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AL NAHDA BLANK
SHABAB AL
KHALIL IN KING
SALMAN CUP

P13

MSX EMERGES
AS SECOND-BEST
PERFORMING
MARKET IN THE GCC

P20

A RAY OF
HOPE FOR
CHILDREN
WITH AUTISM

MUSCAT

NEW TREATMENT
FOR CANCER PATIENTS

The surgical oncology team in the gastrointestinal programme at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre has announced the launch of a new form of management using a minimally invasive surgical technique to deliver chemotherapy, that can give hope for advanced cancer cases in Oman. The technique of “Pressurized intraPeritoneal Aresoal chemotherapy” (PIPAC) is a novel drug delivery system of chemotherapy using a minimally invasive surgical technique to treat patients with peritoneal based metastasis, such as gastrointestinal, ovarian and uterine tumours.

DETAILS ON P3

AIRPORTS SEE 160%
GROWTH IN FLIGHTS

The number of the international inbound and outbound flights through Muscat International Airport, as well as Salalah and Sohar airports surged by more than 160.1 per cent as at the end of January 2023, reaching about 7,525 flights compared to the same period in 2022, when as many as 2,893 flights were reported. The initial statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that the number of arrivals through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a remarkable increase by 94 per cent and the number of departures soared by 115 per cent as at the end of January 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

SEE P2

PINK LAKES OF JAALAN BECKON TOURISTS



Al Ruwais area in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is among the most beautiful coastal areas overlooking the Arabian Sea. Distinguished by its well-known pink lakes that look like a stunning painting, the area is a major tourism destination and an exceptional scene to be viewed from cars travelling on Al Ruwais road.

DETAILS ON P3

DON'T TRAVEL TO MARBURG-INFECTED COUNTRIES

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has emphasised the need to postpone travel to countries affected by Marburg virus disease (MVD), except in extreme emergency.

Dr Amal bint Saif al Maaniyah, Director-General of Disease Surveillance at the Ministry of Health, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that it is currently highly necessary to quarantine travellers arriving from Marburg-infected

countries. She stressed that the travellers who develop symptoms of Marburg (like fever, fever chills, muscle pain, rash or inflammation) have to isolate themselves from other people and go to the nearest medical care institution (emergency departments at health facilities).

The symptoms include throat infection, diarrhoea, weakness, vomiting, stomach pain, unex-

plained bleeding anywhere or bruises, she added, noting that these could be felt even after 21 days.

Such travellers have to report to a doctor that they arrived from an area that is affected with MVD. Dr Amal pointed out that MVD is similar to the Ebola virus and that it was known for the first time in 1967 in the cities of Marburg, Frankfurt and Belgrade.

TURN TO P2

Oman to cut
oil output by
40,000 bpd

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman said on Sunday it will embark on a voluntary cut of its crude oil production by 40,000 bpd starting from May till the end of the year.

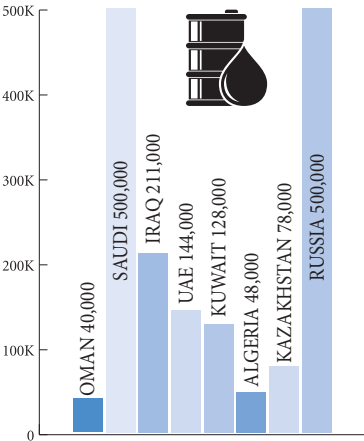
The decision was taken in co-ordination with some Opec+ producers.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals said that the voluntary reduction is a precautionary measure taken on top of the previous output cut agreed upon at the 33rd Opec and non-Opec Ministerial Meeting (ONOMM) held on October 5 last year.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia and other Opec+ oil producers announced voluntary cuts to their production amounting to around 1.15 million barrels per day in a surprise move they said was aimed at supporting market stability.

The group had been largely expected to stick to its already agreed 2 million bpd cuts when

VOLUNTARY CUTS (BPD)



its ministerial panel, which includes Saudi Arabia and Russia, meets virtually on Monday.

Sunday's unexpected voluntary cuts, which start from May, come in addition to the ones already agreed in October.

Riyadh said it would cut output by 500,000 bpd while Iraq will reduce its production by 211,000 bpd, according to official statements. — Agencies



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Iftar kits a boon for low-income workers

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Iftar gatherings organised either by individuals or corporates across the country are a boon for travellers, labourers and people doing menial jobs, at a time when there are only a few mosques that host organised iftar camps.

They assemble near the distribution points well before the suppliers bring the bundles of iftar packs that comprise dates, water, laban, a fruit, a snack, dates and nuts in their cars and distribute.

These blue-collar workers, people on the move, passers-by, and people stuck in some places due to traffic or otherwise are finding it convenient to break their fast with these small kits that hold big meanings for them.

In the case of labourers, they only know the beauty of Iftar with their dear and near ones while they are back home every two years or more and here at workplaces, they limit their iftars within the four concrete walls of the building they are working on and cherish whatever little they have.



They hardly get a chance to break their fast amid ceremonial festivities below the Ramadhan lantern and with their friends and relatives around. “We are trying to support not just our customers but anyone who comes to us at the time of iftar and we are happy to be distributing the Iftar kits to the passersby,” says Prabhu, General

Manager of Mustafa Sultan Exchange that feeds fifty passers-by every day.

With the social iftars not being a norm of this year’s holy month, these men on the move solely look forward to those who bring them the dates and laban to break their fast.

“Since we are engaged in

different construction sites, we do not have the time to go to our camps to break the fast and hence we keep something from our rooms to break fast at the sunset,” said a labourer who was seen standing in the long queue in front of the only iftar tent in Ruwi, run by the Malabar Gold Group.

“But with these good

Samaritans distributing foods at Iftar time, we are relaxed as our fast has ended religiously,” he adds.

These iftars are on one side, done by corporates as part of their CSR (corporate social responsibility) but on the other side, they emanate a sense of being cared for and give a sense of unity, which is the very aim of any social iftar conducted around.

Although these men are of various ethnic backgrounds, diverse cultural origins, and wearing different attires, a few similarities bind them together.

They are taking part in the nation-building process and waiting to share their first meal of the day from a single platter while helping each other with drinking water, dates and other delicacies of breaking fast.

These blue-collar workers, passers-by and travellers stand in perfect unison for prayers in rows after satisfactorily breaking their day-long fast, thanks to the corporates and good Samaritans who extended a helping hand to them.

Registration for academic year 2023-24 starts: HEAC

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced the start of applications for admission to higher education institutions and external and internal scholarships for the Academic Year 2023/2024.

Students who are holders of General Education Diploma (GED) and its equivalent have to submit their applications for the academic year 2022/2023 via HEAC’s website (www.heac.gov.om), along with their desired programmes of study, during the period from April 1 to June 1 2023.

Dr Hamad bin Khalfan al Numani, Director General of the HEAC, said that as many as 28,725 study seats are available in various government higher education institutions, as well as scholarships and study grants in private higher education institutions within Oman and external scholarships and grants. “The number of study seats in government higher education institutions stood at 16,515 as against 11,586 scholarships and grants in private higher education institutions,” he said.

He added that the total number of external scholarships and grants stood at 624, including 59 external scholarships provided by Arab countries and 15 provided by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO).

The academic programmes covered a variety of specialisations in the fields of health, natural and physical sciences, agriculture, environment and related sciences, engineering and related technologies, architecture and construction, information technology, education, management and commercial transactions, society and culture, creative arts, religion and philosophy, Dr Hamad explained.

— ONA

Urgent call for blood donation as donour numbers fall



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

To meet patients’ need for blood and its components, nearly 3,000 blood and platelet donours are urgently needed to donate during the holy month of Ramadhan, according to the Central Blood Bank in Bausher. The first week of Ramadhan had seen 560 blood donors and 52 platelet donors.

The Department of Blood Banks Services of the Central Blood Bank said that people wishing to donate blood can visit the centre’s premises from Sunday to Thursday in the

morning period, from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm. The evening period will be on a daily basis from 7:30 pm to 11:30 pm.

At the same time, the director of Blood Bank Services praised the role of donors and said the increasing number of blood donations is due to community awareness of the importance of blood donation, as well as the media bodies in conveying this humanitarian message.

The Central Blood Bank has been urging the community to continue donating blood to maintain a safe stock of blood units as health services continue to be expanded in the country.

Inbound, outbound flights grow 160pc

MUSCAT: The number international inbound and outbound flights through Muscat International Airport, as well as Salalah and Sohar airports surged by more than 160.1 per cent as at the end of January 2023, reaching about 7,525 flights compared to the same period in 2022, when as many as 2,893 flights were reported.

The initial statistics released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the number of arrivals through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a remarkable increase by 94 per cent and the number of departures soared by 115 per cent as at the end of January 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

The total number of arriving, departing and transit passengers through the airports of Muscat, Salalah, Sohar and Duqm reached about 1,165,556 as at the end of January 2023.



The international and domestic inbound and outbound flights through Muscat International Airport climbed by 143 per cent to reach 7,687 flights, carrying as many as 1,051,390 passengers onboard.

Salalah Airport reported a notable increase in the number of international and domestic flights by 43.1 per cent, as the number of flights through the airport reached 774, carrying 105,719 passengers onboard.

The number of international and domestic inbound and

outbound flights in Sohar Airport reached 24 flights as at the end of January 2023, carrying 2,380 passengers onboard, while Duqm Airport reported 52 domestic inbound and outbound flights, carrying 6,067 passengers onboard.

Passengers of Indian nationality topped the list of those who used Muscat International Airport with a total of 151,087 passengers, followed by Bangladeshi nationality with a total of 52,016 passengers and Pakistani nationality with 39,762 passengers. — ONA

Don’t travel to Marburg-infected countries

FROM PAGE 1

It was discovered among laboratory workers who were exposed to the tissues of infected African green monkeys imported from Uganda, she explained.

The disease is transferred from close contact with an infected person, though the virus does not propagate among human beings during its incubation period, which ranges from 2 to 21 days, she added.

A person can get the infection through physical contact with a patient’s blood or other body fluids like faeces, vomit, urine, saliva, and respiratory secretions or even semen, said Dr Amal. She noted that the probability of infected people’s transmitting the disease increases as their disease develops and that it peaks during the severe stage of infection, which can also be transmitted through the use of injections or exposure to contaminated needles. Such contact may lead to the occurrence

of more severe cases of infection, rapid deterioration of health and an increased probability of death, she said.

Elaborating more, Dr Amal said, “The signs and symptoms of Marburg virus disease in humans begin suddenly with a severe headache and severe sickness associated with common symptoms of muscle pain and high fever on the first day of infection, followed by a gradual and rapid weakness. On the third day of infection, the patient suffers from severe diarrhoea, abdominal pain and cramps, nausea and vomiting. The diarrhoea can last a whole week. Severe haemorrhagic symptoms appear on many patients between the fifth and seventh day.

“Fatal cases are usually associated with a form of bleeding from several areas in a patient’s body, including the nose, gums and vagina. Persistent high fever during the severe stage of the disease may affect the central



No test is available to detect infection while a person is in the incubation period. The disease can be diagnosed as soon as signs and symptoms appear. There are currently no approved vaccines or antiviral treatments for this virus

DRAMALMAANIYAH
Director-General of Disease Surveillance

nervous system, causing irritation and often orchitis (inflammation of one or both of the testicles). In fatal cases, death occurs between 8th or 9th day after the onset of symptoms. It could be difficult to distinguish clinically between

MVD and other infectious diseases such as malaria, typhoid fever, shigellosis, meningitis and other viral haemorrhagic fevers. “All age groups are vulnerable to MVD, although it was noticed that, before the Angolan outbreak, cases of children’s being affected were very rare. Upon the outbreak that occurred in Congo between 1998 and 2000, which was the largest reported outbreak before the Angola one, only 12 children were reported as having contracted the disease from among those aged below 5 years.”

Dr Amal pointed out that no test is available to detect infection while a person is in the incubation period. She said that the disease can be diagnosed as soon as signs and symptoms appear, and that there are currently no approved vaccines or antiviral treatments for this virus. “However, supportive care and symptomatic treatment may help the patient improve,” she concluded. — ONA

RNO COMMANDER RECEIVES CTF-152 CHIEF



MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received at his office in Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Sunday Captain Mohamed Youssef Al Mir, Commander of the Combined Task Force (CTF-152), who is currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. The two sides exchanged views on several naval matters and ways of enhancing them.



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3

Oman launches innovative method to treat cancer

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The healthcare sector of the Sultanate of Oman has made headway in cancer management by using a minimally invasive surgical technique to deliver chemotherapy. The new treatment method gives hope to cancer patients in the country.

The surgical oncology team in the gastrointestinal programme led by Dr Maha al Shuaibi (pictured), Senior Consultant-Surgical Oncology at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCCRC), announced the launch of PIPAC, a new form of cancer treatment on Sunday.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Maha said that this technology provides an opportunity for a selective group of patients who are typically non-responsive, and non-treatable with conventional types of chemotherapy and other different modalities of management and the results are promising.

“This treatment method called PIPAC uses a surgical technique to introduce the state-of-the-art device that converts chemotherapy into a condensed mist that is directed into the



metastatic disease within the peritoneal cavity. We have seen promising results in our group of patients and the future will be better for such cases,” she said.

The technique of ‘Pressurised Intra Peritoneal Aresol Chemotherapy’ (PIPAC) is a novel drug delivery system of chemotherapy using a minimally invasive surgical technique to treat patients with peritoneal-based metastasis such as gastrointestinal, ovarian and uterine tumours, Dr Maha adds.

The technology represents the newest and most advanced method in treating particular cases that would traditionally be considered unmanageable. The PIPAC treatment can help to shrink the tumours enough to

make the patient a candidate for other curative treatments such as Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy (HIPEC).

“Other advantages of this treatment are that it may provide symptom control improvement in quality of life, or even limit the disease progression and in a certain case, it can even convert patients who are unresectable into a respectable and manageable disease,” Dr Al Shuaibi said, adding that PIPAC is provided in a limited number of centres around the world and that the team here is very proud to be the first group to introduce this treatment to the Omani society.

