligence and hard work during your



training period and you will be faced with greater duties and responsibilities that you have to undertake in the best way. Now you are qualified to scale new heights of your career thanks to the medical training you have received at the OMSB.”

Dr Al Sabti added that as part of its strategic plan the OMSB has launched a project to align its specialties to the

needs of the healthcare sector in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. The OMSB has embarked on a project for upgrading the advanced medical education system which determines the path of medical education based on realistic analysis for the present and planning for the future. The OMSB has come a long way in medical training and healthcare innovation

which centres on developing the Medical Simulation and Innovation Centre to become a national medical training centre and a reference for the training institutions concerned with medical simulation. The upcoming period will see a lot of learning that meets the community needs in line with Oman Vision 2040 to enhance public health, education and social empowerment.

CAREERS AT APOLLO SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL, AL HAIL



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KEEP PREMISES CLEAN TO PREVENT DENGUE

THE FOLLOWING CARE SHOULD BE TAKEN
TO PROTECT FROM AEDES AEGYPTI

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

There is a call from the Muscat Municipality to keep residential and official premises clean to avoid attracting rodents and breeding mosquitoes. This comes after the extraordinary meeting of the National Committee for Integrated Management of Vector Control that discussed the urgent situation of Aedes Aegypti spread and cases of dengue fever. The meeting was held at the Ministry of Health (MoH) under the auspices of Dr Mohammed bin Saif al Hosni, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs.

The recommendations of the meeting include scaling up vector control and epidemiological surveillance, intensifying the environmental sanitation actions in collaboration with Muscat Municipality and focusing on community awareness with the collaboration of all concerned authorities.

Article (45) of chapter 5 of Pest Control Regulations and Laws of local order 1/2006 on the protection of public health points out that owners of properties are obliged to maintain hygiene standards, while Article 46 stipulates that occupants of houses or other places intended for a living, are prohibited from keeping animals or poultry and other birds in these places in a condition that is harmful to the residents and environment.

DISPOSE
OF ALL
WASTE IN
CLOSED
BINS

GET RID
OF ALL
DISCARDED
TYRES

BACKFILL
PONDS
AND WET
BINS



CHANGE THE WATER
IN POTS AND FOUNTAINS
CONSTANTLY EVERY
FIVE DAYS

TIGHTEN
WATER
TANK CAPS
PROPERLY

“The owner and the contractor shall be fully responsible throughout the completion of construction for the control of insects and rodents and prevent the chances of reproduction in the building or water tanks or sewage connection,” he said, adding, the owner and the contractor shall check that the building and its accessories are free of insects and rodents upon completion of construction work.

Speaking to the Observer on the sidelines of the joint campaign against the breeding of mosquitoes, he added that the septic tanks, sewer manholes, water connections and ventilation pipes need to be closed properly and shouldn't be left open or broken, while the ventilation pipes should be covered with a soft metal mesh to prevent the entry of mosquitoes.

The law further stipulates administrative penalties for violations harmful to the environment. A fine of RO 300 will be imposed on owners of buildings for failing to comply with general cleaning, pest control and disposal of waste properly, while given three days to correct the violation. The fine is doubled if the violation is repeated.

If the sewage leaks exist, or drainage lines are not maintained from the building, which may be either commercial or residential or industrial, tourism, to streets or public squares, there is a provision of a fine of RO 1,000 and a fine of RO 3,000 if the violation is repeated, while giving the violator one-day deadline to correct the situation.



Minister of Education visits schools in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

MUSCAT: Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed bin Nasser al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, visited a number of schools in the Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, which included Rubu' Al Jabal School for Basic Education (1-4) and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar School for Basic Education for Girls, grades (5-12) and Abu Zaid Al Riyami School for Basic Education

The visit aimed to review the efforts of the Education Directorate in the governorate and to see the progress of work after the students return to school



for Boys, grades (5-12) in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

The minister was accompanied by Saif bin Mubarak al Julandani, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Education in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, during the visit.

The visit aimed to review the efforts of the Education Directorate in the governorate and to see the progress of work after the students

return to school and the decisions of the Higher Committee related to education. Through this visit, the minister also aimed to listen to development proposals and challenges posed by members of the administrative and teaching bodies in these schools, in addition to working to find practical and quick solutions; to overcome the challenges that may face workers in the educational field.

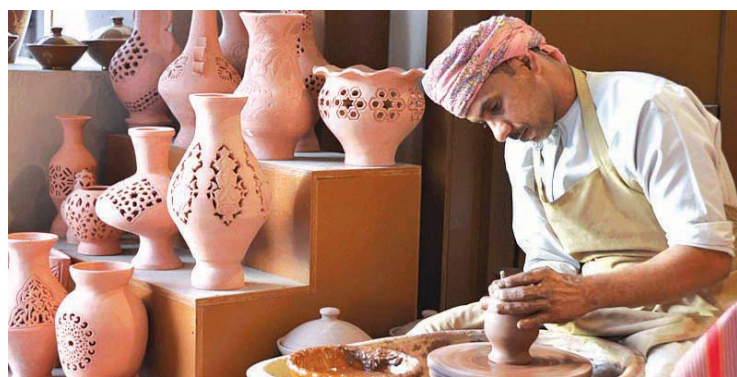
Riyada issues regulation to support 20 craft industries

ZAINAB AL NASSRI
@zainabalnasseri

Qais Mohammed bin al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada), issued a regulation to support craft industries pursuant to Resolution No 262/2022.

This regulation confirms the active role of craftsmen and the importance of developing handicraft industries in the Sultanate of Oman.

Craft industries annex, attached to the regulation, included 20 types of craft industries, including distilling flowers and herbs, the production of water and frankincense oil, making and processing incense, cosmetics and perfumes, besides fabric or wool craft products, leather, fronds and wood products, pottery and porcelain products, stone and gypsum and craft



products derived from bones.

It also included retailing in specialised stores for pottery and handicrafts, making handicraft products of silver, copper, metal and aluminium, retailing in specialised stores for silverware and gifts, making Omani daggers, retailing in specialised stores for Omani daggers, making craft products for traditional fishing tools and retailing in Handicraft stores.

In accordance with Article (2) of the resolution, the authority shall support the craft industries stipulated in the appendix. It may also support craft industries supervised by NGOs. I

In accordance with Article (3), a committee is formed within Riyada to decide on requests for support, whose names of members, terms of reference, powers and work system are to be defined by the Chairman.

According to the regulation specified in Article (4), there are conditions and procedures to support an individual. The craftsman should be Omani, registered in the authority's database, holds a license from the competent authority to practice the craft industry, has specialised vocational training programmes approved by the authority and has successfully

completed the course or has the practical experience as valued by the authority.

It is also required that he manages and supervises the craft industry subject of the subsidy, never having previously been granted subsidies during the two years preceding the submission of the application and that he has a specific location to practice the craft industry in question.

For the craft institution to receive support - in accordance with Article (5) of the decision - it is required that the craft activity be added to the trade register of the institution, registered in the authority's database, not have previously been granted support during the two years preceding the submission of the application and that it have a specific location to practice the industry is the subject of support.

The request shall be submitted to the authority on the form prepared for this purpose, accompanied by the documents.

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مضيافاً
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with Confidence

رؤية عمان
2040
Oman Vision
2040

Ministry of Social
Development

Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non- refundable)
23/2022	Provision of a Programmer & Database Supervisor for a Takaful System	Companies specialized in the field of information technology services that are registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the Excellent and first degree	Monday 11-4-2022 02:00 PM	Tuesday 26-4-2022 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On Monday 28/3/2022.
- ❖ Tender shall be submitted in compliance with the technical specifications and terms along with a local bank warranty at (1%) of the tender value, valid ninety (90) days from the date of e-submission.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

" The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry "

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سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and
Information Technology

إعلان مزاد إلكتروني E-Auction Announcement

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and IT will establish a public e-auction for government items auctioned in www.mazad.om.
Interested auction bidders must examine the following items as per stated below:-

Auctioned Items	Examining Location	Examining Date/Time
Vehicles	Ministry's main building in Al-Khuwair	10/4/2022 8:00AM - 1:00PM
Furniture + Electronics+ Iron poles, barriers and signboards scraps	N. Al Batinah Governorate (Al Ghaili Workshop)	
Iron poles, barriers, and signboards scraps	Roads department in Governorate of Al-Dakhliya (Nizwa)	
Iron poles, barriers and signboards scraps	Roads department in Govenorate of N. Al Sharqya (Ibra)	
Hino Water tanker 2000 Gallons capacity office furniture	Roads department in Governorate of Al-Dhahira	

The auction will start on Tuesday 12/4/2022 from 8:00AM and ends in Wednesday 13/4/2022 at 12:00pm in accordance to the following conditions:

- Bidders must register at (www.mazad.om) website.
- Pay 1000 OMR as insurance electronically through auction website.
- Bidders who acquired the actioned item successfully must pay auctioning fee which is 3% of the auctioned item value.
- The Ministry of Transport, Communications and IT and Mazad.om company E-auctioning shall not be liable for any mismatch between auctioned items images and descriptions in the platform and its actual state thus bidders must examine the items onsite in the allocated times for items examining.
- Bidders who acquired the actioned item successfully must process items full payment through e-auction website within 48 work/office hours.
- Bidders who acquired the auctioned items should dismantle and move the items within a week starting from the date of winning the auctioned item. In case of failing to move the items within the specified time a 5% ground fine will be imposed for each day of delay and the Ministry shall not be liable if anything is lost or damaged.
- Acquired auctioned items cannot be returned or get a discount and any related request will not be accepted.
- VAT (5%) is applied on the value of the auctioned item and auctioning service.
- Insurance payment will be confiscated if the following occurred:
 - If the bidder did not process full payment for the acquired item within the specified time.
 - If the bidder did not move or dismantle the acquired items within the specified time.
- For more information visit www.mazad.om

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Active Learning Awareness Raising Day held

MUSCAT: The Centre for Preparatory Studies (CPS), Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), organised a professional development day called Active Learning Awareness Raising Day aimed to raise teachers' awareness about active learning and improve teaching practices. The event took place on Thursday at Al Wahat Club and 250 teachers were involved.

Dr Badriya al Shihi, Deputy Chair of Omani State Council and CPS Director, delivered the welcome speech in which she emphasised that this day is in line with Oman Vision 2040 in order to improve educational outcomes and increase the quality of foundational and higher education. She also stressed that learning and learner centred approaches to education should be employed to facilitate the development of life-long learning and the 21st century skills of communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity.

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مضيافاً
Moving Forward
with Confidence

رؤية عمان
2040
Oman Vision
2040

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة الزراعة والموارد المائية والصيد البحري
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O.)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
49/2020/MAFW/HQ6-Retenders	Renovation Works For Walk Way, At Sur Fishery Harbour	25/-	Second	Thursday 31/3/2022	Tuesday 12/4/2022
143/2022/MAFW/HQ-9	Maintenance Of Fish Market And Administrative Building At Suwaiq Fishery Harbor	25/-	Fourth	Thursday 31/3/2022	Tuesday 12/4/2022
144/2022/MAFW/HQ-10	Maintenance Of CCTV System At Various Fisheries Harbor	25/-	Specialized	Sunday 10/4/2022	Monday 2/5/2022
145/2022/MAFW/HQ-11	General Maintenance At Musannah Fishery Harbor	25/-	Third	Thursday 31/3/2022	Tuesday 12/4/2022
146/2022/MAFW/HQ-12	Maintenance and rehabilitation of the veterinary clinic in the Department of Agricultural Development in Al-Jabal Al-Akhdhar	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 12/4/2022	Monday 2/5/2022
155/2022/MAFW/HQ-13	Rehabilitation And Maintenance Works In Villas Affiliated In The Directorate Of Agricultural And Fisheries Wealth And Water Resources In North Al Batinah	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 12/4/2022	Monday 2/5/2022
156/2022/MAFW/HQ-14	Consultancy Services for Construction of Groundwater Modeling at Najd Area in Dhofar Governorate	25/-	First	Tuesday 12/4/2022	Monday 2/5/2022

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender), and addressed to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources, And the bidders can contact the Esnad technical support team at the number listed below to find out how to request electronic guarantees from local banks.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968.24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.
- Note:** Bid Submission will be online only. Scan Copy of Tender Bond needs to be attached in system.

TENDERS COMMITTEE

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Palestinians elect West Bank councils

RAMALLAH: Voters cast ballots on Saturday for municipal councils in the Israeli-occupied West Bank in a rare democratic exercise following a decade and a half of delays to Palestinian elections. It was the second phase of municipal polls after a first round of voting in December in 154 West Bank villages.

Saturday's vote was held in 50 towns and cities, with many elections uncontested, or without any candidates in some cases.

Turnout was 52.8 per cent, according to the Central Elections Commission. Wasfi Ramhi, voting in the city of Al Bireh, said he hoped it would lead to national elections.

"If they are democratic, fair and free, they will help us to hold legislative and presidential elections," he said. As he cast his vote in Al Bireh, Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas defended his decision to call off scheduled presidential and legislative elections last year, saying they had to be held in "all the Palestinian territories".

Israel had barred voting from taking place in annexed east Jerusalem. The activists had been poised to sweep the parliamentary election, which was widely seen as



Palestinians register to vote in the local elections in Beit Furik, east of the West Bank city of Nablus. — AFP

the real reason for Abbas's 11th-hour postponement of the poll.

No legislative or presidential elections have been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years, following repeated delays.

The last municipal elections, held in 2017, were boycotted by

Hamas, the rulers of the Gaza Strip. Hamas is also boycotting this year's election in protest at the indefinite postponement of parliamentary and presidential elections. Central Elections Commission chief Hanna Nasser said a number of candidates had

been arrested in the lead-up to the vote.

"There are candidates who were arrested before today," Nasser said. "This indicates blatant interference in the election process. "The arrests were made for political reasons to prevent

No legislative or presidential elections have been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years

certain candidates from running in the elections," he told a news conference. No elections are being held in Gaza or in east Jerusalem.