Dr Maha, along with her colleague Dr Mohammed al Hosni, Consultant Surgical Oncology performed a number



Dr Maha al Shuaibi.

of procedures using PIPAC with very promising results and are looking forward to expanding the services to include as many patients as possible and provide opportunities and hope for those in need.

Selection of Patients: Dr Maha said the process of choosing patients for such treatment comes through extensive discussions in their multidisciplinary tumour board meetings.

“At these meetings, each patient is evaluated individually for the type of disease and the amount of disease spread and once the patient is selected, we start introducing this technology to provide the chemotherapy in multiple sessions, where each session can be six weeks apart,” adds Dr Maha.

Governorates experience upper air trough

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

@lakshmioman

No severe weather expected as the Sultanate of Oman experiences upper air trough, although clouds prevailed over the governorates, according to the Oman Meteorology Office (Oman Met).

The weather forecast stated that there are chances of convective clouds, occasionally thundershowers, over Al Hajar Mountains and governorates of Dhofar and Al Wusta.

Active northwesterly wind ranging from 20 to 25 knots are expected to blow nationwide, leading to dust rising and low horizontal visibility, the Oman Met said.

The weather forecaster at Oman Met Office said the weather with the flow of high and medium clouds will continue on Monday as well. The medium clouds also brought in sporadic

rain in Al Wusta.

The weather forecaster added, “There is a chance for rain over the mountains of Dhofar Governorate during Sunday evening and on Monday.”

The aerial picture showed the flow of high and medium clouds over most of the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, and low clouds intensify over parts of the Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates, with opportunities for cumulus clouds to form and scattered rain over the Hajar Mountains and parts of the Dhofar and Al Wusta governorates during the evening.

There are chances for dust and dust to rise in desert and exposed areas due to active winds.

“The sea state for the Arabian Sea is expected to be light to moderate. The Oman Sea and Western Coast of Musandam will see the situation to be moderate to rough,” pointed out the weather forecaster.

Pesticides for watermelon cultivation safe: Ministry



STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, APRIL 2

The Directorate General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate issued on Sunday a clarification after a tweet by the Directorate on seizing crops of cantaloupe and watermelon at one of the farms in South Al Sharqiyah went viral on various social media platforms.

The clarification came after it took samples of various

agricultural crops from several farms, including cantaloupe and melon products, for tests at the ministry’s laboratory. According to the laboratory’s findings, all samples confirmed they are safe and suitable for human consumption.

In a statement, the directorate said that one sample of the hot pepper taken from a certain farm, was found having residual pesticides and accordingly, the product was kept inside the farm to complete the legal procedures.

MoE, PDO, GUtech sign agreement to execute training

The Ministry of Education (MoE) signed a collaboration agreement with Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech) to train about 70 school students from PDO concession area as part of Maarifa and Tazeez programmes.

Through the agreement, MoE, in collaboration with PDO, will supervise the selection of 70 school students to join Maarifa Programme, which is a summer academic programme consisting of three main elements executed by GUtech; academic part covering English and computer basics, developing competencies focusing



on soft skills such as leadership, taking responsibility, decision making, time management as well

as critical and creative thinking.

This is in addition to problem solving, collaboration, team work

and financial management, and the third part covers a number of extra-curricular activities such as sports, arts, field visits, attending cultural forums, media skills, organising seminars and competitions and educational visits.

Dr Abdullah Ambusaidi Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education said: “The local and international educational programmes targeting students are part of the Ministry’s endeavours for their importance to provide students with academic, vocational and personal skills. This has led us to sign this agreement with PDO and GUtech to execute these two programmes for Omani students.”

‘Pink lakes’ region of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali — a tourist attraction

JAALAN BANIBU ALI: The Al Ruwais region in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali is now an attraction for tourists due to the presence of its beautiful ‘pink lakes’.

The Al Ruwais coastal area in the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is one of the beautiful regions overlooking the coastal strip of the Arabian Sea and has become an important tourist destination in the Sultanate of Oman as tourists flock to the region to get a glimpse of the wonderful pink lake.

The beautiful natural phenomenon, commonly known as ‘pink lakes’ is formed by marine factors when sea water enters the creek, called ‘Al Ruwais Creek’. The presence of algae and plankton in the water gives it a pink colour.

The bright pink waters of the lakes are of particular importance to the residents and visitors of the region. The pink lakes are also a source of food for migratory birds, the most famous of which are the “flamingos” and waterfowls. — ONA





A MONTH TO DETOX

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)



MIND & BODY

WE HAVE CROSSED the ten-day mark of the holy month of Ramadhan, but we still have time to bring understanding into our lives. And this is why many people wait for this time of the year to bring changes into their lives, said Dr Hamed al Sinawi, Senior Psychiatrist. “Ramadhan is the time of the year where we get a chance to detox ourselves from bad habits that we accumulated over the years, be it in the way we eat and drink, relate to people around us and in managing our time.”

Ramadhan provides an opportunity to reflect because it is once a year when there are changes in one’s lifestyle. Praying in the mosque and reading the holy Quran have an effect on the mind, says Dr Hamed. “During Ramadhan, our daily cycle is changed, we get shorter working hours so we can have enough time to enhance our spiritual health through prayers and reading the holy Quran. Praying in the masjid gives us that feeling of collectiveness, that we are in this together, we meet new people and expand our social network. Most masjids run short lessons that link Islamic values to modern life or reflect on the early history of Islam when the (then) new belief faced discrimination and hardship yet they stood for their values.”

He pointed out that reading the holy Quran and thinking of the meanings of the verses enhances our spiritual power and strengthen our ability to accept the things we cannot change in our life. And this is the significance of praying at the mosque.

“During Ramadhan, a Muslim spends more time praying either on his own or with a group at the masjid. These prayers enable the person to deal with distractions around him and help him focus more on his spiritual connection with God. It washes away the influence of noises in our lives, be it our own hopes and desires or materialistic demands of people around us.” According to him, Ramadhan also teaches us to be more patient so we deal with our desires wisely.

“Our desire to eat or drink is shifted to the night. We also learn to manage anger outbursts which are often due to trivial things so we practice self-control,” he said.

Ramadhan also brings in the benefits of togetherness and this is exactly opposite to loneliness, which Dr Hamed explained, is a major risk factor for several mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and sleep disorders. “During Ramadhan people get together either during prayers or Iftar where people share food with each other and get to talk and form social connections, this sense of community enhances togetherness and helps lonely people because they work away from home or have no immediate family members not to feel left out. In the Omani culture neighbours exchange food plates before Iftar time even when they know that the other person can afford food,” he noted.

He clarified that it is not about the presentation of the food but the acknowledgement that we are one community and Ramadhan brings us together.



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Six killed, eight injured in ‘massive attack’ in Ukraine

KOSTYANTYNIVKA, Ukraine: Russian missiles hit a densely populated area of the eastern Ukrainian city of Kostyantynivka on Sunday, killing six people, police said.

There was a large crater in a yard and windows were shattered from ground to top floors in two 14-storey tower blocks, while nearby private houses had smashed roofs, journalists saw.

Donetsk regional police said that Russia fired S-300 and Uragan missiles in a “massive attack” involving six strikes just after 10 am local time.

Kostyantynivka is around 27 km from the city of Bakhmut, where the war's heaviest fighting is continuing.

Prosecutors said three women and three men aged from late 40s to mid-60s were killed, while eight more were injured.

The blast hit “16 apartment buildings, 8 private residences, a kindergarten, an administrative building, three cars and a gas pipeline”, police said.

Liliya, a 19-year-old psychology student, stood outside her severely damaged high-rise block. Broken glass rained down from windows as she spoke.

“I found out about this on the news. And when I was told about it and I saw that it was my area, I was just shocked,” Liliya said.

“I’m very very lucky that I wasn’t home at that moment,” she added, after deciding to stay with her boyfriend.

“Everything is bombed out. And I think it’s like that in every flat in fact. Because it was such an impact that it was very hard for anything to stay unbroken.”

Nina, a pensioner, was looking at the damage to her ground-floor flat in a Soviet-era block. She was also not home when the missile struck.

“The internal doors and the front door were blown in. An internal partition wall has broken. There’s not a single window left,”



Picture shows a crater in front of a damaged house after a military strike on the town of Kostyantynivka, Donetsk region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

Prosecutors say three women and three men aged from late 40s to mid-60s were killed, while eight more were injured

she said.

“So many people have suffered. “It’s horrifying. What are those fellows doing? It’s just a nightmare.” Soldiers were examining the scene afterwards as well an armed man in civilian clothes.

Watching, holding a shopping bag, Sergiy, 61, said “the shock wave came all the way to us, about a kilometre away”. “When will (Russian President Vladimir) Putin kick the bucket?” he asked, adding expletives.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has prepared a 12-point plan for the Crimean Peninsula once it has been retaken from Russia,

Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defence Council says.

The plan includes demolishing the Crimean Bridge that provides a rail and road link between the peninsula and the Russian mainland across the Kerch Strait, Danilov posted on Facebook.

It also includes purging all those who have served the Russian authorities since it was seized in 2014, he says, describing these officials as “trash.” Danilov cited the denasification of Germany after World War II as a model.

Collaborators with the Russians and traitors to the Ukrainian state are to face trial in the plan’s second stage, with Danilov singling out judges, prosecutors and security services staff. Russians who settled on the peninsula after February 2014 are to be expelled and property purchases annulled.

— AFP/dpa

Bangladesh grants bail to top editor



Matiur Rahman, editor of Bengali daily Prothom Alo, appears at the High Court in Dhaka. — AFP

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s high court granted bail on Sunday to Matiur Rahman, one of the country’s most respected editors, after he was charged under a controversial digital law. Matiur Rahman, 78, the editor of the Bengali-language daily Prothom Alo, requested bail after a lawyer filed a case against him and a reporter last week under the Digital Security Act.

The law has been criticised by the United Nations and human rights groups as a tool to crack down on dissent and harass journalists in retaliation for their work.

“He was granted six weeks of bail,” Rahman’s lawyer Z I Khan Panna told journalists outside the courthouse. The case against Rahman and reporter Shamsuzzaman Shams stems from a March 26 story on Bangladesh’s Independence Day that quoted ordinary people on their struggles to afford basic necessities. — AFP

Deadly storms and tornadoes sweep through United States

WASHINGTON: The death toll from a major storm system that has lashed the south-central and eastern United States with devastating winds and destructive tornadoes rose to at least 26 by Sunday, officials said.

Tennessee, one of the hardest-hit states since the storms began on Friday, initially had seven weather-related fatalities, but the toll there later rose to nine, according to Memphis-based news channel WREG.

Scenes of devastation were left in the path of the Tennessee tornado, which twisted trees, flattened homes into piles of wooden boards and ripped walls from still-standing structures.

“The whole house, you can feel it shaking,” said Janice Pieterick, whose house doors and glass windows blew out when the tornado swept through Lewis County. “We just all hunkered down.”

The toll in Tennessee came on top of the 17 deaths reported in Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama in the south, Indiana and Illinois in the Midwest, and Delaware in the mid-Atlantic. The storm system left dozens injured.

It sent multiple tornadoes — some of exceptional size and rare power — sweeping through Arkansas, where they killed at least five people, the state’s governor said. Daylight revealed extensive damage, with several homes torn apart, cars overturned, power lines toppled and trees ripped out of the ground.

Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders declared a state of emergency and activated the national guard to help with recovery efforts.

She said she had spoken to President Joe Biden, who promised to expedite federal aid.

The city of Wynne, in northeastern Arkansas, was “cut in half by damage from east to west,” Mayor Jennifer Hobbs told CNN.

The National Weather Service had issued tornado warnings for several other states, from



Father Patrick Friend of Little Rock Catholic High helps to salvage belongings from a friend's home in the aftermath of a tornado, after a monster storm system tore through the South and Midwest on Friday in Little Rock, Arkansas. — Reuters

as far north as Iowa to the southern state of Mississippi, where a twister last week killed 25 people and caused extensive property damage.

Calamity struck in the Illinois town of Belvidere, outside of Chicago, on Friday when severe weather caused the roof and part of the facade of the Apollo Theater to collapse while a heavy metal band played inside.

TV footage showed emergency personnel carrying out injured concert-goers on stretchers, while video posted on social media showed waist-high rubble on the floor of the venue and a gaping hole in the roof.

Belvidere Fire Chief Shawn Schadle reported one death and 28 injuries, including five people hospitalized with serious injuries.

In Crawford County, in southern Illinois, three people died when a house collapsed, likely from a tornado hit, said Kevin Sur, spokesman for the Illinois Emergency Management Agency.

In the neighbouring state of Indiana, three people were killed by a storm in Sullivan County, on the border with Illinois, several US media outlets reported, citing local authorities. — AFP



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites reputable contractors for carrying out below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/ 2023/046	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF APS WET WELL VALVE CHAMBER COVER	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/ 2023/049	SUPPLY AND LAYING OF FIBER CONNECTIVIY BETWEEN THE SUBSTATIONS AT SIX VARIOUS LOCATIONS	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/ 2023/050	SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF TWIN SOFT STARTER PANEL	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/ 2023/053	& SUPPLY OF TRANSFORMERS PACKAGE SUBSTATIONS	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/ 2023/054	SUPPLY AND LAYING OF FIBER OPTIC CABLE TO ESTABLISH CONNECTIVIY BETWEEN THE EXISTING SHAHALNOOT-1 AND SHAHALNOOT-3 PSS	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/ 2023/055	SUPPLY AND LAYING OF FIBER OPTIC CABLE TO ESTABLISH CONNECTIVIY BETWEEN THE EXISTING ALQARM GSS AND NORTH TAQA PSS	16 th April 2023	7 th May 2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/ 2023/056	UNE – LOT 03C - 2023	16 th April 2023	24 th April 2023	RO. 52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code.
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using “isupplier portal”. No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.
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Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Defence ENGINEERING SERVICES



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
34/2022	Building Works - Salalah	First and Above	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	165/- RO
05/2023	Replacement Of Water Distribution Network at Masira Airbase	First and Above	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	250/- RO
07/2023	Maintenance works (Gas turbine) - MAM	Excellent & Specialize in Electromechanical works (Gas turbine)	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	750/- RO
08/2023	Building works - MAM	First and Above	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	330/- RO
09/2023	Electromechanical works - (RO Plant) - WUDAM	First and Above - specialized in Electromechanical works (RO Plant)	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	100/- RO
10/2023	Design and Build of ALMAZYUNAH AIRSTRIP	Excellent	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	1,500/- RO
11/2023	Building works - Shafaa	First and Above	13 April 2023	15 th May 2023	360/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 1. Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 2. Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 3. Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:
 - A. Financial (**billi 1&2 separated file from billi3**)
 - B. Technical files.
 4. Confirmation of site visit.
 5. All addendums and circulars.
 6. List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 7. List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 8. Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 9. Financial Statement for the last Three years.