In the Jordan Valley city of Jericho, independents dominated the candidate lists, with established parties officially staying away, a dynamic mirrored across the West Bank.

"Usually there are just one or two lists running -- and they belong to the parties. This time there are five lists, many of them independents," said Emad Barahmeh, a businessman who heads one of the independent lists running in Jericho. Yet analysts say Hamas and Fatah, the secular party led by Abbas, are still involved, fielding candidates as independents. "It is also noticeable that the various Palestinian factions are clearly absent from running for these elections, but their candidates have entered under the name of independents," Palestinian elections specialist Talab Awad said. — AFP

Second black box of crashed China plane recovered

BEIJING: The second black box has been recovered from last week's deadly China Eastern plane crash, officials said on Sunday, and could help solve the mystery of the jet's breakneck descent.

The Boeing 737-800 was flying between the cities of Kunming and Guangzhou on Monday when it nosedived into a mountainside, disintegrating on impact and killing all 132 people on board.

The cause of the disaster, China's deadliest plane crash in more than 30 years, is not yet known.

An "orange cylindrical object was unearthed" on Sunday morning, Zhu Tao, director of safety at China's Civil Aviation Administration (CAAC), told reporters.

"Investigators on site have confirmed... it is the storage unit of the flight data recorder."

The plane was equipped with two flight recorders: a cockpit voice recorder and one in the rear passenger cabin tracking flight data. — AFP

EU envoy visits Iran to close gaps on N-deal

TEHRAN: The EU's coordinator for talks to restore the 2015 nuclear deal met Iran's foreign minister and its chief negotiator on Sunday in Tehran, state media reported, aiming to bridge gaps in the talks.

"Working on closing the remaining gaps in the #Vienna-Talks," European Union diplomat Enrique Mora (pictured) tweeted ahead of his trip. "We must conclude this negotiation. Much is at stake."

Iran has been engaged in efforts to revive the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia directly, and the US indirectly since April 2021.

Mora, who coordinates the indirect US-Iran talks arrived in Tehran late on Saturday and on Sunday met Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, state news agency IRNA reported.

Parties have signalled for weeks that the negotiations are close to an agreement, but that "political decisions" are required from Tehran and Washington.

"The lack of a US political de-



Enrique Mora, European Union diplomat

cision to lift sanctions tied to the economic benefits of the Iranian people is the current obstacle to achieving the final results," Amir-Abdollahian said during the meeting.

"Enjoying full economic benefits and the effective lifting of sanctions is our top priority," he added, quoted in a foreign ministry statement. Iran's top diplomat said "other parties, especially the US government, must take a realistic approach to resolving the remaining issues". Mora's visit comes as EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell indicated that a deal would be reached to renew the accord within days. — AFP

Students test run solar e-rickshaw

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

A group of engineering students in the Indian state of Punjab has set an example by turning an electricity-based e-rickshaw into a solar-powered e-rickshaw. The students did a successful test run of the model that can be environment friendly and a model that can enhance the income of e-rickshaw drivers, who otherwise have to wait at least eight hours to recharge the fully depleted batteries.

The Global Group of Institutes students successfully launched the solar-powered e-rickshaw under the guidance of Prof Parminderjit Singh, who termed the product "aesthetically attractive, aerodynamic and environment-friendly".

The students who worked for the project include Jobanpreet Singh, Ankush Kumar, Chetan Kumar, Karandeep Singh, Karanjit Singh. Prof Parminderjit who spoke to the media in Amritsar said, "The students found a major limitation in the traditional electricity charged e-rickshaws. They are generally charged during the night, which affects the daily earnings of the drivers as



GGI Amritsar faculty members and students with solar-powered e-rickshaw built by the Institute students. Source: Tribune

they have to restrict the vehicle's movement for about eight hours. This solar-powered e-rickshaw does not have any need to stop the vehicle to charge batteries. It can charge during the day, run and keep the battery ready even for night hours." "The solar project's costs around INR 17,800, and the same can be recovered in a year," he said. Besides saving the environment from pollution, the drivers of e-rickshaws can also save money on charging the batteries.

Praising the efforts of the students and their guide, Dr Akashdeep Singh, Vice-Chairman, Global Group of Institutes (GGI), said the project would reduce the carbon footprints by 1,260 pounds annually per e-rickshaw.

"If the same is implemented by all e-rickshaws plying in a city like Amritsar, it will reduce the dependence on thermally generated electricity and help the drivers earn more besides saving the environment from pollution," he

said. Commenting on the new model's quality control and its viability in the market, Dr MS Saini, Director, GGI, said: "The complete working modifications of the vehicle were done within the resources available to the team at the High-Performance Automobiles, Center of Excellence of Global Institutes using the 3D Autocad Software of CREO 2.0. The design and fabrication were done under the guidance of the faculty of Mechanical Engineering."

SHORT TAKES

MANILA

Thousands flee rumbling Philippine volcano

At least 3,300 residents have fled their homes around the Philippines' second-most active volcano, where two explosions were recorded early on Sunday.

Taal Volcano in Batangas province, 66 kilometres south of Manila, erupted, generating a 3-kilometre-tall plume of steam, gas and ash. The explosions from Taal's main crater produced 800-metre and 400-metre-tall plumes, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) said. Taal



Volcano's alert remains at level three, Phivolcs Director Renato Solidum said.

"This means there is magmatic activity," he told news TV channel Teleradyo. — dpa

RIYADH

Air strikes pummel Yemen despite truce

The coalition launched air strikes on Yemen hours after Ansar Allah fighters announced a three-day truce, with the UN chief condemning a surge in violence as the war enters its eighth year.

The raids targeted Sanaa, the Ansar Allah-held capital, according to Saudi Arabia's Al Ekhbariya TV, which tweeted "the start of air strikes on Ansar Allah camps and strongholds in Sanaa" around midnight.

The attacks began shortly after



Ansar Allah announced a three-day truce and offered peace talks on condition that the Saudis stop their air strikes and blockade of Yemen and remove "foreign forces". — AFP

SHANGHAI

Shanghai to impose phased Covid-19 lockdown

Shanghai will launch a phased lockdown to curb an Omicron-fuelled Covid-19 outbreak that has hit China with its highest caseloads since the early days of the pandemic.

China's biggest city will lock down its eastern half for five days of testing beginning on Monday, followed by a similar lockdown of its western side from April 1.

Although recent case numbers remain insignificant in a global context, they are China's highest since the first weeks of the



pandemic, which first emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019.

China's National Health Commission reported more than 4,500 new domestically transmitted cases. — AFP



A woman wears eye colors in Ukrainian national flag to protest against Russian war in Ukraine at Brandenburg gate in Berlin. – AFP

Envoy shuns Russian-starred Berlin solidarity concert

BERLIN: Ukraine’s ambassador to Germany did not take part in a concert in solidarity with Ukraine organised by his host government on Sunday because no Ukrainian soloists were billed to play. “Only Russian soloists, no Ukrainians,” Andriy Melnyk tweeted, along with what appeared to be a screenshot of the invitation. “An affront. Sorry, I’m staying away.”

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier opened the Berliner Philharmoniker concert via video link, having caught the coronavirus.

According to Steinmeier’s office, musicians from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus and Germany, among others, were to perform pieces by Ukrainian, Russian and Polish composers.

The line-up included Russian pianist Evgeny Kissin and the Russian baritone Rodion Pogosssov. According

to the orchestra, chief conductor Kirill Petrenko had to cancel at short notice due to illness.

Steinmeier said the participation of artists from different countries was “an affirmation of freedom and peace.”

“Your stance against this criminal war is a question of humanity, not of nationality,” he said, according to an official transcript of his opening address. “We must not permit (Russian President Vladimir) Putin’s hatred to become a hatred dividing peoples and individuals and it must not be allowed to divide our society either.”

Steinmeier’s spokesperson Cerstin Gammelin said she regretted Melnyk’s decision because the concert had offered the chance to send a joint message of support for Ukraine. “It’s a shame that we can’t send this signal together,” she tweeted. — dpa

Biden says Putin ‘cannot remain in power’

WARSAW: US President Joe Biden on Saturday castigated Vladimir Putin over the month-old war in Ukraine, bluntly calling the Russian leader “a butcher” who “cannot remain in power”.

In an impassioned speech from the Royal Castle in Warsaw, delivered after meeting top Ukrainian ministers in Poland and earlier conferring with Nato and EU allies on the conflict, Biden plainly warned Russia: “Don’t even think about moving on one single inch of Nato territory.”

Although the White House moved quickly to temper Biden’s unprecedented comments on Putin — insisting the US leader is not seeking “regime change” in Russia and was referring to Putin’s influence over neighbours in the region — the Kremlin made its displeasure clear.

Personal attacks, one official said, were “narrowing down the window of opportunity” for bilateral relations.

Biden coupled his harsh words for Putin with a pointed attempt to appeal to ordinary Russians, saying they were “not our enemy” and urging them to blame their president for the heavy sanctions imposed by the West.

He offered reassurance to Ukrainians in the audience and elsewhere, at a time when nearly four million of them have been driven out of their country. “We stand with you,” he said.



A Ukrainian soldier sits in an armoured car in the suburbs of Kyiv during Russia’s military attack launched on Ukraine. – AFP

Biden also cast doubt on Russia’s signal that it may scale down its war aims to concentrate on eastern Ukraine — even as two Russian missile strikes slammed into the west of the country.

The president said he was “not sure” Moscow has indeed changed its objectives, which, so far, he said had resulted in “strategic failure”.

Two Russian missiles earlier struck a fuel depot in western Ukraine’s Lviv, a rare attack on a city just 70 kilometres from the Polish border that has escaped serious fighting.

At least five people were

wounded, regional governor Maksym Kozytsky said, as journalists in the city centre saw plumes of thick black smoke. Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, vowing to destroy the country’s military and topple pro-Western President Volodymyr Zelensky.

But his army has made little progress on capturing key cities, and it has hit hospitals, residential buildings and schools in increasingly deadly attacks on civilians.

Biden, who was winding up a whirlwind visit to Poland after holding a series of urgent summits in Brussels with Western

allies, earlier met Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov in Warsaw in an emphatic show of support for Kyiv. Both ministers had made a rare trip out of Ukraine for the face-to-face talks, in a potential sign of growing confidence in their battle against Russian forces.

In a possible shift on a plan to transfer Soviet-era fighter jets from Poland to Kyiv to boost Ukraine’s firepower in the skies — rejected last month by the Pentagon as too “high risk” — Kuleba said the United States now did not object. — AFP

Fleeing Russian attack, Ukrainian woman reaches Gaza home

BUREIJ, Palestinian Territories: After Russia attacked Ukraine, Viktoria Saidam knew she needed to find a “safer place” than Kyiv and ultimately chose her husband’s homeland — a Palestinian territory not typically associated with security: Gaza.

Saidam, 21, was born Viktoria Breij in Vinnytsia, a town some 200 kilometres southwest of Ukraine’s capital.

While studying pharmacy in Kyiv, she met Ibrahim Saidam, a medical student from Bureij, a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli-blockaded Mediterranean enclave home to 2.3 million Palestinians.

Since they married two years ago, Viktoria Saidam had been keen to get to Gaza to meet her in-laws, but the Russian assault launched on February 24 accelerated that long-anticipated family gathering, she said.

“We understood that there was no way to know what tomorrow would bring. The number of dead and dying was rising everyday,” said the young woman, sobbing as she watched videos of Russian strikes destroying buildings in Ukraine.

Their first move was to pack



Ukrainian Viktoria Saidam (R), with her Palestinian husband Ibrahim Saidam in the refugee camp of Bureij in central Gaza Strip. – AFP

up, leave Kyiv and head to Vinnytsia. They left the town before a March 7 Russian bombardment on Vinnytsia’s airport killed nine people according to Ukraine’s emergency services.

“My husband and I had to look for a safer place than Ukraine,” Saidam said. “We chose his homeland, Gaza.” The couple fled Ukraine by minibus and then on foot, walking across the Romanian border. They then flew to Cairo and from there headed for

the Rafah crossing with southern Gaza.

The young woman said she knows “the reality” of life in Gaza, a territory controlled by Hamas since 2007 and under strict Israeli blockade for 15 years now. The unemployment rate is above 50 per cent, the electricity supply is sporadic and conflict can flare at any time.

“There was a war here, and it can start again, but we had to leave Ukraine and (Gaza) was

safe,” Saidam said.

“We don’t know what will happen tomorrow,” added the Ukrainian woman who converted shortly after her wedding and who so far speaks only a few words of Arabic. “We hope and pray for the best.”

According to Ukraine’s diplomatic office in Ramallah, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, there are some 2,500 Ukrainians in Gaza, mostly women who have married Palestinians men who studied abroad, like Ibrahim.

The impeccably coiffed 23-year-old husband, who speaks fluent Ukrainian, said that, having lived through three of the Gaza wars, he has “some experience” with conflict. In Ukraine, “a week before the start of the war, I prepared some provisions. But we didn’t expect it to be so fierce,” he said.

“We could have gone to European countries to seek asylum, but I preferred to return to Gaza because I feel safe here and I know how things work.” Comfortably settled at the Saidam family home, Viktoria Saidam said she was doing well but also that “fear and panic” grip her when she speaks to her brother and sister who are still in Ukraine. — AFP

Ukraine rebel region says may vote on joining Russia

MOSCOW: The head of Ukraine’s Lugansk separatist region said it may hold a referendum on becoming part of Russia, after Moscow sent troops into its pro-Western neighbour. “I think that in the near future a referendum will be held on the territory of the republic, during which the people will... express their opinion on joining the Russian Federation,” Russian news agencies quoted Leonid Pasechnik as saying. “I am sure this will be the case,” he said.

Russia launched its military action in Ukraine on February 24, saying it was acting in defence of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk republics in the country’s east. President Vladimir Putin had two days earlier recognised the two regions as independent.