Israeli strikes wound five Syrian soldiers

DAMASCUS: Five Syrian soldiers were wounded in the latest Israeli air strike on Syria, state news agency Sana reported on Sunday, with Iran saying two Revolutionary Guards officers died in earlier attacks.

The strike early on Sunday near the western Syrian city of Homs was Israel's third in recent days after the capital Damascus was targeted on the nights of March 30 and 31, according to the agency.

"The Israeli enemy carried out an air assault... targeting positions in the city of Homs and its province," a military source cited.

Syria's air defence intercepted several missiles, but five soldiers were wounded and some material damage was reported.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the strikes targeted several military positions of Syrian government forces and other groups.

The monitor said explosions rocked the city and a fire broke out in a research centre, with ambulances heading to the scene of the attack.

Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said that in addition to the five wounded Syrian soldiers, several fighters in the research



People inspect the damage at the Citadel of Damascus in the aftermath of Israeli air strikes, Syria. — Reuters

centre had been killed in the strikes.

In the strikes on Friday, Israel launched "several missiles from the occupied Golan Heights" against positions near Damascus.

The Observatory said those strikes had targeted a weapons and ammunition depot of the Syrian military and other groups.

Sepahnews, the website of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said on Friday that officer Milad Heidari had been killed.

On Sunday, the website

reported that Meghdad Mahghani, a military adviser wounded in the same strike, had "attained the high rank of martyrdom".

Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani condemned that attack, saying on Sunday that the "blood of these high-ranking martyrs will not go to waste" and that Tehran "reserves its right to respond... at the appropriate time and place".

Israel conducted several air strikes on Syria in March, according to the Observatory,

which has an extensive network of sources in the country.

Last week, an Israeli missile strike destroyed a suspected arms depot at Syria's Aleppo airport, the war monitor said.

On March 7, three people were killed in an Israeli strike on the same airport that put it out of service. It reopened three days later. And in February, an Israeli air strike killed 15 people in a Damascus district that houses state security agencies, the Observatory said at the time. —AFP

India opposition leader Rahul Gandhi to appeal jail sentence

MUMBAI: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi will appeal a two-year jail sentence in a defamation case brought against him by lawmaker from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), local media reported on Sunday.

Gandhi, the 52-year-old scion of the Nehru-Gandhi political dynasty and leader of the Congress party, was found guilty of defamation by a court in the western state of Gujarat over comments he made in a speech in 2019.

Gandhi has filed a plea in the Surat sessions court against the magistrate order while a senior Congress party official, who declined to be named, said that the court is scheduled to hear the plea on Monday.

India's parliament disqualified Gandhi after sentencing as the law that governs elections in India mandates disqualification of any lawmaker who is "convicted of any offence and sentenced to imprisonment for not less than two years".

A lower court sentenced Gandhi on March 23 for two years in jail on charges of defamation.

Opposition politicians say Gandhi's trial and the disqualification is the latest evidence of the government's strongarm tactics and follows investigations and legal troubles faced in recent months by other



Rahul Gandhi

opposition parties.

Gandhi said on March 25 that he would not comment on his sentence as the matter was subjudice, but he said his disqualification from parliament was because he had asked Modi what he called "tough questions" over his relationship with Gautam Adani, founder of the Adani conglomerate.

The opposition critics accuse Modi government of giving undue favours to a business group led by billionaire tycoon Adani. Shares of Adani group companies plunged after Hindenburg Research on January 24 alleged that the Indian company had engaged in stock manipulation and used tax havens. It also said the group had unsustainable debt.

A day after Gandhi's conviction, 14 political parties jointly petitioned the Supreme Court, saying opposition groups were being selectively targeted by federal investigative agencies. The court has agreed to hear the plea on April 5. —Reuters

Saudi Arabia to invite Assad to Arab leaders summit

RIYADH/BEIRUT: Saudi Arabia is planning to invite Syrian President Bashar al Assad to an Arab League summit that Riyadh is hosting in May, three sources familiar with the plans said.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan will travel to Damascus in coming weeks to hand Assad a formal invitation to attend the summit scheduled for May 19, two of the sources said.

Assad's attendance at an Arab League summit would mark the most significant development in his rehabilitation within the Arab world since 2011.

Syria's return to the 22-member

body would reflect a change in the regional approach towards the Syrian conflict.

Last month sources said Riyadh and Damascus had reached an agreement to reopen their embassies after the holy month of Ramadhan. The Saudi foreign ministry did not confirm an agreement was reached but said it was in talks with the Syrian foreign ministry to resume consular services.

It is said that discussions have been ongoing for more than a year over a list of demands from Saudi Arabia for the Syrian government to meet as a condition to mend



Faisal Mekdad



Prince Faisal bin Farhan

ties. Initial discussions for a visit by Prince Faisal to Damascus or by Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad to Riyadh were postponed because of the earthquakes that hit Turkiye and Syria in February.

Arab League heavyweight Egypt has also resumed contacts with Assad. Both sides agreed

to strengthen cooperation on Saturday during the first official visit by a Syrian foreign minister to Cairo in over a decade.

An Egyptian security source said that the visit was aimed at putting in place steps for Syria's return to the Arab League through Egyptian and Saudi mediation.

Contacts between Saudi and Syrian officials gathered momentum following a landmark agreement in March between Saudi Arabia and Iran, to re-establish ties.

The rapprochement between Riyadh and Tehran is part of major regional realignment. — Reuters

Recall/Special Service Campaign

Date of Campaign :03/04/2023
Campaign Type :Recall/Special Service Campaign
Product Description :Reprogram the LTA software in the Forward

Production Period	Brand	Vehicle Model	Affected VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles
31March,2021 to 20 June,2022	LEXUS	NX350,NX350H	JTJCGDEZ0N2002024 To JTJCKDEZXN2002143	39

Note: Not all vehicles in these VIN ranges, are affected and/or sold in your country.

Description:
The subject vehicles are equipped with Lane Tracing Assist (LTA), a steering assist feature that can be activated to assist the driver in maintaining the vehicle's position in the center of the lane when certain operating conditions are met. Due to improper programming of the LTA control computer, the upper limit of the LTA steering angle may be reached earlier than expected. If this condition occurs, the system may provide a reduced level of lane centering assist than designed under certain road and vehicle conditions (e.g., curve radius, vehicle speed, etc.) and may not meet certain requirements in countries with a regulation covering the performance of lane centering system. Should the condition occur, the driver remains in full control of all steering maneuvers and, in addition, all lane departure warnings (visual and audible) and driver monitoring functions (drivers hands-off steering wheel warning) will continue to operate as designed.

Procedure:
As per "Technical instruction" advised by TMC

For More Information:
Customers driving these vehicles may please contact M/s. Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC for further details / booking appointment etc from 03/04/2023.

Contact Details:
Toll free No. 80073000 on all working days between 08:30 to 17:30 hrs after 03/04/2023

Recall/Special Service Campaign

Date of Campaign :03/04/2023
Campaign Type :Recall/Special Service Campaign
Product Description :Reprogram the Skid Control ECU

Production Period	Brand	Vehicle Model	Affected VIN Range	No. of Affected Vehicles
5 April ,2021 to 22 Aug,2022	LEXUS	NX350	JTJCGDEZ0N2002024 to JTJCGDEZXN5004104	49

Note: Not all vehicles in these VIN ranges, are affected and/or sold in your country.

Description:
In the subject vehicles, there is a possibility that the Skid Control ECU within the Brake Actuator Assembly may falsely detect an overcurrent condition of the Electronic Parking Brake (EPB) Actuator and enter a failsafe mode, which illuminates the malfunction indicator lamp (MIL), displays a multi-information display (MID) message "Parking Brake Malfunction, Visit Your Dealer," and prevents the EPB from being engaged or disengaged. If the EPB cannot be engaged, the EPB MIL and MID warnings are ignored, and the vehicle is parked on a grade without being placed into "Park," the vehicle could rollaway, increasing the risk of a crash

Procedure:
As per "Technical instruction" advised by TMC

For More Information:
Customers driving these vehicles may please contact M/s. Saud Bahwan Automotive LLC for further details / booking appointment etc from 03/04/2023.

Contact Details:
Toll free No. 80073000 on all working days between 08:30 to 17:30 hrs after 03/04/2023



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In brief

■ QUITO



ECUADOR PRESIDENT AUTHORISES CIVILIAN USE OF GUNS

Ecuador has authorised the carrying and use of guns by civilians, President Guillermo Lasso said in a video message on Twitter, citing rising crime and insecurity in the Andean country.

Lasso, a conservative former banker, has been fighting to tackle rising crime and violence in the streets and in prisons, which the government blames on drug trafficking gangs.

The beleaguered president also faces an impeachment process over allegations of embezzlement — accusations he has denied — after Ecuador's top court gave the green light for hearings to go ahead.

■ NEW YORK



NYT WON'T PAY FOR TWITTER CHECK MARK

The New York Times will not pay a monthly fee to get verified check mark status on Twitter, a spokesperson for the newspaper said hours after it lost the verified badge on the social media platform.

According to new Twitter policy, verified check marks are now offered only through a paid subscription. Organisations will have to shell out \$1,000 a month to obtain gold check marks while individuals can get blue checks for a starting price of \$7 in the United States. "We also will not reimburse reporters for Twitter Blue for personal accounts, except in rare instances where this status would be essential for reporting purposes," the spokesperson added.

■ MADRID



SPAIN'S FAR-LEFT LAUNCHES POLL BID

Spain's labour minister said on Sunday she would stand in a year-end general election as head of the far-left whose support Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez will need to stay in office.

"Today I'm taking a step forward. I want to lead our country," Yolanda Diaz told a political rally in Madrid.

Opinion polls consistently show Diaz, a deputy prime minister in Sanchez's coalition government and lifelong member of the Communist party, is Spain's most popular politician.

HUTCHINSON TO RUN FOR 2024 REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION

Republicans defend Trump by attacking criminal justice system

WASHINGTON: Many Republicans in the US Congress have responded to Donald Trump's looming Tuesday arraignment by characterising the criminal justice system as corrupt, in accusations that parallel their earlier broadsides against the nation's elections after the former president's 2020 defeat.

Trump and his allies in the House of Representatives and Senate have used rhetoric that echoed his false claims of widespread election fraud in the build-up to the deadly January 6, 2021, assault on the US Capitol by his supporters. Critics warn that the present partisan rhetoric could shake public trust in courts by undermining the institutional legitimacy of the criminal justice system.

"Trump's indictment is the culmination of 6 years of the Democrats weaponising law enforcement to target and persecute their political enemies. Dictatorships operate like this — the US is supposed to be different," tweeted Senator Ted Cruz, a hardline Republican who voted to overturn 2020 election results.

Trump says he is innocent of the expected New York charges — which revolve around hush money payments to Stormy Daniels during his 2016 presidential campaign. Details of the charges are as yet unclear.

He says the investigation and three other probes involving his attempts to overturn his 2020



Supporters of Donald Trump gather near Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida. — AFP

election defeat and his retention of classified documents after leaving the White House are all politically motivated.

Most Democrats have warned against challenging the legitimacy of the institutions of government in defence of Trump, who routinely pushed up against the guard rails of democracy during his four years in the White House and was twice impeached by Congress.

"Political leaders ought to stand up for the American system of

government," said Democratic Representative Zoe Lofgren, a member of the House Judiciary Committee who also served on the congressional investigation of the January 6 attack. "Undercutting the system of government is a serious matter and a threat to our future," she said in an interview.

Trump has been unrestrained in his rhetoric in recent weeks, calling for protests and warning of potential "death and destruction" if he were to be charged.

He used fiery language hours before his supporters stormed the Capitol on January 6, in a bid to overturn his election defeat. Five people including a police officer died during or shortly after that riot and more than 140 police officers were injured. The Capitol suffered millions of dollars in damage. Most Republicans have trained their invective on Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, accusing the prosecutor of mounting a politically motivated

investigation aimed at preventing Trump from being re-elected to the White House in 2024.

After Trump on March 18 announced that he expected to be arrested in days, the Republican-controlled House launched its own probe of Bragg's grand jury investigation, seeking documents and testimony. They have called Bragg's move "an unprecedented abuse of prosecutorial authority" and said the indictment followed years of the office searching for any basis on which to bring charges.

Democrats questioned whether Congress has the authority to investigate a state-level investigation, particularly one conducted under secretive grand jury rules. Bragg, a Democrat, on Friday warned Republican Representatives Jim Jordan, James Comer and Bryan Steil, who are leading the probe, against attacking the criminal justice system.

"You and many of your colleagues have chosen to collaborate with Mr Trump's efforts to vilify and denigrate the integrity of elected state prosecutors and trial judges," the Manhattan prosecutor wrote.

House Republicans continued to push back. Firebrand Marjorie Taylor Greene said she planned to protest against Trump's court appearance on Tuesday, while Brian Mast went further and told CNN he would not accept the outcome of a jury trial.

— Agencies

Finns vote as far right aims to unseat PM



A voter casts his ballot at a polling centre in Finland in Helsinki, on Sunday. — AFP

HELSINKI: Finns voted on Sunday in legislative elections that could see the country take a dramatic turn to the right, as centre-right and anti-immigration parties vie to unseat Social Democratic Prime Minister Sanna Marin.

After the breakthrough by nationalists in neighbouring Sweden and the far right's victory in Italy last year, Finland could become the latest country to join the nationalist wave in Europe. First results are expected around 8:00 pm.

The vote comes just days ahead of Finland's formal accession to the Nato defence alliance.

"The polls show that the more right-wing political trend in Finland is gaining strength," Juho Rahkonen from the E2 research institute said.

Traditionally, the biggest of the eight main parties in parliament gets the first chance to build a government, and since the 1990s that party has always claimed the

prime minister's office.

"We are aiming to win this election and continue our work for a more sustainable future," Marin told reporters at her final campaign event in Helsinki on Saturday.

But the latest survey published on Thursday by public broadcaster Yle showed the centre-right National Coalition holding a thin lead at 19.8 per cent, with the nationalist eurosceptic Finns Party in second place at 19.5 per cent.

The Social Democratic Party (SDP) led by Marin, who took office in 2019 as the world's youngest prime minister at age 34, was in third place with 18.7 per cent.

"We have had a great campaign. We have the best candidates all over Finland and we are first in the polls, so I'm optimistic," National Coalition leader Petteri Orpo said at a campaign rally on Saturday.

— AFP

E-scooters around the world a boon or blight?

PARIS: The for-hire electric scooters that have become ubiquitous in Paris and other cities worldwide are under scrutiny in the French capital, where residents vote on Sunday on whether to ban them.

If Paris does outlaw the app-based devices that zoomed onto the city's streets in 2018, it would become the biggest city to do so.

The French capital was an early adopter of e-scooters in 2018, when the pavements were soon strewn with discarded rental devices from the first operator, Lime.

After an uproar over the anarchy and a number of fatal accidents, the city clamped down, reducing the number of operators to three (Dott, Lime and Tier) and the number of scooters to 15,000.

While riders as young as 12 can still use them (the government wants to raise that to 14), they must be parked in designated spots and riders are not allowed to go over 10 km per hour in most parts of Paris — but many do anyway.

Sunday's referendum will decide whether rental scooters should be allowed at all. The vote will not impact privately owned electric scooters.

Across the Channel, London has shown greater caution with regard to devices the city's police chief called "death traps". Only



rental e-scooters with specific safety features are allowed in the capital. Privately owned devices are illegal. Riders must be 18 or over and have a full or provisional driving licence.

The scooters have a speed limit of 12.5 miles per hour (20 kph) and their lights remain on while in use.

New York is a relative newcomer to the scooter sharing revolution, with the first service launching only in the summer of 2021, in the Bronx.

People aged 16 and over are allowed to use both rental and private e-scooters, with the speed limit set at 15 mph (24 kph) and riders obliged to give pedestrians the right of way.

Like most cities, New York bans people from riding on the pavement.

After a number of crashes and

near-misses involving the two-wheelers, including one notorious attempt by two US tourists to ride down the famed Spanish Steps, Rome has vowed to impose order on its booming e-scooter rental market. The city unveiled plans last year to raise the minimum age for scooter rental to 18, reduce their maximum speed from 25 kph to 20 kph, and reduce the number of for-hire operators from seven to three, with restrictions on parking. But the measures, which had been due to take effect in January 2023, have yet to be implemented.

Montreal in 2020 outlawed all electric scooters, rental and private, from circulating on any public roads and cycle paths, complaining that four times out of five they were discarded on the street instead of being parked in designated spots.

— AFP

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Moments of sharing not to be missed

Generally, people are sociable by nature! They very much like to get together celebrating different occasions and enjoying good times. Throughout the year, we live various moments and days some of which are very special either to us or loved ones whom we live with or close to. Perhaps, joining family, friends, colleagues or neighbours to commemorate a particular occasion or just for the sake of enjoying ourselves being together are just to name a few reasons to celebrate social gatherings.

There are many of those special days and moments, which impact on our minds and memories. Though, we experience a different impact when moments sometimes happen during seasonal or spiritual period of time in the year. The month of Ramadhan, for instance, comes on top of these distinct seasons of celebration. It is basically about people getting together more than other times of the year.

For that reason, Ramadhan is becoming a month during which people usually learn patience, giving and feeling for less privileged people within society. Most significantly, it is a month about appreciating, reviving and strengthening relations between people. The spirit of Ramadhan essentially brings the strong feeling of importance of sharing togetherness and being close to family in particular.

Actually, this holy month is essentially about sharing spiritual moments of Ramadhan with others. Family, friends, colleagues and neighbours are mostly the ones we share moments of joy and spirituality with. The importance of sharing moments in Ramadhan is marked through different images of gatherings some of which are during iftar (breaking fast), Taraweeh prayers (special religious ritual in Ramadhan) and evening meetings where most people are spending their evening together by exchanging visits.

Case in a point, men prefer to break their fast together in masjids with other Muslims regardless of their nationalities, languages or origins.



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN COMES ON TOP OF THESE DISTINCT SEASONS OF CELEBRATION. IT IS BASICALLY ABOUT PEOPLE GETTING TOGETHER MORE THAN OTHER TIMES OF THE YEAR

What brings them all together is being all brothers of Islam and practicing their worship and religious rituals together as brothers. This image reflects the commendable unity and harmony of Muslims, just in one religious ritual, which is always observed wherever they converge and meet for prayers and worship the Almighty Allah.

Another thrilling image of people's interest to frequently get together during Ramadhan is the habit of daily commuters. Some people like those who work out of their home towns commute everyday back and forth to home just to have the pleasure of breaking their fast with their families and loved ones. They intend not to miss the lovely moments of sharing iftar with family, not for a single day even! Perhaps they spend hours back and fourth from home to office and to home again on daily basis.

For those homesick people, especially during Ramadhan, it is a unique feeling indeed as they set around their children and loved ones at home enjoying the spirit of Ramadhan together during iftar, dinner or suhur (late meal before the dawn) too. Being at home at such times is one of the much-liked experiences that people strive hard not to miss during Ramadhan.

Friends and colleagues at work also portray another image of sharing spiritual moments of Ramadhan together. Every now and then, they come together to break their fast, have dinner or spend their evening together either at home or out. For them, Ramadhan is a significant occasion to meet and strengthen their ties.

Ramadhan is always awaited by the whole family; it is a great time for togetherness and experiencing the tradition of sharing moments. All the enjoyable moments we share with family, friends, colleagues, neighbours or those less privileged will definitely etch in our minds and last forever. They will be stored in our box of memories and will be recalled someday in the years to come. Just remember that life is not what we gain, but what we give for others; the moments you share with others are what really matters.

WATER WOES



An Afghan girl fills a canister with drinking water in Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Sunday. – AFP

Oman a vital trading partner of Ukraine

The Sultanate of Oman is one of Ukraine's important partners in the Middle East. We pay much attention to the all-round development of bilateral relations, people-to-people ties and cooperation within the international organisations.

In Ukraine, we are consistently monitoring the security, political, social and economic developments in the Gulf and entire Middle East region and, thus, underline the role which Oman plays within the framework of promoting and strengthening peace and stability in the region, that goes fully in line with Oman's tested and trusted mediation experience in supporting solution for different conflicts and crises.

Given the significant role of the Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf and strong persisting linkage of Ukraine to the Muslim world, it is of high importance for us to facilitate and further promote our bilateral relations in the mutually beneficial ways of cooperation.

The visit of the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy to the Sultanate of Oman in January 2020 gave a significant boost to further systematic and institutionalised development of our bilateral relations in various fields. In recent years, we have been observing regular consultations and contacts between Foreign Ministries of Ukraine and Oman, which make it possible to maintain close coordination on a wide range of bilateral and international



Dr Maksym Subkh

The writer is Special Representative of Ukraine for the Middle East and Africa

BILATERAL TRADE IN 2020 INCREASED BY 21 PER CENT AND STOOD AT \$107 MILLION

issues that are of mutual interest.

The Sultanate of Oman is also considered as one of Ukraine's significant trading and economic partners in the Middle East and Gulf.

We spare no efforts in trying to strengthen our trade and economic cooperation with Oman. Notwithstanding the negative economic consequences of Covid-19 pandemic, our bilateral trade turnover in 2020 increased by 21 per cent and amounted to \$107 million. It's a highly positive trend but our real potential is still to be explored.

And to show that our expectations are justified, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that during 2021 bilateral trade turnover between Ukraine and Oman has grown by more than 119 per cent, and amounted to \$203 million. And we believe that there is still a substantial unlocked capacity for its growing in future.

It is real and obvious that with the beginning of the war, our business slowed down, sometimes it stopped, but at the same time, it quickly resumed its work and, in some places, even increased its volumes. Hardships create new opportunities and experienced Ukrainian entrepreneurs are professionally taking advantage of them.

Ukraine now takes all necessary

measures to create opportunities for national exporters to have access to more foreign markets, especially it relates to the Global South region.

We consider agriculture, construction, infrastructure, manufacturing, healthcare, information technologies and digital transformation as the most promising areas for our trade, economic and investment cooperation, as well as invite the Omani side to participate in privatisation processes in Ukraine.

We are convinced that holding regular contacts as well as

establishing additional bilateral mechanisms and platforms of coordination and interaction like inter-parliamentary friendship groups, joint intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation and Ukrainian-Omani business council can provide a strong impetus to development of our relations and, in particular, clearly help to unleash their enormous potential.

In this regard, we consider business-to-business connections to be of crucial importance in terms of promoting and

accelerating our trade and economic partnership.

We hope that our joint efforts on this track will benefit all the parties involved.

Despite the negative effects of Ukraine's economic development, I believe that we should already prepare the groundwork for the full-scale restoration of trade cooperation with the countries of the region, as well as the attraction of their investment potential for the restoration of Ukraine's destroyed infrastructure.

The post-war rebuilding of Ukraine's economy should provide for extensive economic and social recovery, and should not be limited to physical reconstruction of infrastructural assets.

Ukraine has proved its role as a reliable food security guarantor committed to all of its obligations and has asserted the Black Sea Grain Initiative together with the UN and Turkey.

To date, more than 30 countries have joined the humanitarian programme, which has accumulated more than \$200 million in donations.

Ukraine's goal is to provide at least 5 million people with grain by the end of spring this year. Ukraine is committed to fulfilling its obligations and is continuing to ship agricultural products to ensure global food security and price stability.



Ukraine's goal is to provide at least 5 million people with grain by the end of spring this year.

sport

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Eight teams to vie for OJA Ramadhan football tourney title



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

As many as eight teams will vie on the Oman Journalists Association's (OJA) Ramadhan football tournament which will begin on Monday. All the confirmed eight teams are divided into two groups and each group featured from four teams. The Group A comprises Oman TV, Oman News Agency, Oman Journalists Association and Oman Radio. The Group B features Finance and administrative team of Ministry of Information, Galfar Company (media team), *Oman Daily* newspaper and *Shabiba* newspaper.

The ten days tournament will run under organisation of OJA represented by Sports Media committee at Al Hilal team greenfield in Azaiba. The opening day of the Ramadhan football tournament will feature four matches on Monday.

In Group A, Oman TV team will take on Oman News Agency team and the match will kick off at 10 pm while OJA will meet Oman Radio team and the game will start at 11 pm. In Group B matches, Finance and administrative team of Ministry of Information team will play against Galfar company at 10 pm while Oman daily team will face Shabiba newspaper team at 11 pm.

The draw of the tournament took place last week at the OJA headquarters in presence of Salim

bin Hamed al Jahwari, Vice-Chairman of OJA and head of Sports Media committee and some representatives of participated teams. Al Jahwari stated that this is the second consecutive edition of the tournament as OJA is very keen to hold this kind of sports activities during the year. "The football tournaments among the teams representing different media channel is an opportunity to build the relationship between them. Also, the event is a great chance to discover the top potential players. We wish good luck to all the participated teams," he said.

Later, Fadhil bin Rabee al Mazroui, member of Sports Media Committee and head of the tournament organising team explained the rules and regulations of the tournament. The playing format will be in league system from one round during the group stage. The top two teams in each group will advance to the semifinals. Each team will comprise 12 players and four officials including coach, assistant coach, manager and medical treatment specialist. The match will be for 40 minutes while each half is for 20 minutes including ten minutes break in between.

The organising team has allocated top prizes for the top winners besides special awards for the individuals including the best valuable player, the top scorer and the best goalkeeper.



Al Nahda blank Shabab Al Khalil in King Salman Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

Oman's Al Nahda club secured a valuable 2-0 victory against Palestine club Shabab Al Khalil during the first leg of the first preliminary round of the King Salman Cup for Arab Football Clubs at Al Buraimi Sports Complex stadium on Saturday.

Al Nahda scored two goals through their players Abu Bakr Camara and Omar al Maliki, which made their task less difficult in the return match.

In the first half, Al Nahda started with an organised attack and managed to open the scoring through Abu Bakr Kamara in the 13th minute, after exchanging the ball with his teammate and hitting it powerfully from inside the box to the right of goalkeeper

Mohammad Shabeer.

Al Nahda dominated the course of the game, especially in the midfield, while Shabab Al Khalil relied on short passes which were mostly intercepted by Al Nahda players. Despite their efforts, Shabab Al Kahlil failed to go past Al Nahda defence and goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini. The first half ended with the Al Nahda leading 1-0.

The second half started with a clear desire from Al Nahda to control the course of the game, take possession of the ball, and score a second goal. Antres, Al Maliki, and Kamara launched attacks on the Shabab Al Khalil goal, with Antres coming close to scoring, but luck was not on his side.

AMER HEADER
Meanwhile, Shabab Al Khalil attempted to breach Al Nahda's

goal, but their players were unable to capitalise on their opportunities. Al Nahda sensed the danger and responded with another attack, ultimately earning a corner kick. Amer al Maliki received the ball from the corner and headed it straight into the goal, securing Al Nahda's second goal of the game in the 76th minute.

Despite the repeated attempts and substitutions made by Jordanian Raed Assaf, the coach of Shabab Al Khalili, he was unable to bridge the difference. The match ended with Al Nahda winning 2-0 against Shabab Al Khalil.