Half of Ukrainians ready to take up arms: poll

OSLO: Nearly half of Ukrainians aged 18-55 are ready to fight to defend their country against Russia, a poll conducted by European scholars suggested. Around 70 per cent of men and 30 per cent of women said they were willing to take up arms, according to the survey carried out by the Peace Research Institute of Oslo (Prio) with the help of local pollsters Info Sapiens. The latter questioned more than 1,000 Ukrainians considered of age to defend their country, half of them men and half women, in an attempt to create a representative sample despite the challenges posed by conducting a survey during a war. .

British govt adviser appoints war crimes lawyer

LONDON: The British government’s top legal adviser has appointed a war crimes lawyer to advise Ukraine over the Russian attack. The UK Attorney General Suella Braverman announced that Sir Howard Morrison QC will act as an independent adviser to Ukrainian Prosecutor General Iryna Venediktova. Sir Howard has served as a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Court (ICC) for more than 12 years, including overseeing cases like that of Serbian war criminal Radovan Karadzic.

It comes as Vladimir Putin continues to be accused of war crimes over his assault on Ukraine. Earlier this month, Ms Braverman signed a joint statement of support with Ms Venediktova, pledging support to gather evidence of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed by Putin’s regime in Ukraine.

Kyiv says Russia could divide Ukraine like Korea

KYIV: Ukraine said that Russia, whose troops have been slowly advancing towards the capital Kyiv, may aim to divide the country into versions of North and South Korea. Kyrylo Budanov, Chief of the Defence Intelligence, said in a statement on social media that the strategy could result from President Vladimir Putin’s failure to “capture Kyiv and remove Ukraine’s government”.

“There are reasons to believe that he may try to impose a separation line between the occupied and unoccupied regions of our country. In fact, it will be an attempt to set up South and North Korea in Ukraine,” Budanov said.

The ‘five’ strengths of the Costa Ricans



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi
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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

How do you think can a country described in 1719 as “the poorest and most miserable colony in all America (Central, South & North)” by a Spanish governor, become one of the most peaceful, talented and impact investing-friendly nations in the world?

I was fortunate to visit the Costa Rican Pavilion at Expo Dubai 2020 and learn more about the story of how modern Costa Rica, a country of over five million people and over 51 thousand kms in area size focused on building four main strengths in the past 70 years; government, talents, environment and ecotourism and investment.

These five strengths, Costa Ricans or Ticos as they refer to themselves will tell you, are just means to their desired end result, which realising their official nation brand “essential Costa Rica” and

their unofficial nation brand “Pura Vida” which literally means pure life.

Costa Rica is considered one of the most stable countries in the western hemisphere.

It has witnessed the peaceful transition of power between more than 15 administrations during the past 70 years. In addition, Costa Ricans decided in 1949 that they will dedicate their nation’s resources to investing more in education, health and environment with no resources dedicated to military conflicts.

Therefore, I would argue that the success of Costa Ricans in preserving their peace, stability and impact investing laid the ground for their success in achieving the national vision and brand.

In 2021 the winner of Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for

THE SUCCESS OF COSTA RICANS IN PRESERVING PEACE, STABILITY AND IMPACT INVESTING LAID THE GROUND FOR THEIR SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING THE NATIONAL VISION AND BRAND

Environmental Conservation was Costa Rica’s University for International Cooperation (UCI) for their biodiversity and sustainable tourism initiatives. This is understandable given the fact that Costa Rica invests consistently almost 30 per cent of its annual budget on education and innovation. This investment in education and innovation resulted in achieving 98 per cent adult

literacy rate, one of the highest in the world and becoming one of the top software development outsourcing destinations due its talents’ high English language proficiency.

Around 100 per cent of the power Costa Ricans enjoy is generated using renewable energy, and the State invests in protecting more than a quarter of country’s land and marine territory, in order to make sure that this renewable energy generation is sustainable for their future generations. With a population of more than five million people, Costa Rican culture’s emphasis on the values of friendliness and pure life help them attract almost the same number of tourists every year.

It’s worth mentioning that this cultural investment is backed by more than 250 certified sustainable

tourism companies leveraging the country’s biodiversity, which accounts for 6 per cent of the biodiversity of the whole world despite Costa Rica’s small land area that accounts for only .03 per cent of the global surface.

None of the above national strengths would have been able to contribute to the vision of pure life without attracting both national and international impact investment partners.

In this regard, the connected positive impact of investing in peace, education, innovation and environment lead to a focus on a healthy balance between a strong “buying local” policy and implementation and an attractive investment climate, where more than 250 international companies flourish, mainly in technology, logistics and ecotourism sectors.

Activists mobilise over Hungary poll fraud fears

PETER MURPHY

As Hungary’s April 3 general election looms, civil society activists are gearing up to combat what they say are dirty tricks which have been normalised under nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Firebrand Orban has been at the helm for 12 years and is seeking a fourth straight term at Sunday’s poll, for which an unprecedented 20,000 volunteer poll observers are being mobilised.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) will also have a full-scale monitoring mission, only the second time it has ever done this for an election in a European Union country.

In a preliminary report published this week the OSCE mission voiced concerns about several aspects of the election, including bias in the public media and the potential for postal vote abuses.

It also said many of the concerns it identified at the 2018 vote had not been addressed.

In response, the government cited the pro-Orban Centre for Fundamental Rights think-tank which called the OSCE report “baseless” and an attempt “to provide a convenient excuse for the Hungarian Left, should they lose at the polls”.

The last general election in 2018 was “the dirtiest of the last 30 years, since the end of communism”, Zsolia Banuta, co-head of the Unhack Democracy election watchdog, said in Budapest.

After interviewing 170 poll workers her group concluded that the 2018 election was marred by “major malpractice” such as transporting voters from neighbouring countries, bribery and intimidation, tampering with postal votes, missing ballots and election software malfunctions.

Banuta, 40, laments the fact that Supreme Court rulings, including against the practice of busing in voters from abroad to support Orban’s Fidesz party, had “no consequences”.

In contrast to Western European countries, “over the last 30 years cheating at Hungarian elections has become gradually normalised, that mindset should be changed”, she said.

Although analysts expect a close result, Orban is still favourite to win an election following a campaign dominated by the February 24 Russian war on neighbouring Ukraine.

Orban has adopted a safety-first neutral stance in the conflict, sparking accusations by the opposition that he is Russian President Vladimir Putin’s closest ally in the EU and Nato.

—AFP

Public health catastrophe looms in Ukraine, experts warn



Apoorva Mandavilli

The writer is an American investigative journalist whose work has focused on medical science

A convoy of five vans snaked slowly from the battered Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, towards Chernihiv, in the northeast of the country. On board were generators, clothes, fuel — and medications needed to treat HIV.

With a main bridge decimated by shelling, the drivers crept along back roads, hoping to reach Chernihiv and begin distributing the drugs to some of the 3,000 residents in desperate need of treatment.

Organisers of efforts like this one are rushing to prevent the war in Ukraine from morphing into a public health disaster. The conflict, they say, threatens to upend decades of progress against infectious diseases throughout the region, sparking new epidemics that will be nearly impossible to control.

Ukraine has alarmingly high numbers of people living with HIV and hepatitis C and dangerously low levels of vaccination against measles, polio and Covid-19. Overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions for refugees are breeding grounds for cholera and other diarrhoeal diseases, not to mention respiratory plagues like Covid-19, pneumonia and tuberculosis.

“If they don’t get the medicines, there is a high risk that they will

THE WAR ‘WILL HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON HEALTH SYSTEMS THAT ARE ALREADY VERY FRAGILE’, A FORMER UN SECY-GEN ENVOY FOR EASTERN EUROPE

actually die because of the lack of therapy, if they don’t die under the shelling”, said Dmytro Sherembei, who heads 100% Life, the organisation delivering medications to Chernihiv residents with HIV.

Sherembei, 45, learned he had HIV 24 years ago. He is one of more than 250,000 people in Ukraine living with the virus, a huge epidemic driven largely by the sharing of contaminated needles among intravenous drug users.

Ukraine and the surrounding region also make up a world epicentre of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, a form of the disease impervious to the most powerful medications.

The Ukrainian health ministry in recent years had made progress in bringing these epidemics under



An aid tent in the aftermath of an explosion at a residential complex in Kyiv, Ukraine.

control, including a 21 per cent drop in new HIV infections and a 36 per cent decline in TB diagnoses since 2010. But health officials now fear that delays in diagnosis and treatment interruptions during the war may allow these pathogens to flourish again, with consequences that ripple for years.

“Last year, we were working to differentiate between different TB mutations”, Iana Terleeva, who heads tuberculosis programmes for Ukraine’s Ministry of Health, said.

“Now instead, we are trying to differentiate between aerial shelling, raids and other military hardware.”

The fighting also has damaged health facilities throughout the country and spawned a refugee crisis, imperiling thousands of people with chronic conditions like diabetes and cancer who depend on continuing care.

“Everything is at very high risk, as it is always in the battlefield”, said Dr Michel Kazatchkine, a former UN secretary-general envoy for Eastern Europe.

“We should anticipate major health crises with regard to infectious diseases and chronic diseases across the region that I expect to be severe and durable”, he added. The war “will have a huge impact on health systems that are already very fragile”, Kazatchkine said.

More than 3 million Ukrainians have fled to neighbouring countries, most of them to Poland, and nearly 7 million are internally displaced. The refugees are arriving in countries unprepared for an onslaught of patients with medical needs, experts said.

Moldova, for example, is one of the poorest nations in Europe, ill-equipped to care for refugees or to stem infectious disease outbreaks. Countries like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan buy drugs and vaccines produced by Russia and are heavily dependent on its economy.

Russia itself has more people with HIV than any country in Eastern Europe, and Western sanctions are likely to interrupt the already low levels of funding for services in the country.

— New York Times

Break your glass ceiling



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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

Nobody is too old to set another goal or to have a new dream. All that matters is to believe in that dream and work everyday to make it come true. As Walt Disney said: “If you can dream it, you can do it”; as simple as that! This is possible if people only truly believe in their dreams and spare no effort to make them a reality someday. However, what stops people from having a dream is their fear of failure. This is not a fair excuse that one can have for if one doesn’t make mistakes, he learns nothing new.

Not to blame those scared to fail in achieving their dreams, but probably they wonder how a dream could come true?! The answer is you are what you think and you achieve what you believe in. Thus, if you have faith in your dreams, then definitely you will hold on them and strive to get them the breath of life. Perhaps, all they have to think of is that not all storms come to disrupt their life, some come to clear their path instead. They have to remember that before they can make their dreams come true, they must first have one!

Having a dream to chase is not a common belief to many people! Some only prefer to live the moment and do not even care about the future and what they would do the day after. It is good to keep your life simple and stress-free, but not to the extent that you do not bother to plan for what you want to do on the next day! Possibly, what concerns

HAVING A DREAM TO CHASE IS NOT A COMMON BELIEF TO MANY PEOPLE! SOME ONLY PREFER TO LIVE THE MOMENT AND DO NOT EVEN CARE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND WHAT THEY WOULD DO THE DAY AFTER

them more is how to make a good living and enjoy life. Eleanor Roosevelt said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

In fact, life is worthless without having a dream that one believes in and fights for. Dreams add a different flavour to life as it becomes challenging and thought-provoking, but rewarding of course. As Albert Einstein said, “Never give up on what you really want to do. The person with big dreams is more powerful than the one with all the facts”. Always the little of persistence results in getting more achievements and whatever looks a failure and disappointing might suddenly turn into a commendable victory.

If you thought that you failed in achieving a dream, change your ways of doing things, but not your principles. Likewise, trees usually change their leaves and not their roots. It has been said that a pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity, but an optimist sees an opportunity in every difficulty. There is nothing impossible to do regardless how difficult it is; you just got to roll the dice and make it happen.

Successful people always keep trying till they get it right; that is what we all should do when things don’t go right from the first shot. The road to success and making dreams come true is never an easy one; it is paved by challenges and struggles. Nobody is too old, too bad, too late and too sick to start from scratch once again. All what you need is to have more of self-confidence and believe in your dreams that are achievable ones.

To those who believe in themselves and like to celebrate their dreams shall never say die no matter what challenges come across their way. The journey to success is always full of obstacles; just keep moving as the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life. Martin Luther King advised, “You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.” Hence, one has to put his foot on the dream-making track and start the journey.



BEATING THE HEAT

A boy swims in the Arabian Sea on a hot day in Karachi, Pakistan, on Sunday. – AFP

The world must avoid another food crisis



Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Director-General of the World Trade Organization, is a former managing director at the World Bank, finance minister of Nigeria, board chair of Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and African Union special envoy on Covid-19

The war in Ukraine is causing immense, heart-wrenching human suffering. At the World Trade Organization, an institution based on the rule of law and established to help forge peace, we find the violence abhorrent to our fundamental principles. We echo United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres’s call for the bloodshed to stop, and we wish for a prompt and peaceful resolution of the conflict.

But even as we remain transfixed by the shocking and tragic images of Ukrainian cities under attack, and even as we commit to doing all we can individually and collectively to help Ukraine’s people, it is also becoming clear that the war’s economic and humanitarian repercussions will be felt far beyond Europe. We have a responsibility to mitigate these consequences proactively as well.

Even prior to the war, rising food and energy prices were straining household and government budgets in many smaller and poorer countries whose economies had also been among the slowest to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. New price spikes triggered by the conflict in Eastern Europe now threaten to cause poverty and food insecurity to rise. In these circumstances, the role of the WTO and trade in general, particularly for countries that are net food importers, is of paramount importance in preventing hunger.

While Ukraine and Russia together account for a modest 2.2 per cent of global goods trade, according to WTO estimates, this figure understates their significance in grain and energy markets, and as suppliers of fertiliser, minerals, and other inputs critical for a wide range of downstream production activities. In 2020, for example, the two countries supplied 24 per cent of globally traded wheat, and 73 per cent of sunflower oil.

Imports of such commodities are essential for basic food security in the many countries that lack the water, soil, and weather conditions to grow all the food they need. Over the past 30 years, Ukraine and Russia have become key sources of grain for countries including Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Egypt, Malawi, Namibia, and Tanzania. The World Food Programme, the UN agency that provides food aid to people affected by conflict and disasters in more than 80 countries, typically procures more than half of its wheat from Ukraine.

War-induced blockages of Ukrainian ports and the international sanctions imposed on Russia have sharply reduced the available global volume of wheat. Fears that Ukrainian farmers will be prevented from growing this year’s spring crop have compounded supply concerns, causing the

price of wheat futures to rise 40 per cent and reach record highs in the first week of March.

Surging energy and food prices have begun to elicit familiar policy responses, with several governments restricting exports of grains and other key foodstuffs in an effort to maintain domestic supplies and limit price increases. The rising number of complaints to the WTO from exporters in several member countries

IT IS BECOMING CLEAR THAT THE UKRAINE WAR’S ECONOMIC AND HUMANITARIAN REPERCUSSIONS – ESPECIALLY RISING FOOD PRICES – WILL BE FELT FAR BEYOND EUROPE. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST ACT NOW TO PREVENT SOME OF THE WORLD’S POOREST AND MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE FROM BECOMING COLLATERAL DAMAGE

and jurisdictions underscores the extent of the problem. Such export controls can trigger a spiral of price increases and new restrictions. The World Bank estimates that 40 per cent of the increase in global wheat prices during the last food-price crisis in 2010-11 resulted from governments’ attempts to insulate domestic markets.

But the world can mitigate these risks. Experience shows that international cooperation can help manage the knock-on effects of surging food prices. For a decade,

sharing information about food supplies and stockpiles through the Agricultural Market Information System has enabled leading exporters and importers to prevent panics and keep markets functioning smoothly.

With the global trading system already struggling to cope with high transport costs and congested ports, closer coordination could help stabilise international markets for food, energy, and commodities, and minimise additional disruptions to supply chains. Importantly, the WTO’s monitoring and transparency function can help ensure that food and agriculture supply chains that are not directly affected by sanctions remain open and operate efficiently.

Better visibility regarding market disruption would also enable the international community to identify and mobilise financial and other assistance for poor countries badly affected by rising food prices. This is particularly urgent because, even before the Ukraine war, the post-pandemic economic recovery had been leaving much of the world behind. Growth in the poorest countries was furthest behind the pre-2020 trend, reflecting their weak fiscal capacity and inequitable access to Covid-19 vaccines.

As the world watches Ukraine’s unfolding tragedy, we must all urgently focus on how to support the Ukrainian people. And it is natural and appropriate that governments will concentrate on the disruption to their own economies. But we must also act now to ensure that some of the world’s poorest and most vulnerable people — far away from the conflict and absent from the headlines — do not become collateral damage.

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A truck is loaded with wheat at Bogatoye village in Izmail. The fate of the war in Ukraine is currently being played out in the east of the country, but the food security of tens of millions of people around the world depends on the sowing which is beginning in the west and south, relatively sheltered from the fights. – AFP

sport

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Nibras al Owisi won silver in ILCA 4 class.



Hood al Nofli won silver in U-12 Optimist class.



Tameem al Balushi won silver in Optimist class.

Oman conclude GCC sailing with rich haul

OMAN SAIL SAILORS CLAIM 3 SILVER, 4 BRONZE IN KUWAIT



MUSCAT: Oman Sail's sailing team has concluded their participation at the 11th GCC Sailing Championships after claiming the highest number of medals out of all participating nations.

The championship was held at Messilah Beach in Kuwait from March 22-26.

The Omani entry is the first regional tournament for the young Optimist sailors, who were joined by experienced ILCA sailors to together claim seven podium positions.

Medals were won by: Hood al Nofali, silver (Optimist U12); Tameem al Balushi, silver, and Abdullatif al Qasmi, bronze

(Optimist); Nebras al Owaisi, silver, and Elyas al Fadhli, bronze (ILCA 4); Ahmed al Balushi, bronze (ILCA 6); Abdulmalik al Hinai, bronze (ILCA 7).

Sultan AbdulAziz al Zadjali, Optimist Coach, said, "This was a great performance from our young sailors in their first regional competition. We have worked

hard behind the scenes to prepare them for the event and to return to Oman with so many medals is really pleasing. This is a very strong group of sailors and they will definitely learn from this challenge as they continue to improve and gain experience on the water."

He added, "It is inspiring to see the youth of the country embrace

the sport of sailing and reinforce Oman's maritime heritage. The achievements of this very young Oman Sail team shows that the future of sailing in Oman is promising and that the nation's youth is both highly-capable and highly-motivated to fulfil their considerable potential."

The 11th GCC Sailing

Championships featured a total of 57 sailors from Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates raced over four days in five classes.

The team will now return to Oman to practice and prepare for the upcoming IODA, taking place in South Korea from April 29 to May 6.



Sultanate of Oman
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-

Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Fees R.O	Grade in Tender Board Registration
RE-TENDER 19/2021	Supply	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF FLOODLIGHT TO MAIN FOOTBALL PITCH AND RUNNING TRUCK AT ALWAHADA SPORTS CLUB	25/-	Excellent & First Grade
1/2022	Supply	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF FLOODLIGHT TO MAIN FOOTBALL PITCH AT DIBBA SPORTS CLUB	25/-	Excellent & First Grade
2/2022	Supply	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF MOVEBAL GRAND STAND AT VARIOUS SPORT CLUBS	25/-	Excellent & First Grade
3/2022	Supply	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF FURNITURE AT YANQUL CLUB	25/-	First & Second Grade
4/2022	Construction	COMPLETION OF CONSTRUCTION OF SPORTS HALL AT AL LAKBI IN WILLAYT AL JAZIR	25/-	Second Grade

Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) until 09/04/2022.

The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site at 09:00am 09/05/2022.

A Tender Bond equivalent to 1% of the tender sum issued from a registered bank, in the prescribed form, in Sultanate of Oman and valid for 90 days should enclosed with the tender. Any tender without the bond will be reject and the tender committee is not bound to accept the lowest or any tender received.

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH

Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om

Medvedev advances, Murray out

MIAMI: Daniil Medvedev is thriving on the pressure of being the man to beat after dispatching Andy Murray in straight sets at the Miami Open on Saturday to edge closer to regaining his world number one ranking.

The Russian top seed served superbly against the 34-year-old three-time Grand Slam champion to ease to a straightforward 6-4, 6-2 triumph at Hard Rock Stadium and will face Spain's Pedro Martinez next.

Medvedev lost his No. 1 ranking after just 18 days, having failed to go deep in Indian Wells, but will regain it once again from the absent Novak Djokovic if he reaches the semifinals in Florida.

With Djokovic and Rafael Nadal both missing, the 26-year-old is the favourite to claim his first Miami Open title and his performance against Murray showed he's in the kind of form that will cause the rest of the field a multitude of problems.

"For sure, guys going against you are going to have more motivation if you are the top seed," Medvedev said.

"It could be the biggest win of their season but I like to be in this position. The more pressure you have, the more you expect from yourself.



"At the beginning of my career, I would be really happy when I was in the third round for the first time but now I want to achieve more. So yeah, there's definitely more pressure but also more motivation to continue doing well."

Medvedev was delighted to briefly reach the pinnacle of men's tennis but is determined to ensure his next spell at the top won't be as short.

"It felt good to touch it," smiled Medvedev. "Reaching No.1 is something that nobody can take away from me even if it was for two weeks."

MURRAY EYES WIMBLEDON

While Medvedev is at the top of his game, Murray is still searching for answers.

The Scot, playing with a metal hip after two operations to fix the problem which almost forced him to retire, has reintroduced Czech legend Ivan Lendl into his coaching team for a third time and hopes he can arrest a run that has seen him fail to back up first-round wins at his last six tournaments.

"My level of tennis wasn't good enough to win matches like that but Ivan will bring clarity over the right way to play," said Murray, who will spend time working with Lendl in Florida before skipping the clay court swing of the ATP Tour to ensure he's prepared for Wimbledon later this summer. "I don't think I have been practicing the right things for 18 months or so, it's difficult to sort of undo that space. I do feel like I played better here than I did in the previous tournament in Indian Wells but it's going to take a lot of work."

World No 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece punched his ticket into the third round after seeing off big-hitting American J.J. Wolf 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1. — AFP

OMAN, UAE WIN TO CLOSE OUT GCC WOMEN’S CUP

MUSCAT: Oman clinched a hard-fought 2-run victory over Qatar on the final day of the GCC Women’s T20I Championship Cup at the Oman Cricket Academy on Saturday. They ended the tournament in second place.

Electing to bat first after winning the toss, Oman made 97-8 after 20 overs.

Skipper Vaishali Jesrani was the only batter to cross the 20-run mark. Fiza Javed, Saya Channa and Amanda Dcosta chipped in with scores of 13, 13 and 12 respectively.

The visitors were energetic in the field, but Oman paid the price for their indecisive strike rotation throughout the game. Qatar inflicted a total of four run-outs in



the first innings. Saachi Dhadwal, Hiral Agarwal, Rochelle Sherlene Quyn and Aysha, with 1 wicket apiece, administered the other dismissals.

Qatar fell agonisingly short in the second phase of the match. Captain Aysha led the scoring

for her side with a 25-ball 24. At the 14-over mark, her 41-run partnership with Saachi Dhadwal, who made 18 runs herself, looked to be enough to steer the visitors to victory.

However, Priyanka Mendonca picked up 3 key wickets in the

space of 2 overs to turn the tide back in Oman’s favour. With 10 runs needed off the final 6 balls, Saya Channa held her nerve and secured the win for the hosts. Snehal Nair, Amanda Dcosta and Saya Channa accounted for Oman’s remaining scalps.

UAE FINISH ON TOP

In the day’s other game, the UAE cemented their spot at the top of the standings with a dominant 210-run victory over Bahrain.

Batting first after winning the toss, the UAE openers forged a 193-run partnership in 16 overs to turn the remainder of the contest into a formality.

Kavisha Egodage was dismissed for 67 runs but Esha Oza continued the carnage.

Her unbeaten 71-ball 158 - the second highest-individual score in Women’s T20I history, powered the UAE to 253-1 after 20 overs.

In response, Bahrain were bowled out in 16 overs for 43 runs, 25 of which belonged to opener

Tharanga Gajanayake. Lavanya Keny was the pick of the UAE bowlers. She claimed 4 wickets while giving away just 3 runs.

Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain settled on third, fourth, and fifth spot respectively, with net run rate separating all of them. Saudi Arabia were unable to pick up any points in the competition and finished last.

BRIEF SCORES:

Oman 97-8 in 20 overs (Vaishali Jesrani 23 (33b); Rochelle Quyn 13-1) beat Qatar 95-8 in 20 overs (Aysha 24 (25b, 2x4); Priyanka Mendonca 3-11) by 2 runs.

UAE 253-1 in 20 overs (Esha Oza 158 (71b, 22x4, 6x6); Kavisha Egodage 67 (45b, 10x4) beat Bahrain 43 all out in 16 overs (Tharanga Gajanayake 25 (45b, 3x4); Lavanya Keny 4-3) by 210 runs.



Michael XI clinch first Grand Challenge Cup

MUSCAT: Michael XI claimed the inaugural Challenge Cup tennis ball T10 cricket tournament organised by the Grand Investment Group (GGI) at the Al Hail CC grounds on Saturday.

In the final, Michael XI edged past Kingfisher Cricketers by four wickets.

Sent into bat first, Kingfisher scored 90 for 7 wickets in 10 overs. In reply, Michael XI reached the target with three balls to spare for the loss of six wickets. Ruben of Michael XI was the man of the match in the final.

In the semifinals, Michael XI thrashed Matco XI Barka by eight wickets and Kingfisher thumped Proline Knight Riders by the same margin.

A total of 48 teams took part in the men’s Challenge Cup knockout and five teams participated in the Women’s Cup organised as part of Grand cricket tournament from March 4 to 26.

Chief organiser Ali thanked all the teams for competing in the first Grand tournament.

“I congratulate the winners and thank all teams for making this tournament a success.”

“We will start our bigger tournament, Corporate Cup cricket in April,” Ali announced.

Technical director Sanjit Kanojia said the Corporate Cup is planned with 30 teams divided into five groups in a league format. “The Grand tournament was a challenging affair with 48 teams and 5 women’s teams. But with support of the organising committee and the teams we managed to conclude the tournament on a bright note.”

Pradeep of Kingfisher was the man of the series. Akbar of Michael XI was the best batsman, Shafik of Matco XI claimed the best bowler award and Ajay of Kingfisher became the best fielder. Altaf of Ruwi Smashers got a special gift for scoring the lone century of the tournament. Altaf smashed 15 sixes to score 117 from 34 balls.

ISC WOMEN’S CHAMPS

Indian Social Club (ISC) Oman emerged winners of the Women’s Cup round-robin event by winning all their four matches. Wadi Kabeer Women finished runners-up with three wins.

Tripti Pawde of ISC won the women of the series award. Shreya of Wadi Kabeer claimed the best batswomen award, teammate Radhika was selected as the best fielder and Yukta of ISC became the best bowler of the tournament.



ENGLAND MAKE WORLD CUP SEMIFINALS, INDIA CRASH OUT

WELLINGTON: England snatched a late berth in the Women’s World Cup semifinals with a crushing 100-run victory over Bangladesh in their final group stage match in Wellington on Sunday.

But India, who also started the day with a must-win opportunity to make the play-offs, were denied by South Africa in a last-ball thriller in Christchurch.

South Africa had already qualified for the final four along with unbeaten Australia and the West Indies, whose place was only confirmed when India lost.

England’s win sealed a dramatic resurgence for the defending champions, who had been on the brink of elimination after losing their first three matches in the 50-over competition. They then won their remaining four games to secure a place in the top four.

Captain Heather Knight said it showed the character of the side to bounce back from their early losses when “obviously we didn’t play particularly well” and then handle the pressure of a do-or-die clash with Bangladesh.

England lost wickets at regular intervals in the first half of their innings and were 96 for four before Sophia Dunkley, who scored 67, led a middle-order charge to get the score up to a



defendable 234 for six.