With this victory, Al Nahda brightened their chances of qualifying for the second round of the King Salman Cup for Clubs. The return match will take place

on April 11 at the Al Hussein Stadium in Al Khalil, West Bank, Palestine.

Shabab Al Khalil need to win by three goals to snatch the qualification card for the third preliminary round.

The winner of the Al Nahda and Shabab Al Khalili match will face the winner of the Egypt's El Gaish and Libya's Al Ahly in the third preliminary round match in Tripoli. The winner of the third preliminary round will qualify for the group stage, which will be held in Saudi Arabia.

The winner of the third preliminary round matches will join the second group to play alongside Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal, Morocco's Wydad and Qatar's Al Sadd teams. The presence of these top clubs make the group strongest among the championship groups.

Verstappen, Perez critical of red flags in Australia

MELBOURNE: World champion Max Verstappen and team mate Sergio Perez were among drivers to criticise the officiating at a chaotic Formula One Australian Grand Prix on Sunday, which finished under a safety car after the race was restarted three times.

Verstappen won his second race of the season at Albert Park, ahead of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton with Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso third, following a series of incidents that led to only 12 cars finishing.

Red Bull's Verstappen told reporters the decision to restart the race from the grid a second time, for what should have been a two-lap sprint to the finish, led to multiple collisions that took four cars out of the race.

"I think if we would have had a safety car and then just have a normal rolling start, we wouldn't have had all these shunts, and then you have a normal finish," he said.

"They (race officials) created the problems themselves at the end of the day."

Team mate Perez, who battled from

last on the start line to finish seventh, said restarting the race from the grid rather than under a safety car was incentive for drivers lower down the field to gamble in the opening corners, putting other drivers in jeopardy.

"It's people taking massive risk and it was quite difficult for me," he said.

F1 has boomed in popularity after a thrilling 2021 season was decided by a controversial officiating decision on the final lap of the last race.

But the increased interest from casual fans - lured in part by Netflix documentary "Drive to Survive" - has led critics to argue authorities are seeking to manufacture drama in the closing stages of races. "The whole point of red flagging, it feels like it was just to put on a show," McLaren's Lando Norris, who finished sixth, told reporters.

"So we've gone all the way to Australia, put in so much hard work, drive 56 laps perfectly. And because they try and put on a show, (you can) just get unlucky and everything can get taken away from you all of a sudden. "I just think it needs a small rethink. — Reuters

FORMULA 1			F1 23	
3. Australian Grand Prix			April 2	
Melbourne - Albert Park Circuit				
1	Max Verstappen (NED)	2:32:38.371	Driver standings	
	Red Bull		Verstappen (NED)	69
2	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	at 0.179	Pérez (MEX)	54
	Mercedes		Alonso (ESP)	45
3	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	at 0.769	Hamilton (GBR)	38
	Aston Martin		Sainz Jr (ESP)	20
4	Lance Stroll (CAN)	at 3.082	Teams	
	Aston Martin		Red Bull	123
5	Sergio Pérez (MEX)	at 3.320	Aston Martin	65
	Red Bull		Mercedes	56
AFP		Source: Formula1.com		



Buttler, Sanju help Rajasthan thrash Hyderabad by 72 runs



Jos Buttler



Sanju Samson

HYDERABAD, India: England's Jos Buttler hit a scintillating half-century to help the Rajasthan Royals hammer Sunrisers Hyderabad by 72 runs in their opening match of the Indian Premier League on Sunday.

Buttler's 22-ball 54 led the team's batting onslaught as they posted 203-5, and then their bowlers restricted hosts Hyderabad to 131-8 in the first match of the day.

Leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal returned figures of 4-17 after pace

spearhead Trent Boult struck twice in his first over.

Buttler and his opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal — who also made 54 — had provided an explosive start to last year's runners-up and the inaugural IPL champions.

Skipper Sanju Samson also joined in the charge with his powerful 55 before he departed in the 19th over and Shimron Hetmyer finished off the innings with his unbeaten 22.

Buttler was the leading batsman

in the last IPL season with 863 runs including four centuries, and he then led England to a T20 World Cup triumph in 2022.

He reached his fifty in 20 balls before being bowled by Afghanistan left-arm pace bowler Fazalhaq Farooqui inside the sixth over. Samson soon took charge then with Jaiswal for company as they piled on the runs.

Hyderabad were never in the chase after Boult bowled Abhishek Sharma for a duck and then Jason

Holder clung on to a superb catch at slip to send back Rahul Tripathi.

Wickets kept tumbling, including Harry Brook (13) and Glenn Phillips (8). Getting in big-hitter Abdul Samad as an "impact player" only reduced the margin of loss as he hit an unbeaten 32.

The impact player, who can only be an Indian unless the team has fewer than four overseas players in their XI, is chosen from one of five substitutes listed with the team.

— AFP

Ayan Muscat, MCC in semis of Danube cricket tourney

MUSCAT: Ayan Muscat and MCC have qualified to the semifinals of Danube Ramadhan Tennex Ball Cricket Tournament 2023, organised by Al Hail Cricket Team.

The Chief Development officer of Al Hail Cricket Club, Rafeeq al Balushi, said the semifinal matches will be played on Tuesday. "We are getting full support from the participating teams. A total of 16 teams divided in four groups are in the tournament with toppers of each group qualify into the semifinal."

In weekends, the tournament saw some exciting games. On day eight of tournament, Ayan Muscat won the toss and elected to bat first and managed to score 68 in 10 overs for nine wickets. In reply, Direction Bravos scored 58 runs in 10 overs for 8 wickets and lost the match by 10 runs. Bilal from Ayan Muscat was declared the man of the match.

The second match was played between Abeer Warriors and Qureshi XI. Abeer captain Hussain won the toss and elected to bat first and they scored 83 all out in 9.4 overs. Saud scored 20 runs in 12 balls, Ovais Altaf scored 17 runs. In reply, Qureshi XI scored 52 runs for 6 wickets in 10 overs. The Abeer Warriors won the match by 31 runs and got points in Group C. Ovais was declared man of the match.



Wood makes English record on IPL return



LUCKNOW: Fast bowler Mark Wood proved his lack of experience in the Indian Premier League would not be an issue after he claimed the best figures for an Englishman in the tournament on Saturday, guiding Lucknow Super Giants to a win over Delhi Capitals.

Playing in only his second IPL match, Wood picked up 5-14 and was named Player of the Match as Lucknow sealed a 50-run win in their opening match of the season. Lucknow set Delhi a target of 194 after Kyle Mayers hit 73 on his IPL debut. Even though Delhi skipper David Warner struck a half-century, the visitors fell short in their chase.

Wood, who had played once for the Chennai Super Kings in 2018, said he was eager to make an impact on his return to the Twenty20 tournament.

"Last time I was here, I played

for CSK and it didn't go quite well. So I wanted to try to make an impact this time and I'm delighted that it's gone well," Wood said in the post-match presentation. "I'm just pleased that I managed to get some rhythm and take some wickets... The planning with (bowling coach) Morne Morkel helped me. He has been really good with me, just try to do similar with what I do for England.

"I was trying to keep my strides short because it (the pitch) was so wet. I feel at ease doing that charging in and letting it fly."

Captain KL Rahul was full of praise for Wood. "When someone is going well and has those kinds of performances, it has a huge impact on the team and on the result of the game. It was Woody's day, he made it count, but overall the group put pressure on the batters," Rahul said. — Reuters



It's the fourth day already and IPL has surely not disappointed so far. As a viewer, we have got everything that could be asked for from massive sixes to crazy catches, from an all out batting attack to an innings of brilliance from the bowler, from the seniors showing the experience to the youngsters showing their spark and talent. We have also witnessed the weather playing the spoilsport as well, although it was only after 90 per cent of the match was completed. But the things that I have enjoyed the most is the traditional combination of bouncer-yorker from a pacer and some amazing creativity from the batsman, which both have been in abundance.

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS (CSK) vs LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS (LSG)

- **TEAM INFO:** It's time for both the supers to clash with each other and the social media can't get enough of it. Chennai Super Kings, that have had an unfortunate start against the Gujarat Titans, would be looking to remove their wrath and frustration on the Lucknow Super Giants. Although, I don't really believe that this is going to be anywhere close to an easy opportunity for Dhoni's men, considering the form of Lucknow that they showed against Delhi Capitals in a one-sided affair.



Although, if you talk about the past, both the teams have met on one occasion where LSG had the better of CSK by just 1 run, while CSK was chasing 211 set by LSG. Although that match was at Brabourne stadium, while this time on, LSG will be travelling to CSK's fortress – MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai, where CSK's record in unbelievable.

- **Head-to-Head: Played — 1; Won by CSK - 0; Won by LSG - 1**
- **LSG Possible Impact player** – K Gowtham was used last time, which looked like a good option and LSG would like to stick with him. Other options are Prerak Mankad, Manan Vohra, Amit Mishra, Yash Thakur or Karan Sharma possibly.
- **CSK Possible Impact player** – Tushar Deshpande was used against Gujarat Titans. CSK has plenty of other options and they are all defined as per situational requirement.

- **Pitch Report** – The pitch at Chepauk is going to favour the spinners. The captain winning the toss should opt to bowl first and anything above 160 will be a good total on this wicket.
- **Fan Comments**
"CSK is playing at home and looks quite strong, mainly because Dhoni has some magical spinners and then Gaikwad is in red hot form. Don't think LSG stands a chance against Chennai's 'whistle podu'." – Dr Makarand Jewrikar, 38, Doctor, Indian.
"No doubts on cheetah's agility, hawk's eye power and Dhoni's captaincy." — Mohammed Altamash, 37, Sports Development Manager, Indian.
This is our very own backyard's Chennai 'whistle podu'. – Haja Hameed, Senior Estimation Engineer, 32, Indian. "Lucknow is a brilliant team and I support it wholeheartedly, but such is the domination of CSK, that even the mighty LSG feels like an

underdog." – Ahmed Khan, 55, Country Manager, Indian.

Match Prediction

Lucknow is oozing with confidence and that might just overshadow the poor form of captain KL Rahul. They posted a mighty total against Delhi on the back of Kyle Mayers, but on this doggy wicket of Chennai, there is a need of a sensible innings from KL Rahul. At the same time, it would be interesting to see, how Mayers, Stoinis, Pooran and other free flowing strikers of LSG plays the quality spin of CSK. It goes without saying that, the presence of MSD behind the stumps (with his genius mind and fast hands) is always going to put extra pressure on most batters. CSK has a lot of left-right combination and most players are brilliant players of spin and CSK has surely built the team, focusing on the crucial 7 home games, where spin will play a big role. So its going to CSK on this one!

Kvitova defeats Rybakina for 30th WTA title

MIAMI GARDENS, UNITED STATES: Petra Kvitova drew on all her experience to claim her 30th WTA singles title with a straight sets Miami Open victory over Elena Rybakina on Saturday.

Czech Kvitova, appearing in her first Miami final at the age of 33, triumphed 7-6 (16/14) 6-2 at Hard Rock Stadium, a victory which will return the two-time Wimbledon champion to the top 10 in the world rankings.

Rybakina came into the final on a career-best 13-match winning streak after winning the title at Indian Wells and was looking for the rare “Sunshine Double” of both WTA 1000 events.

It was a tight, serve-dominated battle until Kvitova broke to go 5-4 up but Rybakina, who represents Kazakhstan, immediately broke back. That set up a tie-break and having a 7-0 perfect record in those contests this season, reigning Wimbledon champion Rybakina would have been confident of her chances but Kvitova’s serve was strong and her determination stronger still.

The tie-break was a thrilling 22-minute, 28-second, 30-point shoot-out in which Kvitova saved five set points to emerge triumphant when Rybakina hit a return into the net.

Kvitova, a left-handed player, took that momentum into the second set, breaking early to go 2-0 up and from then on she never looked like letting her opponent, 11 years her junior, back into the contest.

Rybakina couldn’t convert a

break point in the next game and then she herself was broken again when serving to stay in the match at 5-2 down.

Kvitova, who has now won 30 of 41 career finals, said the tie-break, which saw each player have five set points, had turned the contest in her direction.

“That was deciding the whole match for sure. I think it was the longest one I ever played in my life. Nothing is easy hanging out with Elena,” she said.

“(She hit) so many aces at the beginning of the tie-break, I was like oh my God, I couldn’t even play, so it was a little difficult,” added Kvitova, who now has nine WTA 1000 titles.

Rybakina is part of a talented new generation on the WTA Tour, along with world number one Iga Swiatek of Poland and Belarusian Aryna Sabalenka, but Kvitova said she had been able to draw on her greater experience.

“I think it has played a good role in my mind. I have played so many finals. I know I can play well in a final, no matter who I am facing. So mentally that was important for me to know that,” she said.

YOUNG ONES

“Of course this means a lot, that at my age I can still win big tournaments, the young ones are coming up all the time, it’s tough to face them all the time, it’s very tiring,” added the Czech.

Kvitova won 78 per cent of her service points (52 of 67) and finished with 29 winners to 14 unforced errors. — AFP



Oman finish fourth in ACC U16 West Zone Cup

MUSCAT: Oman boys concluded their campaign in the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) Men’s Under-16 West Zone Cup on a winning note to finish fourth in the six-nation event at the Vision Cricket Centre Grounds in Sharjah, UAE, recently.

Skipper Jeet Shah’s brilliant 75 was the highlight of Oman’s 106-run win over Saudi Arabia, only their second success in the tournament, which began on March 24.

Hosted by the Bahrain Cricket Association and played in Sharjah, the West Zone Cup top honours went to the UAE, who stayed perfect throughout to collect the maximum 10 points with five out of five victories. Bahrain finished second with six points but with better net run-rate (+1.349) as compared to Kuwait, who also collected six points (+1.161) with three victories.

Oman were fourth with four points (-0.547) edging Qatar on net run-rate (-2.903), who too had four points with two wins. Saudi Arabia failed to open their account.

On the final day, UAE defeated Bahrain by eight wickets to conclude their dominating victorious campaign. In the earlier matches, UAE had defeated Saudi Arabia by 10 wickets, outplayed Kuwait by 140 runs, routed Qatar by 254 runs, and drubbed Oman by 106 runs.



For Syed Aamir Kaleem-coached Oman squad, there were many positives to take from the tournament.

On his return from Sharjah, Aamir Kaleem said: “One of the many positives was the boys’ desire and determination to fight till the last ball. Overall, the performance in the tournament was not to our satisfaction. The conditions were tough to deal with for our players. Our batters struggled to hit the strides during crucial stages of the matches, which cost us dear.”

The coach added: “However, I am happy with the fact that the boys stayed positive throughout the tournament despite the defeats. Such match situations and losses will serve as lessons for these young boys.”

The former Oman international said, “The boys have lot of areas to improve upon. We will strive to keep the boys in good shape mentally and physically as they prepare for bigger tournaments ahead. We have returned with lot of experience and exposure. There are a lot of positives from the tournament and we will work upon them with this pool of talent. They have the potential to better themselves.”

Oman’s only other victory showcased the potential of the players to keep their nerves in tense match situation as they recorded a thrilling two-wicket victory over Bahrain with just three balls to spare.

Kriv Patel and Kavish Shah stood out in Oman’s thrilling

triumph over Bahrain. Against the Saudis, there were valuable contributions from Rishab Gupta (24), Girihran Kuttiraja (28), and Rahil Habibulla (27) to compliment Jeet’s 75 as Oman scored 218/6 in the stipulated 35 overs.

The bowlers then did an exceptional job to bowl out the tournament minnows Saudis for 112 in 28.4 overs with superb spells from Kriv Patel (3/16) and Aryan Joshi (3/23). Prathiesh Ramesh picked up two wickets.

CLOSE WIN OVER BAHRAIN Earlier, during the victory over Bahrain, Prathiesh picked two for 30 as Bahrain was restricted to 179/6.

Chasing the target, Oman lost



Jeet Shah – man of the match against Saudi and highest run getter for Oman.

two early wickets. But a fighting 42-run stand in 47 balls between Girihran Kuttiraja and Kriv Patel (36) put the team’s chase on track. Kriv also shared a crucial 68-run partnership with Kavish Shah in 91 balls.

However, Oman lost three quick wickets with Kavish run out for 33. Varshieth Dinesh and Aneek Chakraborty then shared a 24-run partnership in 25 balls before Aneek departed with 15 still needed. An invaluable unbeaten 20 by Varshieth and Prathiesh took the team home with three balls to spare.

Oman’s campaign in Sharjah began with a forgettable outing as UAE drubbed them by 109 runs. UAE scored 230/9 with Oman’s Devansh Loya the pick of

bowlers with 3/43 while Jeet and Prathiesh took two wickets each. Oman were bundled out for 121 in 31.5 overs with Kriv the top-scorer with 31.

Qatar routed Oman by 69 runs in a low-scoring affair. Qatar was restricted to 140/9 with Devansh, Prathiesh and Aryan picking two wickets each. However, Oman batting flopped as they were shot out for 71 in 17.5 overs with Jeet making the highest 23.

Oman suffered a 27-run defeat at the hands of Kuwait for their third loss. Kuwait put up 209/8 in 35 overs. Devansh took 3/29 while Prathiesh bagged 2/29. In reply, Oman was bowled out for 182 in 33.1 overs. Devansh top-scored with 41 while Varshieth made 39.



Loan prepayment buoys Oman’s fiscal position: Expert



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

Effective management of public debt is crucial in reducing the cost of servicing it and the resulting interest on the borrowing portfolio, which could save as much as RO 385 million this year, according to local economic expert Mohammed Ali.

The economist made the comments in response to last week’s announcement by the Ministry of Finance that the Omani government had prepaid the equivalent of \$1.5 billion in debt by the end of Q1 2023, effecting paring Oman’s accumulating public debt with consequent savings for the treasury.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Mohammed Ali highlighted the importance of reducing the interest rate on some loans, which is determined by credit rating agencies and comprises

several elements such as actual rate, expected inflation premium, default risk premium, liquidity premium, and maturity risk premium.

To achieve good management of public debt, economic reforms are required to improve spending quality and increase revenues. He pointed out that such reforms have already been implemented, and surpluses can be utilised to address high-cost loans, which can save significant amounts in interest payments.

“If RO 1.1 billion is not included in the budget table for expenses, the public debt will decrease by less than RO 15 billion, as there is another item allocated for loans this year that must be repaid. Otherwise, the RO 1.1 billion was planned.

Moreover, there is another item allocated for early repayment of approximately RO 400 million,” he noted.

According to Mohammed Ali, these results are a product of economic reforms that provide sustainable solutions, and with the increase in oil prices, positive results can be achieved more swiftly.

Repaying the surplus without resorting to borrowing again is one of the best and safest investments at the moment, with a return on the management of RO 385 million, maximising the benefits of surpluses, he said, pointing out that addressing the public debt file and achieving a secure level holds promising prospects for Oman’s economy.

Among the positive outcomes of the government’s debt prepayment actions are the stimulation of the Muscat stock market and a likely investment boost across the country.

In addition, credit ratings are expected to improve, which will fuel investment growth

and bolster the expansion of the economy, he pointed out.
“The financial savings that were previously designated for public debt will significantly reduce costs.

This will enable redirecting funds towards other crucial areas, such as social protection and other significant projects.
Furthermore, such measures

will contribute to curbing expenses, lowering the breakeven price and securing a more resilient budget to deal with declining oil prices,” the economist added.



Tender

Oman chamber of commerce and industry would like to announce the following public tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Tender Fees (irrevocable)	Specialized companies	Deadline for Obtaining Documents	Deadline for Tender submission
1/2023	Designs, Printing and Marketing for Oman Chamber Magazine	25 /- R.O	Companies Specialized in Content Creation, Design, Printing and Marketing	16 April 2023	Before 12 pm 30 April 2023

Companies specialized may obtain the tender documents from the Administration Department at the Second Floor of the chamber’s Headquarters in Ruwi, during the official working hours against the payment of tender fees.

Tender Terms:
Provide valid CR,OCCI membership , and taxation certificate.

The bids should be submitted in red waxed envelopes addressed to - Head of main tendering Committee, OCCI, written outside the Number and title of the Tender. No indication about the bidder is allowed on the envelope.

Offers should be deposited in the tender box kept at the Administration Department in the Second floor of OCCI Head office.

OCCI is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bids. It has the right to accept or reject any bids without showing reasons.

Interested companies should submit the Tenders before 12 pm on 30 April 2023
For any inquiries please call : 24763881
Email : Shahla.zadjali@omanchamber.om

www.omanchamber.om | +968 90997733 | 80073737 | chamber_oman

MSX emerges as second-best performing market in the GCC

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 index was the second-best performing market in the GCC during March-2023 witnessing a monthly growth of 2.3% to close the month at 4,863.09 points. In terms of sector performance, two out of the three sector indices recorded monthly gains during March-2023, according to Kamco Invest.

The industrial sector index recorded the biggest monthly growth of 2.2% during March-2023, closing the month at 6,070.8 points. The growth was primarily driven by small number of top performing companies including SMN Power Holding which witnessed share price growth of 31.9% during March-2023 and Anwar Ceramic Tiles which witnessed 13.3% gains.

The financial sector index followed witnessing a monthly rise of 1.8% to close the month at 7,778.2 points while the services sector index registered a marginal monthly drop of 0.4% during March-2023.

Stand out share price performance of companies like Al Batinah Development & Investment Holding Co in the Financial Sector Index, which recorded a share price growth of 76.2% during the month has been the primary driver of the sector indices monthly gain.





Tender Announcement

Introduction
Duqm Power Company SPC (herein the “Employer” or “DPC”) inviting proposals from qualified and experienced Tenderers to undertake the provision of **General Maintenance Services to DIPWP (an integrated CCGT Power and SWRO plant) at Duqm**. The Company invites Bidders to submit their proposals as described below.

Tender Number	Tender Title	Tender Description	Tender Fees	Clarification Closing Date	Bid Submission Date
DPC-DPW-00-000-LE-TND-0041	General Maintenance Services to DIPWP at Duqm	Provision of General Maintenance Services to DIPWP at Duqm. The Tenderer shall be experienced in providing all or part of the following. 1. Provision of Manpower 2. Maintenance of HVAC 3. Maintenance of Pumps and Motors 4. Maintenance of Air Compressors 5. Maintenance of Valves. 6. Repair and replacement of GRP Pipes 7. Maintenance of Instrument and calibration 8. Welding services 9. Provision of Scaffolding and services.	300 OMR	02.05.2023	04.05.2023

Request for proposal
The RFP will be made available in electronic form only from **9:00 AM, 03rd April 2023 Oman time until 20th April 2023 12 pm.**

Contractor Minimum Qualifications
Contractor must hold valid registration with Government Entities for works of this nature and have necessary experience and resources in Oman with track record in Power, Utility or Oil and Gas sector for provision of General Maintenance Services. Ie. Mechanical equipment such as HVAC, Pumps, Boilers, Motors, Valves, Air Compressors, GRP Pipes, Instruments, plus Welding and Scaffolding. We particularly encourage contractors currently operating in Duqm area (Al Wusta Region).

Interested Bidders shall contact DPC via email to tender@marafiq.om with the subject heading **“General Maintenance Services to DIPWP at Duqm.”** to receive further instructions related to payment of tender fee and collection of RFP Package.

P.O. Box 80 P.C. 102
Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
www.marafiq.om



Fundamentals of fixed income investing highlighted at MCICAI webinar



MUSCAT: The Muscat Chapter of Chartered Accountants of India (MCICAI) held a webinar on the theme, 'Stable income in an unstable world: Fixed income fundamentals and opportunities', on Saturday.

It was presented by Sanjay Guglani (pictured), founder and Chief Investment Officer of Singapore-based Silverdale Capital Pte Ltd.

Guglani said: "In today's hyper-connected world, news and reactions travel faster than reasoning and fundamentals.

It took less than 72 hours for Silicon Valley Bank with \$211 billion of assets to collapse. It took less than 48 hours for Signature Bank with \$110 billion of assets to crumble.

It took less than 16 hours for 167-year-old Credit Suisse Bank with over \$1.5 trillion of assets to fall down. UBS took over Credit Suisse practically for free, wiping out \$35 billion of equity and \$15 billion of AT-1 bonds. And it took less than 8 hours to recoup over \$25 billion of CS bonds market-to-market (MTM) losses.

This proved once again: volatility is friend of an investor, an enemy of a speculator, and importantly that fortune favours the prepared."

MCICAI invited Guglani to explain how to "lock-in" the prevalent higher interest rates while navigating treacherous volatility of the markets and share his views on interest rate outlook, and learnings from collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and Credit Suisse.

Sajeev Surendran, chairman of Muscat Chapter of ICAI, said: "It is a privilege to bring to our fellow-members and friends cutting-edge insight from Sanjay Guglani, who has once again proved unique insights chartered accountants bring to the investment world. I would like to thank all my colleagues and our sponsors for their untiring support to create such wonderful events.

Oman's OQ mandated to help decarbonise oil firms and industrial clusters

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 2

OQ Group, the global integrated energy group of the Sultanate of Oman, says it has been tapped by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals to assist oil and gas companies as well as industrial zones — among the biggest domestic contributions of greenhouse gas emissions — with their decarbonisation goals by making available the supply of clean energy resources.

Wholly state-owned OQ Group — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — said the commitment is part of a large portfolio of initiatives planned by the Group in support of its own decarbonisation strategy, as well as the nation's Net Zero journey.

"OQ has been working closely with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) to charter a clear pathway for decarbonisation and carbon neutrality in the country, with MoEM mandating OQ to help oil and gas concessions and industrial clusters in the country to decarbonise through supply of clean energy," the Group stated in its newly published 2022



Annual Report.

A decarbonisation plan approved by the Board last December sets out Net Zero roadmaps for OQ's sizable Oman-based operational assets.

"These roadmaps identify opportunities across four clear pathways; energy excellence, clean energy, low carbon molecules and negative emissions to decarbonise OQ's existing assets

and recommended actions to shift OQ's portfolio towards greener energy," it said.

Envisioned in the strategy is a plan for the development of opportunities to support the decarbonisation of OQ's upstream and downstream assets by harnessing renewable energy resources to supplant their current dependence on fossil fuel-based energy.

To this end, OQ also plans investments in solar projects aimed at partially decarbonising the operation of its multi-billion dollar Liwa Plastics complex in Sohar Port and its oilfield activities within its wholly-operated Block 60 in central Oman. Both initiatives are currently "under study", according to the Group.

Last year, OQ stated that a Final Investment Decision (FID) linked

to the development of a 100 MW solar power project, planned at Liwa, is anticipated in 2023. At its Bisat operations in Block 60, OQ has decided on a combination of conventional power from the electricity grid supplemented by solar PV generation.

The PV component will be developed by OQ's Alternative Unit through an asset lease agreement to OQ US, it had further noted. However, its biggest contribution is anticipated in the emerging green hydrogen space with the Group set to play a dominant role in the development of a hydrogen-centric economy in Oman by 2040.

"OQ has several large-scale green hydrogen projects already announced with the potential to generate more than 30 GW of renewable energy in Oman," the Group said.

"We are driving over \$40 billion worth of investments with partners into these projects and expect them to pass the final investment decision (FID) stage over the next decade. These projects include Hyport Duqm, H2Oman, Salalah2, and Green Energy Oman," it added.

Yahya al Jabri, Noor Sweid join Renaissance Board



Yahya bin Said bin Abdullah al Jabri



Noor Sweid

MUSCAT: Yahya bin Said bin Abdullah al Jabri, Chairman and Board member of Alizz Islamic Bank and Noor Sweid, Founder and Managing Partner of UAE-based Global Ventures, have joined Renaissance's Board of Directors. They were elected to the Renaissance Board at its AGM held on March 27, 2023.