Bangladesh found it difficult to score against a tight England attack, averaging just 2.79 runs per over until they were all out for 134 with 12 balls remaining.

India, needing to beat South Africa if they were to pip the West Indies for the fourth semifinal spot, posted 274 for seven with Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma and captain Mithali Raj all scoring half-centuries. Mandhana (71) and Verma (53) put on 91 in their opening stand while Mandhana and Raj (68) added 80 for the third wicket with a score in excess of 300 on the cards until South Africa restricted India to just 51 runs in the final 10 overs.

South Africa, needing to produce their highest ODI chase to win, saw Laura Wolvaardt and Lara Goodall take the total to 139 for one by the 27th over. The chase lost steam when Goodall was out for 49, with Wolvaardt gone for 80 in the following over.

But a late charge led by Mignon du Preez (52 not out) saw South Africa home, with du Preez scoring the winning run on the final ball of the match. — AFP

IAS, Yalla Shabab, Oman Stallions win

MUSCAT: IBN Abdul Samad (IAS) beat Majees by 6 wickets in their Premier Division clash on March 24 at the Oman Cricket Academy.

Majees were bowled out for 206 with 9 balls to spare. For IAS, Jasim Ali finished with figures of 4-42 in his 10 overs.

In reply, IAS were 80-4 after 21 overs. However, a 127-run partnership between Akmal Shahzad (74) and Waseem Akhtar (88) secured IAS the win, with 10 overs in the bank.

In the day’s other game, Yalla Shabab came out on top against Muscat CT. Electing to bat, Muscat CT posted 223-9. Shoaib Khan hit 76, while Kashyapkumar Prajapati scored 58.

Kaleemullah and Jitenkumar



Ramanandi accounted for seven of Muscat CT’s 9 wickets.

Openers Hannan Rizwan (81) and Mohammad Usmani (89) picked up right where they left off in the D10 league as Yalla Shabab eased to a 7-wicket win with 20 overs to spare.

The Oman Stallions thumped AER International by 194 runs in

their match on March 25.

Sent into bat, the Stallions amassed 397-7 in 50 overs.

Opener Akshaykumar Patel set the tone with a sublime 100-ball 117. Rafi Ullah made 81 runs off 28 balls with 10 sixes.

Chasing, AER International lost wickets at regular intervals and were bundled out for 203 in

37.3 overs. Aamir Kaleem hit a 90-ball century.

In the final Premier Division game of the weekend, Renaissance beat Arabian Region Travel and Tourism (ARTT) by 5 wickets.

BRIEF SCORES:

Majees 206 all out in 48.3 overs (Khawar Ali 35; Jasim Nasir Ali 4/42) It to IAS 207/4 in 39.5 overs (Waseem Akhtar 88, Akmal Shahzad 74; Sachin Kumar Jagra 2/25) by 6 wickets

Muscat CT 223/9 in 50 overs (Shoaib Khan 76; Kaleemullah 4/31) It to Yalla Shabab 224/3 in 30.1 overs (Mohammed Usmani 89, Hannan Rizwan 81; Ayaan Khan 1/32) by 7 wickets

Oman Stallions 397/7 in 50 overs (Akshaykumar Patel 117, Rafi Ullah 81; Aamir Kaleem 2/55) bt AER International: 203 all out in 37.3 overs (Aamir Kaleem 100; Rafi Ullah 3/39)

ARTT 147 all out in 33.4 overs (Sanjaya Ravindra 38; Asif Khan 4/26; Mehdi Hasan 3/13) It to Renaissance 148/5 in 30.4 overs (Hammad Ifraq 53; Sanjaya Ravindra 2/45)

Oman Open Padel Championship concludes successfully



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

As many as 100 players representing 55 teams took part in the first edition of the Oman Open Padel Championship which concluded recently.

The two-day event was under the organisation of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in coordination with Padel Masters in Seeb club.

Padel, recent popular sports in Oman and GCC, is a racket sport and it is a combination of squash and tennis sports. The scoring in Padel is the same as normal tennis and the balls used are similar but with a little less pressure. The national Padel Championship featured four categories including juniors, middle level, advanced level and women category.

The organisers of the tournament aimed to introduce Padel sport in the Sultanate of Oman. Also, the event was the initial official tournament for Padel and it was a great opportunity for the officials to select the best faces to represent the Sultanate of Oman in abroad events.

The duo Ahmed al Barwani and Khalid al Barwani claimed the title of the first domestic Padel

championship in the advanced category.

The winners won in the final match against Akthar al Riyami and Fawaz al Mandhari who were positioned as runner up. In the middle level category, Zahran al Mafdhali and Hisham al Ibrahim managed to lift the title after defeating the opponents Mutasim al Aoulakai and Khalid Tabook.

Hussain Sajwani and Mohammed al Lawati clinched the juniors category as they won against Azan al Khalil and Jihad al Khalieji in the concluding game. In the women's category, Olisia and Silaventa manged to clinch the title after beating Lubna al Riyami and Mozna Abdullah in the final clash.

At the end, His Highness Sayyid Ali bin Ghalib al Said, the chief guest delivered the awards to the top winners in all the categories. The concluding ceremony was attended by Saud Ambo Saidi, the deputy General Manager of Sports Activities in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and other officials.

Earlier in March, Oman women's padel team took part in the GCC championships which took place in Qatar. The team claimed the title of the event in the women's category.

Perez claims 'unbelievable' pole in Saudi Arabian Grand Prix

SCHUMACHER FINE AFTER HORROR HIGH-SPEED CRASH

JEDDAH: Sergio Perez claimed his first ever Formula One pole at the 215th attempt when the Mexican upstaged Red Bull teammate and world champion Max Verstappen in qualifying for the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix on Saturday.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc joins Perez on the front row with Verstappen on the second row after qualifying in fourth behind the other Ferrari of Carlos Sainz.

Saturday's qualifying was marred by a horror crash suffered by Mick Schumacher, which ruled him out of the race, and Lewis Hamilton's shock elimination in the opening Q1 session for the first time since 2017.

It was a dramatic session coming just hours after it was confirmed the weekend action would go ahead following lengthy talks overnight about racing in the aftermath of Friday's missile strike by Yemen's Huthi rebels on the nearby Aramco fuel plant.

"It took me a couple of races! But what a lap man, it was unbelievable!" said Perez, the first Mexican to head an F1 grid.

"I could do 2,000 laps and I couldn't beat that one!" he added.

Verstappen described his first lap in Q3 as "terrible", adding: "I didn't really feel comfortable. Checo did a great job today and I am very happy for him."

Red Bull will now be hoping for better luck on Sunday than in the season-opener in Bahrain last week when both their cars failed to finish in a race won by Leclerc.

Leclerc, who looked set to confirm his early season pace with pole before Perez produced a flying last lap, said: "I didn't expect Checo (Perez) to come with that lap time so congratulations to him."

SCHUMACHER IN HOSPITAL

In Q2, Schumacher was the victim of a high speed crash after his Haas car bounced off the Jeddah street circuit barrier at around 240kph after clipping a kerb.

The 23-year-old son of German F1 legend Michael Schumacher was lifted out of the wreckage of his stricken car and into an



Red Bull's Sergio Perez drives during the qualifying session on the eve of the 2022 Saudi Arabia Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit on Saturday. – AFP



Red Bull's Sergio Perez poses for a picture with the Pole Position award after the qualifying session. – AFP



A helicopter carrying Haas' driver Mick Schumacher to hospital after he crashed prepares to take off from the circuit during the qualifying session on the eve of the 2022 Saudi Arabia Grand Prix at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit on Saturday. – AFP

ambulance by medics.

Haas reported that Schumacher appeared "physically fine" and had spoken to his mother, Corrina.

In a statement F1's governing body the FIA confirmed that an assessment at the medical centre "revealed no injuries".

It added that Schumacher "had been transferred to King Fahad Armed Forces Hospital, Jeddah, for precautionary checks".

He was later ruled out of Sunday's race but tweeted: "Hi everyone, I just wanted to say that I'm ok. Thank you for the kind messages. The car felt great @HaasF1Team, we'll come back stronger."

The session was red-flagged

after the accident in which the rear of the Haas car was split as under from the main monocoque and body.

It was the second red flag in the session following an earlier high-speed collision by Williams' Nicholas Latifi in Q1. The Canadian escaped unhurt.

Q2 did not feature Hamilton for the first time in five years.

'I'M SO SORRY'

Mercedes' seven-time world champion has 103 poles to his name, but in a major upset will start Sunday's race from 14th on the grid.

"I'm so sorry guys," said Hamilton whose new team-mate

George Russell was sixth behind Esteban Ocon of Alpine.

"I struggled with the balance of the car, not where we want to be," added the downbeat deposed champion. "Unfortunately just went the wrong way with the set up."

Russell admitted he and the Mercedes team were struggling to understand their new car.

"As a team it was not a good day," said Russell.

"We don't have a handle on the car at the moment. It has been a bit inconsistent. We are fighting for this very small window and if you can't find it you don't have any confidence in the car."

— AFP

Sultan's Cup for RCC camel racing to start from today

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

The Royal Camel Corps' (RCC) camel racing competition started today at the Al Fulajj Track for Camel Racing in Barka.

The event is being organised by Oman Camel Racing Federation (OCRF) and will be held from March 28-31st.

The competition will start with 'Alhagayeg' category in 16 rounds. 11 rounds will be for female (Bkar), the first five rounds with car prizes and the remaining 6 rounds with cash prize (RO 700).

The last five rounds for male (Geadan), the first main round with car prize, and cash prize (RO 700) for four rounds. In all 16 rounds, the top ten winner will get cash prizes.

The event is being held with the



support of camel owners and the rules and regulations of the event were laid out by the Royal Court of Affairs.

The winner camels will have to



be according to RCC requirements. The winner must have the best time from all rounds in same category and the camel owner should be Omani and the camel itself should

be of Omani origin.

In the 'Alhagayeg' category, the first winning with the best time will have RO 80,000 from 16 rounds, two camels will be bought

from 'Lagaya' category the top camel will have RO 70,000 and the second one will have RO 60,000 from all nine rounds.

Two camels will be bought from

The competition will start with 'Alhagayeg' category in 16 rounds, 11 rounds will be for female (Bkar), the first five rounds with car prizes and the remaining 6 rounds with cash prize (RO 700)

'Elythaa' category, RO 60,000 and RO 55,000, one camel with RO 50,000 from 'Althnaya' category from three rounds.

Finally, RO 55,000 for the top winner in 'Alhool' category out of four rounds.



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Omani tech start-up 44.01 nominated for Earthshot Prize

Top accolade: World's top environmental prize accelerates planet-saving carbon removal technologies

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

Local Omani technology start-up 44.01 is among a select group of organisations nominated for the prestigious Earthshot Prize. Launched by Prince William, Duke of Cambridge and The Royal Foundation in 2020, the Earthshot Prize is the most prestigious global environment prize in history.

Muscat-based 44.01, a specialist in carbon removal, has been nominated by PDIE Group in the 2022 'Fix Our Climate' category for their solution which takes CO2 removed from the atmosphere and turns it into rock. PDIE Group is building a global ecosystem for game changers who are co-creating a better tomorrow. They are one of the top Earthshot Prize nominators.

The prize aims to maximise impact and take planetary

solutions to scale. It is designed to incentivise change and help repair our planet over the next ten years. The prize has five categories in which finalists will be chosen: Protect and Restore Nature, Clean Our Air, Revive Our Oceans, Build a Waste-Free World and Fix Our Climate.

Each Earthshot is underpinned by scientifically agreed targets including the UN Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally recognised measures to help repair our planet. Each year for the next ten years, £1 million will be awarded to each category winner.

Talal Hasan, (pictured), co-founder and CEO, 44.01: "Our planet's health has degraded and we now need to focus on leveraging technology to help repair it, our very survival depends on it. To be nominated among so many great companies working to turn the clock back on emissions is an honour, we'll keep doing everything we can to make an impact. There's no silver bullet when it comes to fighting climate change but if we have enough of us committed to change anything is possible."

First Omani risk pool for natural disasters to launch in 2H 2022

NATURAL PERILS: Oman Reinsurance, Oman's first and only reinsurer, to manage Omani Natural Catastrophe Pool

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Galvanised by the spate of adverse weather events that have pummelled the Sultanate of Oman in recent years, at significant cost to human life and property, a first-ever Natural Catastrophe Pool is proposed to be rolled out to support insurance payouts to policyholders who are victims of natural disasters.

The initiative is being led by Oman Reinsurance Company (Oman Re), the country's first and only reinsurer, which recently underwent a successful public listing and is currently listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). The proposed 'Nat Cat Pool' for the Omani market marks the culmination of several years of deliberations between insurance companies, the sector regulator Capital Market Authority (CMA), Oman Insurance Association and other stakeholders, according to a top official of Oman Re.

"Considering the increased frequency of natural catastrophe events in Oman in the recent years, Oman Re initiated a national dialogue with the regulator and Oman Insurance Association in view of mitigation and management of natural catastrophes affecting Oman since 2018," said Dr Juma bin Ali al Juma, Chairman of the Board of



The proposed 'Nat Cat Pool' for the Omani market marks the culmination of several years of deliberations between insurance companies, the sector regulator Capital Market Authority

Directors - Oman Re.

Those efforts gained momentum late last year in the wake of Cyclone Shaheen which inundated large swathes of North and South Al Batinah governorates, as well as Muscat Governorate, wrecking infrastructure, businesses and residential homes. Several lives were lost as well. At a workshop held in the aftermath of Shaheen, top executives of leading insurance

firms called for the establishment of a Nat Cat Pool for the Omani market. It also led to the formation of a Steering Committee with representatives from six local companies and chaired by Oman Re. The panel is "actively working on the various technical aspects of the reinsurance pool formation", Dr Al Juma stated in the Directors' Report of Oman Re for fiscal 2021.

"The deployment of the Omani Nat Cat Pool is planned for the second half of year 2022. All local insurance companies and the Capital Market Authority expressed their agreement in principle that Oman Re should be the Nat Cat Pool Manager...", the Chairman further added.