Al Jabri, also a member of Alpen Capital's Advisory Board, brings his vast experience in global corporate investment and banking to Renaissance. He was earlier chairman of Special Economic Zone Authority of Duqm (SEZAD) and executive president and chairman of Capital Market Authority (CMA).

Noor is the first woman to operate, scale and IPO a company in MENA, listing it on NASDAQ Dubai and the London Stock Exchange for \$1.1 billion. She has been named among 'Top 50 Women in Tech' by Forbes and the 'Most Influential Arabs' by Arabian Business.

Noor is also Board Director of Clue, Europe's largest femtech company, the Founding Chairwoman of the Middle East Venture Capital Association, a Director of the Global Private Capital Association and a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network and the World Economic Forum's Young Global Leaders.

OPAZ signs MoU to provide rescue and ambulance services in Duqm

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance.

The MoU stipulates areas of cooperation in providing first responder emergency services, rescue and ambulance services in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

The MoU was signed by Eng Ahmed bin Hassan al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones and Faisal al Tanaak, Chairman International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance.

The Memorandum stipulates facilitating the procedures for establishing a company specialised in managing emergency cases in the Special Economic Zone at



Duqm and shall start operation to provide emergency services. It also includes that the Company provides ambulance services, firefighting systems, marine search and rescue services, Aeromedical helicopter and jet-based rescue and emergency, including third-level injury coverage, and transportation service to an emergency hospital, according to international standards.

The MoU, further, included establishing a training academy to

train and certify Omani citizens in emergency-related aspects.

It's worth mentioning that the International Rescue Company for Air Ambulance and Commercial Land and Sea Ambulance is a consortium which includes a number of specialised and professional companies in the fields of rescue, ambulance, firefighting, land, sea and air search and rescue (SAR), emergency medical services (EMS) and accredited training services.

Al Omaniya Financial Services declares 12.25% dividend

MUSCAT: The annual general meeting of Al Omaniya Financial Services SAOG was held on March 29, 2023 where the meeting was presided by Chairman of the Board of Directors, Khalid bin Said al Wahaibi.

Khalid bin Said al Wahaibi stated that the shareholders have given their approval for the audited financial statements of the company as well as for the 12.25% dividend comprising of 7.25% cash dividend and 5% unsecured compulsorily convertible bonus stock bonds.

The Board of Directors appreciated the measures taken by the Central Bank of Oman and the Capital Market Authority with a



view to strengthening the financial sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Aftab Patel, Chief Executive Officer, added that the company's loan book stands at RO 132 million at the year end of 2022.

The total revenues of the company stood at RO 14.754 million. The pre-tax profit stands at RO 3.236 million and the net profit is RO 2.750 million. The earnings per share is RO 0.009 and net worth of the company stands at RO 69.9 million. The book value of the share is RO 0.219.

He further added the company has a well diversified portfolio of assets with the lowest NPA ratio of 2.99% in the industry (as per

IFRS9). The cumulative ECL provisions towards installment finance receivable including special reserve for non-performing assets stand at RO 18,420 K which covers 464% of the non-performing assets.

Patel stated that the company has been at the forefront of issuing innovative financial instruments and that the company has pioneered the issue of bonus stock convertible bonds as dividends over several years.

The company has been paying consistent dividend and has the unique distinction of paying dividend every single year since inception. The cumulative total dividend paid so far is 478.58%.

How post-2008 bank rules led to a 2023 problem

LIAM PROUD

Britain eliminated wolves well over a century ago, hunting them out of existence because they preyed on sheep, and sometimes humans.

One consequence is that deer, with no apex predator, exploded in number, overgrazing land and killing off biodiversity.

There are now calls to bring wolves back. There is a lesson here for the financial system. Curb one pest, and you might encourage another. Here's how that story applies to the collapse of Credit Suisse and Silicon Valley Bank.

Fifteen years ago, it became clear that lenders' habit of funding themselves generously with fickle, short-term borrowing from financial investors had become a problem.

Doing so had helped to sink firms like Lehman Brothers and Northern Rock. So regulators revised their toolkit, encouraging banks to lean on supposedly sticky sources of cash, like the money households and companies keep in their accounts.

Tinkering with the ecosystem promoted a period of calm, but has created unintended consequences. Corporate and wealthy depositors turn out to be flighty after all.

Silicon Valley Bank's technology-heavy customers attempted to withdraw \$42 billion in a day.

Credit Suisse's deposits fell by more than one-third in the last three months of 2022 as anxious wealth-management clients fled. Lenders are no longer struggling

with a wholesale funding exodus, like in 2008.

But they've arguably replaced that problem with an overdependence on corporate and private banking customers, who can also take their money out in minutes.

Regulators will once again rethink their toolkit, but previous pest-control techniques won't work this time. After the last crisis, the Basel regulations told banks to keep enough liquid assets to cover all their wholesale funding, as if every penny might be called on at once.

For corporate deposits that exceed national deposit guarantees, they typically only need to keep 40 per cent in liquid assets, and 10 per cent if the customer is "high net worth."

The logical thing would be to raise those coverage ratios to 100 per cent, or something like it. That's the equivalent of culling the deer that have run amok across Britain's countryside.

But if regulators started asking banks to back those deposits 100 per cent with liquid instruments instead of loans, the amount of cash they'd have to hold would leave them little room to lend into the economy.

There's no easy answer, and the problem is urgent. Online banking has made it easier for customers to pull cash, and social media amplifies financial panic.

It's clear that deposits can go quickly from friend to foe. But regulators and politicians ought to remember that eliminating predators brings new problems.

Better to live alongside them, understand how they behave, and be prepared to lose the odd sheep. — Reuters

KNOWING YOUR MARKET

How to conduct effective market and competitor analysis



KAMLA SAID AL RAHBIYAH
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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant



Market and competitor analysis is a crucial aspect of any business strategy, and it is essential to conduct it effectively in order to make informed decisions.

In the digital age, the process of analysing your market and competitors has become easier, faster, and more comprehensive than ever before.

In this article, we will explore the key steps and best practices for conducting market and competitor analysis in the modern era.

Step 1: Define your market

The first step in conducting market and competitor analysis is to define your market. This includes identifying the target market you serve, the size and growth potential of your market, and the key trends that are affecting your industry. You should also research your target market's buying habits, preferences, and pain points to gain a better understanding of their needs and wants.

Step 2: Research your competitors

Next, you should research your competitors and understand their strengths, weaknesses, and differentiators.

This information will help you identify opportunities for differentiation and create a unique value proposition for your product. It's also important to analyse your competitors' marketing strategies, pricing models, and distribution channels to see how they are positioning themselves in the market.

Step 3: Analyse market trends

Another critical aspect of market and competitor analysis is understanding the key trends that are affecting your industry. This includes tracking the latest technological advancements, regulatory changes, and consumer behaviour patterns.

By staying informed of these trends, you can identify new

opportunities and threats and make adjustments to your strategy accordingly.

Step 4: Use data and tools

The digital age has made it easier than ever to access and analyse market and competitor data. There are numerous tools and platforms available that can help you gather and analyse market and competitor data, such as Google Trends, SEMrush, and Alexa.

You should use these tools to gather data on your target market, competitors, and industry trends and use this information to inform your strategy.

Step 5: Communicate your findings

Finally, it's important to communicate your findings and insights from your market and competitor analysis to your team. This includes sharing data

and insights that can help inform product development, marketing, and sales strategies. By sharing this information, you can ensure that everyone is aligned and working towards the same goals.

In conclusion, market and competitor analysis is an ongoing process that requires continuous research and monitoring.

By following these steps and best practices, you can stay informed of the key trends and competitive landscape in your industry and make informed decisions that drive your business forward.

Are you ready to learn how to secure the future of your business and explore the world of funding for entrepreneurs and start-ups? Stay tuned for our next article, "Securing the Future: The Guide to Funding for Entrepreneurs and Start-Ups."

The coming doom loop



NOURIEL ROUBINI

The author, Professor Emeritus of Economics at New York University's Stern School of Business, is Chief Economist at Atlas Capital Team and the author of MegaThreats: Ten Dangerous Trends That Imperil Our Future, and How to Survive Them (Little, Brown and Company, 2022).

In January 2022, when yields on US ten-year Treasury bonds were still roughly 1% and those on German Bonds were -0.5%, I warned that inflation would be bad for both stocks and bonds.

Higher inflation would lead to higher bond yields, which in turn would hurt stocks as the discount factor for dividends rose. But, at the same time, higher yields on "safe" bonds would imply a fall in their price, too, owing to the inverse relationship

between yields and bond prices.

This basic principle – known as "duration risk" – seems to have been lost on many bankers, fixed-income investors, and bank regulators.

As rising inflation in 2022 led to higher bond yields, ten-year Treasuries lost more value (-20%) than the S&P 500 (-15%), and anyone with long-duration fixed-income assets denominated in dollars or euros was left holding the bag.

The consequences for these investors have been severe. By the end of 2022, US banks' unrealised losses on securities had reached \$620 billion, about 28% of their total capital (\$2.2 trillion).

Making matters worse, higher interest rates have reduced the market value of banks' other assets as well. If you make a ten-year bank loan when long-term interest rates are 1%, and those rates then rise to 3.5%, the true value of that loan (what someone else in the market would pay you for it) will fall.

Accounting for this implies that US banks' unrealised losses actually amount to \$1.75 trillion, or 80% of their capital.

The "unrealised" nature of these losses is merely an artefact of the current regulatory regime, which allows banks to value

securities and loans at their face value rather than at their true market value.

In fact, judging by the quality of their capital, most US banks are technically near insolvency, and hundreds are already fully insolvent.

To be sure, rising inflation reduces the true value of banks' liabilities (deposits) by increasing their "deposit franchise," an asset that is not on their balance sheet.

Since banks still pay near 0% on most of their deposits, even though overnight rates have risen to 4% or more, this asset's value rises when interest rates are higher. Indeed, some estimates suggest that rising interest rates have increased US banks' total deposit-franchise value by about \$1.75 trillion.

But this asset exists only if deposits remain with banks as rates rise, and we now know from Silicon Valley Bank and the experience of other US regional banks that such stickiness is far from assured.

If depositors flee, the deposit franchise evaporates, and the unrealised losses on securities become realised as banks sell them to meet withdrawal demands. Bankruptcy then becomes unavoidable.

Moreover, the "deposit-

franchise" argument assumes that most depositors are dumb and will keep their money in accounts bearing near 0% interest when they could be earning 4% or more in totally safe money-market funds that invest in short-term Treasuries.

But, again, we now know that depositors are not so complacent. The current, apparently persistent flight of uninsured – and even insured – deposits is probably being driven as much by depositors' pursuit of higher returns as by their concerns about the safety of their deposits.

In short, after being a non-factor for the last 15 years – ever since policy and short-term interest rates fell to near-zero following the 2008 global financial crisis – the interest-rate sensitivity of deposits has returned to the fore.

Banks assumed a highly foreseeable duration risk because they wanted to fatten their net-interest margins.

They seized on the fact that while capital charges on government-bond and mortgage-backed securities were zero, the losses on such assets did not have to be marked to market.

To add insult to injury, regulators did not even subject banks to stress tests to see how

they would fare in a scenario of sharply rising interest rates.

Now that this house of cards is collapsing, the credit crunch caused by today's banking stress will create a harder landing for the real economy, owing to the key role that regional banks play in financing small and medium-size enterprises and households. Central banks therefore face not just a dilemma but a trilemma.

Owing to recent negative aggregate supply shocks – such as the pandemic and the war in Ukraine – achieving price stability through interest-rate hikes was bound to raise the risk of a hard landing (a recession and higher unemployment).

But, as I have been arguing for over a year, this vexing trade-off also features the additional risk of severe financial instability.

Borrowers are facing rising rates – and thus much higher capital costs – on new borrowing and on existing liabilities that have matured and need to be rolled over. But the increase in long-term rates is also leading to massive losses for creditors holding long-duration assets.

As a result, the economy is falling into a "debt trap," with high public deficits and debt causing "fiscal dominance" over monetary policy, and high

private debts causing "financial dominance" over monetary and regulatory authorities.

As I have long warned, central banks confronting this trilemma will likely wimp out (by curtailing monetary-policy normalisation) to avoid a self-reinforcing economic and financial meltdown, and the stage will be set for a de-anchoring of inflation expectations over time.

Central banks must not delude themselves into thinking they can still achieve both price and financial stability through some kind of separation principle (raising rates to fight inflation while also using liquidity support to maintain financial stability). In a debt trap, higher policy rates will fuel systemic debt crises that liquidity support will be insufficient to resolve.

Central banks also must not assume that the coming credit crunch will kill inflation by reining in aggregate demand.

After all, the negative aggregate supply shocks are persisting, and labour markets remain too tight. A severe recession is the only thing that can temper price and wage inflation, but it will make the debt crisis more severe, and that in turn will feed back into an even deeper economic downturn.

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Observer

86 new Covid-19 cases in Oman, Muscat crosses 1,000 mark

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before the Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamood bin Ahmad al-Farisi, Chairman of the Supreme Court, Saad bin Shihri al-Musallhi, and Saad bin Shihri al-Musallhi, the Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, administered the oath of office to the new Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, Dr. Saad bin Hamood bin Ahmad al-Farisi, in a ceremony held at the Supreme Court on Thursday.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has issued a new order and urged citizens to follow social distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Ministry has also urged citizens to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel.

NEW RO SO BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 10th anniversary of the Omani Rial, the Ministry of Finance has issued a new 10 Omani Rial banknote from this month. The new banknote features a portrait of Sultan Qaboos bin Said Al Said.

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health has issued a new order and urged citizens to follow social distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Ministry has also urged citizens to stay at home and avoid unnecessary travel.



ramadhaan



A ray of hope for children with autism

The Sultanate of Oman has been proactively taking up the cause of children with autism through government initiatives and private participation as the current numbers and projections indicate some 27,300 cases between 2020 and 2030.... **P20**



QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY

Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return [i.e., Paradise].

Surah Aali 'Imran

HADITH A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Every correct action is sadaqah."