Cyclone Shaheen is understood to have unleashed insurance losses to the tune of RO 62 million when it struck northeastern parts of the Sultanate of Oman in October 2021. More than 9,800

insurance claims were submitted by individuals, homeowners and businesses across a number of wilayats impacted by the storm. The magnitude of insurance losses has led to more stringent terms for reinsurance contracts governing natural disasters, according to a leading insurance firm.

"In view of the above, the reinsurance market is already seeing hardening of terms for reinsurance contracts with numerous restrictions including sub-limited storm, tempest and inundation cover.

Facultative reinsurers have tightened terms and the 1st January renewal season has seen reduction of capacities and cover for Oman. We expect cautious selection of risks, and push by reinsurers for increased retentions by the local insurers," the company stated in its 2021 Annual Report.

Pact to position Muscat and Frankfurt Main as financial hubs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Frankfurt Main Finance of Germany to enhance cooperation in the field of financial centres and development of regulatory infrastructures, as well as to benefiting from international experience in financial services and the regulation and supervision of financial institutions.

The MoU, signed over the weekend, aims to create a cooperation framework to enhance the positions of the cities of Muscat and Frankfurt Main as financial hubs in addition to exchange of information on financial markets, supporting and



encouraging financial institutions in Muscat and Frankfurt Main Finance to expand.

The agreement came on the sidelines of the meeting of the

board of directors of the World Alliance of International Financial Centres (WAIFC) held in Kigali, Rwanda. The CMA is a founder member of WAIFC, which was

established in 2018 to bring the global financial centres under the WAIFC for exchange of ideas and business development.

The CMA participated in the

meeting with a delegation chaired by Shaikh Abdullah Salim al Samli, Executive President of the Capital Market Authority and including Abdullah Salim al Rubiei, Director of Communications, Media and External Relations Department, and member of the board of directors of WAIFC.

The MoU was signed in the context of the distinguished relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany and is considered an opportunity to achieve cooperation and communications between the markets for the transfer of expertise and information that would enhance the efficiency of the regulatory and supervisory frameworks in the two countries, and would avail an opportunity to acquaint

with and access the technical and administrative capabilities of the two institutions to develop the legislative and regulatory systems for the protection of the participants of the stock markets and to enhance investor confidence which would reflect positively on the national interests in the two countries.

It is worth to note that WAIFC aims to enhance cooperation between the member countries for exchange of information, expertise and adopting best practices in the business of financial institutions including fintech, green investment, infrastructure, creation of databases for financial centres, financing small and medium enterprises and the role of financial centres in financing the economy.

Alizz Islamic Bank honours top performing students



MUSCAT: In a celebration attended by the branch manager of Alizz Islamic Bank's Al Suwaiq branch Abdullah al Hadhrami, parents, school principal, and a number of educators and administrators, Alizz Islamic Bank honoured the top performing students for the Academic Year 2021/2022 in Thabet Bin Kaab School in North Al Batinah.

The branch manager of Alizz Islamic Bank in Al Suwaiq also honoured 60 runner-up students who came 11th - 20th in different classes (i.e 60 students) as part of a new initiative implemented this year.

Additionally, Nabil al Salhi, supervisor of the Holy Quran competition and top students in the competition were also felicitated during this celebration that witnessed a variety of activities.

Guided by the CEO of the bank, Alizz Islamic Bank seeks to support all segments of society by investment in various social initiatives and the bank

has allocated budgets in each wilayat branch to contribute to promoting and supporting social responsibility programmes that ensure the optimum benefit of people across Oman, which reflects the bank's deep belief that growth of individuals and businesses is the key driver of welfare and growth of the community.

In this respect, students commended the role played by Alizz Islamic Bank towards the community, as the bank makes great efforts to fulfil its commitment to social responsibility by providing robust support to institutions that contribute to building strong and cohesive communities.

Recently, the bank offered support to a number of events across governorates and wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman, as part of its commitment to help its customers and the community and to extend its services to anyone seeking a different experience in the Islamic banking sector.

Apollo Super Specialty Hospital all set for soft launch in Al Hail

MUSCAT: The Apollo Hospitals Group Oman is all set for the soft launch of its state-of-the-art Apollo Super Specialty Hospital Al Hail this week. As the flagship Hospital, Apollo Super Specialty Hospital is to offer services across 25 super specialties.

The management expressed their profound gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for all the support.

"We are looking at clinical excellence with advanced technology combined with our commitment to an absolutely patient centric approach. We envisage to expand our footprints beyond Muscat, and this is part of our phased approach. I am delighted that we are becoming operational as we prepare for the holy month of Ramadhan," said V T Saileswaran, Managing Director of Apollo Hospitals Group Oman.

Spread across 10,000 sq metres, the hospital presents world-class infrastructure that will be manned by a team of super specialist consultants from the Sultanate of Oman, India, and other countries. The new facility of Apollo will offer a wide range of clinical services across all major super specialties and subspecialties backed by cutting edge technology and advanced



IT infrastructure.

Dr Waleed al Zadjali , Medical Director of Apollo Group Muscat stated that through Apollo Specialty they intend to reverse the outbound medical travel from the Sultanate of Oman.

"We are further strengthening our clinical resources with international collaborations and academic affiliations as we progress on our journey," he said. Announcing the soft launch, Saileswaran stated that in the clinical journey of the last 17 years, they have touched over 20 million lives.

"Through Apollo Super Specialty Al Hail, we reiterate our commitment to the people of this

great country. The last two years of Covid has proven beyond doubt the supply -demand gap in global healthcare delivery and our efforts are meant to compliment the great efforts of Oman's Ministry of Health by adding this super specialty facility to Oman's private healthcare.

Through Apollo Super Specialty Al Hail, we are presenting a facility that can offer a 360-degree care model," he said.

Apollo Muscat is one of prominent private healthcare providers in the Sultanate of Oman with over 17 years of service.

Apollo Hospitals Muscat has remained in the forefront of clinical excellence in Oman's private healthcare space. The group has international affiliations, corporate partnerships and is the first in Oman's private healthcare space to announce the first dedicated Diabetic care facility, the Apollo Sugar Clinic in Ruwi. Currently, Apollo Hospitals Group has two hospitals, a dedicated Sugar Clinic, and a neighbourhood clinic in Ghala.

The group is on an expansion mode across the Sultanate of Oman and aims to be a healthcare powerhouse with Oman as its base for the MENA region.

Al Athnain celebrates 30th year anniversary

MUSCAT: Al Athnain Co, a catering stalwart in the Sultanate of Oman celebrated its 30th anniversary at a special event on Thursday. Started in 1991 as a small company with a skeleton staff and infrastructure, the wholly-owned Omani company currently is one of the leading providers of catering and support services mainly to industries and institutions. According to Mohammed bin Hamed bin Salim al Ruzaiqi, Chairman of Al Athnain, the first Omani company in the catering field, has its services presently all over the Sultanate of Oman mainly catering to the oil and gas sector.

"We ensure the best possible practices in the industry with focus on high standards of hygiene and safety while providing our services. We try to give highly delicious food in accordance with the needs of employees of the companies who hail from different parts of the world", said Al Ruzaiqi.



Through trained and motivated professionals Al Athnain Company extends its support to organisations and institutions engaged in the development of the nation and society. The company, which has 1,500 employees from different countries, has over 300 Omani nationals who are working both in offices and in the catering section. The success of the company, said Al Ruzaiqi,

results from the dedicated and combined efforts of its employees, who are the real assets. "It's the employees who have made the dream come true for the company by encountering all the challenges. The 30 year anniversary celebrations are dedicated to them", he said.

Fadi Elayan, Operation Manager, said the company takes all steps to provide quality services. "The major challenge is the lack of a uniform standard for catering services. Still we do not leave any stone unturned in complying with the needs of each company with whom we have contracts", he said.

The event was attended by Managing Director of the company, Salim al Ruzaiqi, General Manager Nasser bin Salim al Ruzaiqi, Chief Financial Officer Jagdeesh K, Business Development Manager Ramesh Palakkal and employee representatives from all sections and guests.



Bank Muscat honoured at Oman Sustainability Week Awards

MUSCAT: In recognition of its pioneering role in the field of Sustainability, Bank Muscat was honoured at the Oman Sustainability Week Awards held recently at the W Hotel Muscat. The bank received the Silver Award for its stellar efforts in Sustainability from the Chief Guest, HH Sayyid Dr Fahad bin al Julanda al Said. Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, received the award on behalf of the bank at the ceremony, which was attended by a number of their Excellencies and senior executives from some of the top institutions and corporates in Oman.

Oman Sustainability Week is a national platform that aims to highlight Oman's commitment to leadership in sustainability through innovative strategies, which are aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the landmark Oman Vision 2040. Speaking on the occasion,

Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat, said, "We are delighted to receive this prestigious award, which reconfirms Bank Muscat's pioneering role in promoting sustainability in Oman. By aligning to Oman Vision 2040, the bank has a roadmap to generate and make maximum use of opportunities, which promote economic competitiveness, social well-being, growth and development, and reflecting positively on socio-economic development. As a leading financial services provider in Oman, Bank Muscat works to ensure sustainability across its operations, and also to serve the Omani society through various programmes and initiatives.

The bank will continue to move forward with its strategy of strengthening cooperation and partnership with various government and private sector institutions, in line with the latest sustainability trends, both at the local and international levels."

LuLu opens 2nd branch in Falaj Al Qabayil

MUSCAT: LuLu Hypermarket Oman strengthened its retail presence in Suhar with the grand opening of its new store located at Falaj Al Qabayil. This is the retail giant's second store in Suhar and the 29th branch in the Sultanate of Oman. The new store was inaugurated by Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shehi, Governor of North Al Batinah, in the presence of Yusuffali M.A., Chairman and Managing Director of LuLu Group, senior management, and LuLu staff.

Spread over an area of 75,000 sq ft, the store will offer a one-stop shopping experience complete with enhanced and expanded departments to better serve customers in Suhar, the major industrial hub of the Sultanate of



Oman and its residential areas.

The new store will feature sophisticated fit outs and category bays with spacious layout for categories like grocery, fruit &

vegetables, dairy products, poultry, meat and fish and the ever popular hot food and bakery. There is also designated sections for garments, electronics, IT products, stationery,

and home appliances. There are multiple check-out counters and ample parking spaces to contribute to a relaxed shopping experience.

Just in time for Ramadhan shopping, the store will feature a range of exciting offers and deals on fresh food, grocery, electronics and home appliances, as well as inaugural offers on a range of products at attractive prices. In addition, shoppers can participate in the first-of-its-kind LuLu Shop & Win promotion across all its stores in Oman.

Through this promotion, which will run till May 7, 2022, customers can win cash prizes worth RO 100,000. There will be a Grand Prize of RO 10,000 cash as well as Weekly Cash Prizes of RO 5,000, RO 750, RO 500, and more.



Seminar focuses on Korean smart farm initiative

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) hosted a Korea-Oman Smart Farm Initiative last week in association with KOTRA (Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency), a Korean government agency promoting mutual economic and business relations between Korea and the Sultanate of Oman. 'Smart Farm' technology can increase the productivity of Omani farms and help boost food self-sufficiency in the Middle East region.

Smart Farms adopt a controlled farming system with labour efficiency by converging with ICT, AI and automation.

They control the cultivation environment, such as light, temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide concentration and culture liquid to produce high-quality crops stably throughout the year.

"The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources is working on the pilot project for smart farm within Oman and we are happy to learn all the new technologies from Korea that can very well be replicated to the Oman agriculture environment", Saif al Khamisi, Director at the MAFWR told the 'Observer'.

The seminar had four presentations including the 'Smart Farm concept', the 'project progress in Kuwait', 'Korea and overseas Smart Farm projects and cases' and finally a set of recommendations for Oman like greenhouse types and advanced smart farm automation for perusal.

"We would like to strongly initiate Korea-Oman smart farm cooperation and hope to contribute to Oman's agriculture sector to be more technologically advanced and substitute food imports to provide healthy locally-grown vegetables to the residents", Sejin Kim, Director General from KOTRA said.

The seminar also highlighted the latest smart agricultural technologies and models of developing smart farms, as well as the types of greenhouses used in smart farms and saw the participation of several experts from the Ministry, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and various international companies in the agriculture sector.

Smart Farm technology can be applied to greenhouses, vertical indoor farms, fish farms, mushroom farms, livestock farms and orchards and can also manage the growing environment of crops and animals even with the aid of a smartphone and tablet PC remotely and automatically.

PDO, Oman Sail ink pact to support sailing opportunities in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

Oman Sail and Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) - have signed a five-year Memorandum of Collaboration to provide technical expertise in sailing and water sports activities and potential collaboration for ICV projects in Oman. The agreement was signed by Steve Phimister, PDO's Managing Director and Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail.

The collaboration agreement includes the Ras Al Hamra Club (RAHRC) and covers recognised accreditation support at the Ras Al Hamra Boat Club, potentially sailing courses, power boat courses, instructor development, support off and on water rescue and leisure boat charter. Oman Sail's personal corporate development arm, Zimam, is in talks with PDO's learning and development centre to collaborate on the exchange of expertise.

In addition, Oman Sail will help to train the Club's Safety Post team in health and safety, rescue management during water sports events. It also covers the development of club volunteers and staff for the maintenance and management of the Club's fleet of boats and equipment, as well as water sports event planning and delivery.

The partnership will enable the Ras Al Hamra Boat Club to become a training and development platform for sailing and water sports in the future. Thus, enabling the creation of new



employment opportunities within the water sports sector and career advancement opportunities for club members in Oman and beyond.

Steve Phimister, PDO's Managing Director said, "PDO's collaboration with Oman Sail, is well suited and timely. We both have a united purpose to serve Oman, we both support national efforts for the delivery of sustainable opportunities through in country value, job creation and development of the national capacity.

Oman's coastline and historical legacy lends itself naturally for the development of water sports. Thus, PDO is committed to strengthen its relationship with

Oman Sail in alignment with the shared national vision for sustainability and where possible optimising the use of its existing platforms."

Adel al Foory, President of Ras Al Hamra Club added: "This is an exciting opportunity to promote sailing and water sports to PDO employees, club members, our dedicated club volunteers and our local community. We are delighted to partner with Oman Sail and benefit from over 12 years of technical experience in International and water sports performance.

We hope that these skills can increase the number of Omanis participating in sailing and water sports and add to the long-term

sustainability of the Ras Al Hamra Boat Club activities."

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "From the onset, Oman Sail was founded with the task of reignite Oman's maritime eminence and we are incredibly proud to be able to share our experience with a reputable and prestigious organisation to apply the accumulated experience in the Ras Al Hamra Club.

Promoting the sport, encouraging more people to take part and creating the framework for sailing and training in the country to thrive is central to our mission and we are looking forward to working closely with PDO over the next five years."

Spanish trade mission to arrive in Oman today

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

A trade mission organised by the Spanish Cluster Association of Steelworks (SIDEREX) is due to visit Muscat from March 28 to 31, 2022, the Economic and Trade Office of the Spanish Embassy in

Muscat announced on Thursday.

The delegation includes four members representing the following Spanish companies: ALFE Cutting (industrial, slitters and shear blades), SARRALLE (all kind of services for Steel Melting Plants, Rolling Mills and Processing Lines from

engineering to manufacturing, construction, commissioning, maintenance, spare parts and consulting services), KALFRISA (design and supply of equipment, plants and technologies for heat recovery systems) and Dominion (maintenance of large raw material plants such as steel,

aluminium, iron and glass.

"The visit seeks to continue to build on the close bilateral relationships that exist between the two countries. During the mission, the representatives will meet potential distributors and agents", the Economic and Trade Office added.

French business conference focuses on digital innovation

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MARCH 27

A business conference titled "Digital Innovation for an Inspiring Future" was organised as part of the fourth edition of the French Week in Oman by the Economic Department of the Embassy of France in association with the Omani French Friendship Association (OFA). Organised at the Crowne Plaza Muscat under the auspices of Véronique Aulagnon, Ambassador of France to the Sultanate of Oman and Talal bin Said bin Marhoon al Maamari, CEO of Omantel, the "Digital Innovation for an Inspiring Future" conference brought together creative French and



Omani companies in order to highlight the positive and concrete progress made possible by digital innovation.

Moderated by IT expert Tariq al Barwani, the first panel discussion focused on "Building an effective industry",

with Air liquide and Veolia explaining first how to deepen smart plant management, TotalEnergies and Engie presenting then how to produce with awareness with an audience of a hundred participants, including heads of institutions

and companies in attendance. The second panel was dedicated to "Becoming an e-consumer".

Idemia, Thawani Pay and Thales shared their know-how about making safety convenient and Otaxi and JCDecaux showcased current and coming improvement of urban experience.

The French Week in Oman is a week-long celebration aimed at promoting the strong ties between the Sultanate of Oman and France. From March 20 to 27, the Embassy of France, with the support of sponsoring companies, has been programming various events in Muscat, including a concert, cultural and scientific events, workshops and conferences.

India's largest multiplex operators to merge, creating cinema giant

NEW DELHI: India's two largest multiplex firms said on Sunday they would merge to create a giant cinema operator with more than 1,500 screens across 109 cities as the entertainment industry recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic.

PVR and INOX Leisure said the merger, which is subject to regulatory approvals, would help both companies improve efficiency, reach newer markets and optimise cost.

"The film exhibition sector has been one of the worst impacted sectors on account of the pandemic and creating scale to achieve efficiencies is critical for the long-term survival of the business and fight the onslaught of digital OTT platforms", PVR Chairman Ajay Bijli said.



A worker wearing protective gear sprays disinfectant inside an empty multiplex in New Delhi. - Reuters

Over-the-top, or OTT, platforms such Netflix, Amazon's Prime Video and Disney have made deep inroads in India, where the pandemic ravaged a film industry known for song-and-dance spectacles watched by millions.

PVR is India's largest multiplex chain with more than 850 screens, followed by INOX Leisure with about 650 screens. — Reuters

Corporate culture is constantly evolving



MAYMUNA AL ADAWY

Tejarah Talks

BUSINESS STORIES ABOUT THINGS THAT MATTER

We sat down with Maymuna Al Adawy, Director at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and organiser of Tejarah Talks. We got her views on corporate culture, risk-taking, retaining talent, Gen-Z changing the world of work and more

Before we discuss corporate culture, tell us about Tejarah Talks?

Tejarah Talks is a series of seven evening discussions organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in association with Oman Business Forum and supported by HSBC and SOHAR Port & Freezone.

It is a gathering space, bringing together some of the Sultanate of Oman’s most inspirational and innovative business thinkers to share their stories with a big, unique, warm and enthusiastic crowd. We are motivated by the belief that everyone needs to be part of the conversation about the future if they are to get the most from it. Tejarah Talks is a platform for positive interaction.

The next session of Tejarah Talks is on Wednesday, March 30, and the topic up for discussion is corporate culture – what exactly is that?

For me, corporate culture is a company’s vision, as well as its values, beliefs, attitudes and goals – the all-important ingredients that guide a firm’s thinking and behaviour. In simple terms, it all starts with what motivates someone to get up and go to work each day. Among other things, it is about promoting team spirit, honest



communication, transparency, honouring commitments and being customer-centric. Look around and you will see every Omani business, big or small talking strategy, but whether that strategy succeeds or not usually hinges on one thing - culture

Is corporate culture set in stone or does it morph?

The best kind of corporate culture is constantly evolving. It is about reflection, routinely examining how your business functions. Ask yourself, are my staff spending their time and energy in a way that aligns with the company’s purpose and values?

What are you offering your staff,

both personally and professionally? What are you doing right for them? What can you do better? Do they have the right tools to do the job? Corporate culture is more than just a buzzword it is the fuel that turns vision into reality.

Should corporate culture encourage creativity and risk-taking?

Great question, when you look at successful Omani companies they are the ones fostering an environment that encourages creativity and risk taking.

I know from my own experience that a team that feels safe to experiment and make mistakes thinks bigger and contributes more enthusiastically. I would

also add that if you want to retain creative talent you need to help them become the best versions of themselves and achieve their goals. People are a company’s greatest asset and it is essential to commit time and energy to spur them forward. As they say, culture requires walking the walk.

What about Gen-Z, are they going to challenge corporate culture?

Corporate culture is going to be challenged and changed by Gen-Z – professionals in their mid-20s now entering Oman’s workforce.

This is a generation concerned about climate change, diversity, equality as well as employee well-being and work-life balance. They

want continual learning, training and development opportunities, flexible working and career progression. They also want happiness, fulfilment, appreciation and security just like every other generation.

This is a group that is laser-focused on securing a better future for themselves, fuelled, I believe, by the hardships experienced during the pandemic.

Going forward, they may pose some challenges for HR managers. However, ultimately, they will change the world of work for the better and improvements that benefit Gen-Z benefit everyone, right?

CORPORATE CULTURE IS MORE THAN JUST A BUZZWORD IT IS THE FUEL THAT TURNS VISION INTO REALITY.

Fight inflation with supply-side labour reform



TODD G BUCHHOLZ

The writer, a former White House director of economic policy under President George HW Bush and managing director of the Tiger Management hedge fund, is the author of *New Ideas from Dead Economists* (Plume, 2021) and *The Price of Prosperity* (Harper, 2016).

In the past few years, a million retired Americans have picked up a pickleball racket. We would have less inflation if they had picked up a hammer, wrench, or pencil instead. “Help Wanted” signs are everywhere, from coffee shops to pharmaceutical plants. Advanced economies could ease one major source of inflation by inducing more people to join the workforce, especially those at the two ends of the labour barbell: older people and young people.

Owing to the whirling printing press of central banks, excessive government spending, shipping disruptions, and now Vladimir Putin, inflation has spiked to levels not seen since Rocky II (1979). But with a supply-side labour policy, we can help fill the record 11.3 million job vacancies in the US, while the Federal Reserve figures out how to drain their bloated balance sheet.

In the popular press, the US economy appears to be blessed with Energizer bunnies. Tom Brady breaks touchdown records at age 44, Clint Eastwood directs movies at 89, and William Shatner boldly goes into space at 90. Despite these stunning achievements, the proportion of retired people in the economy has jumped by one-third over the past 15 years.

At the same time, more than 20 million prime-working-age (25-54) Americans effectively wake up each morning, smell the coffee, and then scroll through cat videos



on TikTok until lunch. They tell US Bureau of Labour Statistics surveyors that they “do not want a job now.” Sofa-dwelling gamers and crypto bros might help Xbox and Coinbase prosper, but a low labour-force participation rate is bad for the broader economy – and the country.

A smart supply-side labour strategy has three prongs. It should draw some of the “unworked” back into jobs by correcting public pension distortions, attacking the epidemic of occupational licensing and credentialism, and defending gig workers and the platform economy from heavy-handed regulation.

Seniors respond to tax incentives, just as they respond to early bird dinner specials. Unfortunately, Social Security penalizes retirees who return to

work by cutting their monthly benefits. A 62-year-old recipient loses \$2 of benefits for every \$1 she earns over \$19,560. The Urban Institute calculates that while a median-income 60-year-old faces an implicit tax on work of about 15%, the rate jumps to over 30% at age 66. So why bother working?

With America’s declining birth rate, each retiree now leans on a mere 2.7 active workers, a dependency ratio that is expected to worsen to 2.3 active workers per retiree by 2035. Countries like France, Italy, and Japan face an even more dire calculus. To manage this imbalance, pension taxes for seniors should be eliminated when they reach a certain number of years in the workforce. After 45 years, for example, an individual would be “paid in full” and could continue to work without facing

penalties or payroll taxes. Too many energetic seniors are moving to “active” communities too soon, indulging in rum punch when they might prefer punching a time card.

The government should also create better incentives for young people. In Italy, before Covid struck, nearly 30% of young people aged 20 to 34 were classified as NEET (“neither in education, employment, nor training”). The US labour-force participation rate has dropped 17% for 16-24-year-olds since 2000.

In 2000, over half of teens worked during the summer; now, only about one-third do. Cooking hot dogs on the boardwalk may not do much for an academic resume, but it does build lifelong skills like self-discipline and time management.

Moreover, according to a

Northeastern University study, low-income high-schoolers who work are more likely to graduate.

With a smarter supply-side labour strategy, 16-24-year-olds who pay into government retirement plans would be credited at double the current payout rate when they retire. A 20-year-old who earns \$15,000 in 2022 and pays about \$1,200 in Social Security taxes would be credited at retirement as if she had earned \$30,000.

Finally, governments should stop undermining the gig economy. Gig workers perform an inflation-fighting service when they bring into use a spare apartment, a garaged car, or an idle dump truck sitting on the side of a construction site. Re-classifying these workers as employees robs them of flexibility and pushes up prices. New York City capped the profits on food-delivery companies, which only hurts city-dwellers. Parliamentary committees in the European Union, Australia, and Canada also are taking aim at firms like Airbnb and DoorDash.

A smarter labour policy would create opportunities for those who want to work, while combating inflation and helping reopen some of the nearly one-third of small businesses that were shuttered by lockdowns. For healthy people, retirement and other noble endeavours like Xbox and pickleball can wait for another day.

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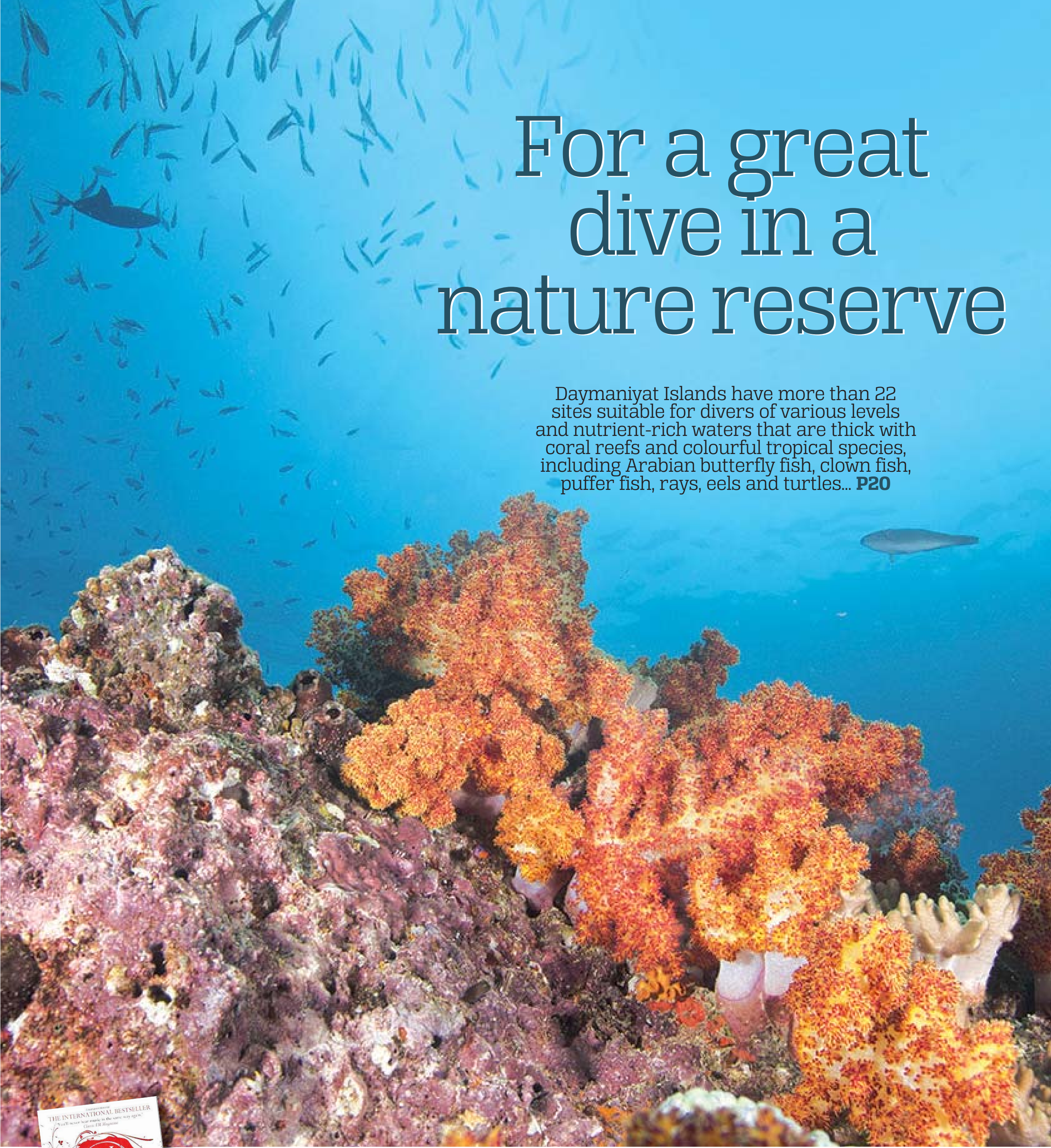
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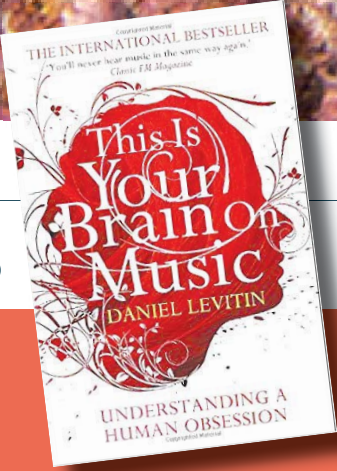
features



For a great dive in a nature reserve

Daymaniyat Islands have more than 22 sites suitable for divers of various levels and nutrient-rich waters that are thick with coral reefs and colourful tropical species, including Arabian butterfly fish, clown fish, puffer fish, rays, eels and turtles... **P20**

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This is Your Brain on Music

by daniel levitin

It explores cultures in which singing is considered an essential human function, patients who have a rare disorder that prevents them from making sense of music, and scientists studying why two people may not have the same definition of pitch.

CELEBRITIES

Foo Fighters drummer Taylor Hawkins dies aged 50

DRUMMER TAYLOR Hawkins of the multi-Grammy award-winning rock group Foo Fighters has died, his bandmates said in a statement on Friday. He was 50. As part of one of the world's most influential and critically lauded alternative rock bands, Hawkins was known for his on-stage charisma and classic rock-inspired beats, which he once said were influenced by legends like Phil Collins and Queen's Roger Taylor. He had played with Foo Fighters since 1997, when he was taken on by lead singer and former Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl, providing percussion on some of the group's biggest hits including "Learn to Fly" and "Best of You". "The Foo Fighters family is devas-

tated by the tragic and untimely loss of our beloved Taylor Hawkins", the band said in a statement on Twitter. "His musical spirit and infectious laughter will live on with all of us forever", they added. The statement did not reveal the cause of Hawkins' death, news of which emerged the same day the band was due to play at the Festival Estereo Picnic in Bogota, Colombia. A source in Colombia's prosecutor's office told AFP that Hawkins' body had been found in a hotel in eastern Bogota. The festival said in a statement that the show would not go ahead. Prior to joining Foo Fighters, Hawkins drummed for Canadian indie songstress Alanis Morissette. — **AFP**





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AROUND THE WORLD

HEALTH

Consuming artificial sweeteners linked to cancer risk: study



CONSUMING ARTIFICIAL sweetener could increase the risk of developing cancer, a large-scale study suggested on Thursday, but experts not involved in the research said it was not enough proof to consider changing current health advice.

Sweeteners are consumed by millions every day in products like diet soda, partly as a way to avoid weight gain from sugar – but how healthy these substitutes are themselves has long been a matter of controversy.

To assess the cancer risk of sweeteners, researchers analysed the data of more than 100,000 people in France who self-reported their diet, lifestyle and medical history in intervals between 2009-2021 as part of the NutriNet-Sante study.

They then compared consumption to the rate of cancer, while adjusting for other variables such as smoking, poor diet, age and physical activity.

The participants who consumed the largest amount of sweeteners, "beyond the median amount, had an increased cancer risk of 13 per cent compared to non-consumers," Mathilde Touvier, research director at France's INSERM institute and the study's supervisor, said.

The study, published in the journal *PLOS Medicine*, said that a higher cancer risk was particularly seen with sweeteners aspartame and acesulfame potassium – both used in many soft drinks including Coke Zero.

Out of the 103,000 participants, 79 per cent were women and 37 per cent consumed artificial sweeteners.

Soft drinks accounted for more than half of the artificial sweeteners consumed, while table-top sweeteners represented 29 per cent.

The study found that "higher risks were observed for breast cancer and obesity-related cancers".

Touvier said "we cannot totally exclude biases linked to the lifestyle of consumers", calling for further research to confirm the study's results.

The US National Cancer Institute and Cancer Research UK both say that sweeteners do not cause cancer, and they have been authorised for use by the European Food Safety Authority.

Not proof

"The relationship between artificial sweetener consumption and cancer risk is a controversial one, going back to the 1970s when (sweetener) cyclamate was banned for being linked to bladder cancer in rats – although this was never shown to be the case in humans," said James Brown, a biomedical scientist at Britain's Aston University. — AFP

ART

Nepal artist breathes life into sacred painting tradition



WITH A SHAVED head and an empty stomach, artist Ujay Bajracharya dips his brush to line the eyes of the deity Tara as a soothing Buddhist hymn warbles in the background.

The 40-year-old is applying the final strokes to his paubha painting, a devotional art form known for its minute detail, intense colours and the strict purification rituals traditionally required of its practitioners.

It took three months for Bajracharya to complete his rendition of the Green Tara, a goddess of compassion revered by Buddhists and Hindus in Nepal.

Before work began, he shaved off his hair and clipped his nails, while a Buddhist priest blessed his canvas and selected a day auspicious enough for the artist to commence his labours.

Bajracharya woke up early each morning and did not eat until his day's work was over, adopting a strict vegetarian diet that also excluded garlic, tomatoes and onion when he broke his fast.

"My body felt light and I felt more focused and motivated to paint," he said.

"Changing my lifestyle was a bit difficult at first but I had the support of my family and friends, so that helped me stay disciplined."

Paubha remains a common painting method in

Nepal but the austere religious observances once followed by its artists have fallen out of practice.

Bajracharya's adoption of these rituals began last year, when he approached a museum in the capital Kathmandu about painting another Buddhist deity while adhering to the forgotten traditions.

Rajan Shakya, founder of the Museum of Nepali Art, said that they immediately agreed to the idea of reviving the practice.

"It is part of what makes paubha art unique and valuable. The more people learn about it, the more demand there will be for Nepali artists. And then we know our art will survive," Shakya said.

Bajracharya has committed to observing these rules for future paintings, beginning with his exacting work on the Green Tara, which he crafted for worship in a private prayer room at his home.

"I felt that we should preserve this method and the next generation should also be aware – people should know about the spiritual aspect of these paintings," he said.

Paubha artworks use cotton or silk canvases, and colours were traditionally made by grinding minerals and plants into fine powder. Some works even used pure gold and silver.

The oldest preserved paubha painting dates to the 13th century, but scholars believe the tradition is much older, with earlier examples likely disappearing because of the fragile materials used.

Its artists are believed to have inspired trends in thangkhas, a similar type of devotional painting in neighbouring Tibet that has been recognised in UNESCO's list of intangible cultural heritage.

A form of meditation

Priest Dipak Bajracharya – a member of Ujay's caste but of no relation to the painter – said that in earlier times paubha artists would stay "pure" to ensure the sanctity of the images they produced.

"The process itself is considered a form of meditation," he said.

While the traditional religious value remains, paubha paintings are now commonly seen as decorative hangings in museums or the homes of collectors.

A growing international appreciation for the craft has proven lucrative for artists, with interested buyers in China, Japan and Western countries.

"Paubha paintings have now become a business, but their aim is not commercial – they are actually objects of respect and worship," said the priest. — AFP

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



Dr Zainab al Ajmi
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Bridging the gap between the education and future skills

WITH FUTURE SKILLS, there are several key reasons that the educational gap has been a major issue in the debate. Despite all the efforts focusing on curriculum development to keep pace with the global changes and employer expectations, today's requirement labour market is ever-changing which should be taken into consideration. In Addition, it should be looking at the economic variables and requirements of the new generation of students.

In light of a rapidly changing 'labour landscape'; (Bongomin et al, 2020) stated that the current university education framework finds context in the preceding three industrial revolutions. "Demand for 'generalists' is likely to be higher than that of 'specialists' in most industries", that is making it imperative for academic institutions to identify skills and abilities needed and produce graduates with deeper skills and knowledge which is required in the future labor market. On the other hand, researchers show that students have insufficient skills needed for future occupations, which specifically confirms that a gap exists between the skills needed in the job market and the competencies and skills they have upon graduation. For instance, the questionnaire results of (Zeidan& Bishnoi, 2020)' study showed that students "believed it was hard to relate theory and application during an internship. Results also demonstrate that even for the purposes of 'internship readiness', the respondents were expected to have knowledge of latest applicable software and techniques applicable in the industry. Moreover, only 22% of the undergraduates believed that industry expectations could be met, whereas 78% stated otherwise. Undergraduates opined that their existing knowl-

edge of accounting methods was outdated, while the Business administration undergraduates felt their knowledge of marketing theories was outdated".

According to the report of (the global skills gap in the 21st century), the gap between education and future skills is a global and widespread issue. The report identifies the biggest burden educational institutes face. Referring to the view of Stephen Isherwood "the pace of change in the workplace is ever increasing, so graduates need to ensure they are developing the skills and abilities that will not only empower them to land the job of their choice but also allow them to thrive as their career develops." To that end, it's imperative that educational institutes equip graduates qualified, and trained for the world of work. Soft skills, like leading a team and making a decision, is an equally important aspect of technical skills and knowledge acquired during a degree. This could help bridge the gap between students, and future skills. Moreover, it provides a clear look at which skills and behaviours need to improve.

In conclusion, as there is a requirement of alignment curriculum and set up to keep pace with the future jobs' continuous changes, researchers and educators hoped to make up the gap through curriculum content either through self-funded external training programmes, or more internships. Additionally, must stress on skill-based curriculum with emphasis on developing soft skills. "Witnessing Curriculum revamping to match the rapid tempo of scientific and technological advances and develop graduates who can constantly reinvent themselves and exhibit creativity are imperative" (Zeidan& Bishnoi, 2020).



For a great dive in a nature reserve

SAMUEL KUTTY
[@samkuttyvp](https://twitter.com/samkuttyvp)

Historically, beaches and parks have played a very significant role as locations for recreation and attractions for tourism. And their use has had substantial impacts environmentally, socially and economically.

The Sultanate of Oman takes great pride in its magnificent ecology and diverse flora and fauna. Emanating from the government's care for environmental conservation, the authorities have taken several steps to ensure that its natural resources are protected and people are actively engaged in preserving the country's remarkable natural treasures.

Indeed, awareness of the fragility of the ecosystem along with ways to ensure its protection have been in place for almost four decades. Species that were once extinct in the wild have been brought back through breeding and conservation programs and sustainable tourism efforts are ongoing.

Through royal decrees, the government ensured establishment of nature reserves such as the Daymaniyat Islands near Muscat, the turtle reserve at Ras Al Jinz, the Land of Frankincense in Dhofar or the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary in Al Wusta.

The Lonely Planet, in its travel guide recommends the Daymaniyat Islands as one of the biggest draws in the Sultanate of Oman.

"The azure waters surrounding the Damaniyat Islands – a 100-hectare marine reserve and craggy nine-island archipelago off Oman's northern coast – are wildly popular with divers in the know", says the global trip advisor.

Daymaniyat Islands, often called the "Jewel of the Middle East" offers great dive sites for visitors to enjoy. With most dive sites located along the islands, Daymaniyat Islands offers great dive sites to all level divers, beginners to advanced.

It is a kind of archipelago comprising nine islands Kharaba, Hayot, Al Jabal Al Kabeer, Qisma, Al Jabal Al Sagheer, Al Mamlahah, Aloumiya, Al Jawan and Awlad Jawan in the of wilayats Al Seeb and Barka.

Daymaniyat islands have more than 22 sites suitable for divers of various levels, and nutrient-rich waters that are thick with coral reefs and colourful tropical species, including Arabian butterfly fish, clown fish, puffer fish, rays, eels and turtles.

"Divers and snorkellers are typically rewarded with sightings of whale sharks, humpback whales and pods of dolphins

too", entices a feature in the travel magazine, which has put the Sultanate of Oman at seventh position among the top ten countries to visit in 2022.

Daymaniyat Islands are characterised by the presence of great number of different species of coral reef fish. Large number of Hawksbill Turtle shelters in the islands in order to nest and lay their eggs, which in fact add a great importance to these islands being a haven for such species strongly endangered with extinction.

"You're not allowed to disembark on the uninhabited islands from May through October, when green and hawksbill turtles visit to nest and bury their eggs in holes on the sandy beaches", advises Lonely Planet advisory.

But outside nesting season, it's easy to visit by boat, from Al Mouj Marina in Muscat or further down the coast at Barr Al Jissah.

Daymaniyat Islands are considered the natural habitat for a wide range of wildlife species as many bird species take it as haven thanks to the availability of food and the shallow waters of islands.

The islands are considered significant standpoints for migratory birds such as Osprey and sooty falcon. The island turns to a fantastic panorama thanks to the migration of thousands of seabirds during the breeding season such as the great white heron, the gray heron, the wading bird, different sea ducks and many types of the seagull, many types of bridled tern and some red billed tropical birds.

Some sea mammals live in the reserve such as Bottlenose Dolphin and local types of common dolphin along with spinner dolphin, humpback whale, whale shark and black-headed fish.