Sahih (Al-Albani)

HEALTH TIPS

Try not to rely on Iftar to meet all of your nutritional needs if you want a balanced diet. Before going to bed, you may eat some dried fruit and nuts, a whole-wheat cheese sandwich, or another light meal. Don't forget to consume your Suhoor, which can include a glass of low-fat milk, whole wheat bread and some legumes.



The Story of Yellow Cow

ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY SAYS: {And [recall] when Moses said to his people, "Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow." They said, "Do you take us in ridicule?" He said, "I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant." They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is." [Moses] said, "[Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded." They said, "Call upon your Lord to show us what is

her colour." He said, "He says, 'It is a yellow cow, bright in colour - pleasing to the observers.'" They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is. Indeed, [all] cows look alike to us. And indeed we, if Allah wills, will be guided." He said, "He says, 'It is a cow neither trained to plow the earth nor to irrigate the field, one free from fault with no spot upon her.'" " They said, "Now you have come with the truth." So they slaughtered her, but they could hardly do it. And [recall] when you slew a man and disputed over it, but Allah was to bring out that which you were concealing. So, We said, "Strike the slain man with part of it." Thus does Allah bring the dead to life, and He shows you His signs that you might reason.) Surah Al-Baqara

The story of the yellow cow took place during the prophethood of Musa.

The story begins with a righteous but poor man, whose sole prized possession, was a beautiful cow. The cow was unique, it was unblemished and yellow in colour. The man entrusted the cow to his son.

After his father died. He took good care of the cow. Meanwhile, a wealthy man was murdered. The discovery of his body created an uproar. They disputed the identity of the killer, and this murder created a lot of suspicion and distrust within the community.

It was crucial for keeping the peace within Bani Israel that the murderer was identified. However, there were no clues. The Israelites disputed and debated until one of them suggested that they consult Musa AS on how to solve this problem.

Then, they asked Musa AS to ask his Lord for a solution. Musa AS asked

Allah, and he was commanded by Allah to command his people to slaughter a cow. This announcement was met with incredulity by Bani Israel and they accused him of making fun of them. Musa sought the command from Allah and: "[Musa] said, '[Allah] says, 'it is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded.'" (Al Qur'an 2:68)

This condition was not difficult to comply with, as the description of the cow was still so general that it would have been easy to find a cow of matching description.

Yet, unwilling to obey, Bani Israel continued with their questioning and this time, asked for the colour of the cow. Therefore, Musa AS had to ask Allah again for his command. They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is." [Musa] said,

"[Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded." (Al Qur'an 2:69)

Bani Israel demanded a further description:

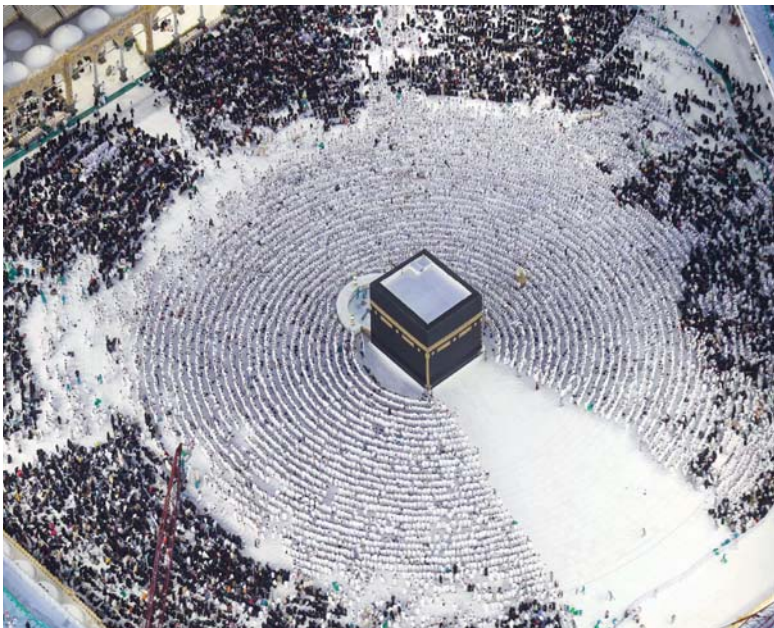
"Call upon your Lord for us to make plain to us what it is. Verily, to us all cows are alike. And surely, if Allah wills, we will be guided." (Al Qur'an 2:70)

The only cow fulfilling the detailed criteria set by Allah was that belonging to the son of pious parents.

Once the cow was slaughtered, Musa AS instructed them with the command of Allah to strike the dead man with a piece of meat from the cow. When they struck the murder victim, he was resurrected by Allah the Almighty. Musa asked him who his murderer was. The murder victim identified his murderer and then became lifeless again.

STORIES FROM THE QURAN

IN PHOTOS



Taken during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadhan, from the Mecca Royal Clock Tower of the Abraj Al Bait skyscraper complex, shows an aerial view of Muslim worshippers around the Kaaba, the holiest shrine in the Grand Mosque complex in Saudi Arabia's holy city of Mecca. — AFP



Women collect free bags of flour from a government distribution point in Lahore. At least 11 people were killed in a crowd crush in Pakistan's southern city of Karachi on March 31 as a Ramadhan alms donation sparked a stampede in the inflation-hit nation, police said. — AFP



Tailors make "dishdashas", Kuwait's traditional dress, at a shop in Kuwait City amidst high demand as social gatherings resume in the holy Muslim month of Ramadhan. — AFP



In east DR Congo, displaced Muslims celebrate Ramadhan

A BRILLIANT SETTING sun illuminates the sky above the mosque of Munigi, a small clapboard building in troubled eastern DR Congo serving Muslims displaced by the M23 conflict.

Worshippers are preparing to break their Ramadhan fast in the camp, on a lava-strewn field just 10 kilometres (six miles) from the front lines.

Their circumstances — cramped together in makeshift huts — are far bleaker than the dazzling sunset behind them.

Some 500 Muslims live in the Munigi displaced persons' camp, where access to food and water is severely limited.

"The first ones arrived nearly a year ago," said Ali Assani Mukamba, the local imam, speaking of Muslim displaced people.

Walking through the mass of tiny huts, built hastily on the field of volcanic rock, he explains that one of the biggest problems is a lack of fresh water.

"To wash before prayer, we're sometimes forced to rub ourselves with dust or mud," Mukamba said.

As night falls, Muslim worshippers pass around a platter of rice and beans, while a pale bulb comes on to light up their mosque.

KILLED BY THE M23

Abda Juma Buranga, one of the Muslim elders in the camp, said they are only able eat their iftar meal — which breaks the fast — because of charitable donations.

He fled his native village of Kibumba, less than 20 kilometres (12 miles) from the camp, when

M23 fighters launched an attack in November.

"I lost 25 members of my family, cousins, aunts, nephews," the 65-year-old said.

"They were all killed by the M23". The Muslim community in

late 2021 after years of dormancy, on claims that the government had ignored a pledge to integrate its fighters into the military.

The M23 has since captured swathes of territory in North Kivu, and is now threatening to cut off

fled their home under a hail of gunfire.

Now, she and her family sleep on the ground in a hut in Munigi, where she said there isn't enough room for everyone.

M23 fighters are still in position



Munigi makes up a tiny part of the huge number of people who have fled the M23 in North Kivu province.

This month, the International Organization for Migration said the crisis has displaced almost 900,000 people.

A Tutsi-led group, the M23 first came to international prominence when it briefly captured North Kivu's capital Goma in 2012 before being driven out.

The rebels took up arms again in

the roads leading to Goma, a trade hub of over one million people.

- 'WE'RE SUFFERING' -

"In 2012, I didn't flee when the M23 arrived," said Aisha Furaha, sitting on a rock in Munigi camp with her head bent low.

The M23 returned "with more brutality" during its second campaign, according to the 40-year-old woman.

The rebels had threatened to loot and kill, Furaha said, adding that she and her 10 children had

across North Kivu, and on hilltops near Goma.

According to reports by independent experts for the United Nations Security Council, Rwanda is backing and equipping the rebels. Kigali denies the claim.

Abda Juma, the Muslim elder in Munigi, said he wanted the international community to force Rwandan President Paul Kagame to withdraw the M23.

"We're suffering a lot," he said. — AFP

Hat tip: Italy's Borsalino fedoras are back putting on the style

HUMPHREY BOGART, Michael Jackson and Al Capone had one thing in common. All were fans of the Borsalino fedora hat, which is now enjoying a comeback.

Italy's legendary brand — long synonymous with dapper, rugged masculinity — has dusted itself down since it was driven into bankruptcy in 2017 by an unscrupulous boss.

Franco-Italian financier Philippe Camperio has put it back on its feet and revived sales while staying true to its age-old traditional techniques.

Time appears to stand still in its Piedmonte factory near Alessandria, southwest of Milan. Wooden machines dating from 1888 are used to make the felt from piles of rabbit fur, with only the softest strands selected.

They are then sent in a cloud of steam onto a rotating cone, gradually taking the form of a fedora, before being sprayed with hot water and singed with flames.

The process is unchanged since the brand was founded more than a century and a half ago.

It takes seven weeks to make a felt hat, with about 50 steps in the process. And most of those steps are done by hand.

"When our factory opened in 1888, the machinery was ahead of its time. Today, we are one of the last craftsmen in the world to make hats by hand," said Borsalino's purchasing manager Alessandro Mortarino.

Rabbit hair is used because it is "softer, more consistent and more malleable than wool," he said.



A NEW LEASE ON LIFE

Daniele Fascia, a craftsman who has worked at Borsalino for 15 years, is busy shaping a future fedora. He flattened its wide edges and delicately moulded the crown, using quick gestures with surgical precision. "The machines help us, but the main part is done by hand. We respect tradition", he said.

The classic Borsalino fedora costs 300 euros (\$327) on average. But the luxurious Panama Montecristi, which takes six months to make, can set you back up to 1,650 euros.

A poster from Jacques Deray's 1974 film "Borsalino" starring French actor Alain Delon — wearing a fedora, of course — hangs over the company's brightly lit showroom, lined by tall cases containing hats of all shapes and colours.

The appointment last year of Jacopo Politi as head of styling, formerly with the Chanel-owned Paris milliner Maison Michel, has breathed new life into the hatmaker.

Besides the classic felt hats or summery straw Panamas, Borsalino now offers more playful baseball caps, bucket hats and especially berets, which Politi, 44, said were a hit with young people.

Borsalino has benefited from a renewed enthusiasm for hats since the early 2000s, the designer said.

"The hat was considered old-fashioned and locked away in a wardrobe, but now it's back in fashion," Politi said.

WOMEN CLIENTS

The brand is also looking to attract more women customers, who now account for half of revenue, up



30 per cent since the ownership change.

"Our goal is to increase their share to 60 or 65 per cent," owner Camperio said.

After sales plunged by half in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, they began to recover in 2021 and increased by 25 per cent to 20 million euros (\$21.8 million) last year.

"For 2023, we are once again aiming for a 20 to 25 per cent revenue growth," said Camperio, executive

chairman of the private equity company Haeres Equita.

Borsalino's former boss, Marco Marengo, was sentenced to five years in prison in 2016 for fraudulent bankruptcy, leaving the company with debts of 34 million euros.

But now the page has turned. A new Borsalino Museum will be inaugurated in Alessandria on April 4, where more than 2,000 hats that have marked the history of the storied brand will go on display. — AFP



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AROUND THE WORLD

ART

Banksy artwork smashes estimate after being sold by band



AN ARTWORK BY world-renowned street artist Banksy, entitled "Brace Yourself!", has sold for \$2,032,000, more than three times its original estimate, during an auction featuring a performance from the band that inspired the piece.

The anonymous artist created the work in 2010 for the British band then known as Exit Through The Gift Shop, who shared the same name he wanted to use for his 2010 documentary film.

To avoid copyright issues, the group agreed to Banksy's offer to create a painting for them on the condition they changed their name.

The artwork, a large-scale painting of a grim reaper figure riding in a carnival bumper car, was sold to Miguel Garcia Larios, owner of Rcnstrct Studio in Hollywood, during an event hosted by Julien's Auctions in Beverly Hills.

Its original estimate was \$600,000 and the sale was preceded by alive performance by Brace Yourself, fronted by singer Natalie Zalewska.



Zalewska previously told the PA news agency the sale was about preserving the artwork as a "piece of history."

Exit Through The Gift Shop tells the story of Thierry Guetta, a Los Angeles-based Frenchman who videotapes underground art escapades and later finds fame with the moniker Mr Brainwash.

A portion of the proceeds will go to music charity MusiCares, providing health, financial and rehabilitation support to those in the sector.

Also featured in the auction was an original print of Banksy's Girl With Balloon, which sold for \$195,000, as well as more than 70 artworks from famous names such as Bob Ross, Jim Carrey and Jane's Addiction guitarist Dave Navarro.

In early March, "Brace Yourself" was displayed in the window of the Hard Rock Cafe in Piccadilly Circus in London. — PA Media/dpa

ENTERTAINMENT

Cinema's undying love for Dumas and his Musketeers



THE WORK OF FRENCH author Alexandre Dumas has attracted stars since the birth of cinema, through silent-era hero Douglas Fairbanks and Leonardo DiCaprio, not forgetting a certain Volodymyr Zelensky and — almost — The Beatles.

The 19th century writer's popularity shows no signs of dimming — a flashy new version of "The Three Musketeers" hits French screens next week, while

Italian puppet version a few years later.

The Beatles almost donned the capes in the 1960s, but eventually passed the roles to Charlton Heston and Oliver Reed.

And Hollywood keeps them coming, from the "Brat Pack" version in the 1990s with Charlie Sheen and Kiefer Sutherland, to the little-loved 2011 remake featuring Milla Jovovich, Orlando

AFP.

"It's the values of camaraderie, courage, panache and solidarity that make it so interesting."

It helps that Dumas was a pioneer of the sort of writing that has shaped modern cinematic storytelling — from his fast-paced action scenes to the multiple cliffhangers that punctuate each section.

Dumas, then 41, wrote the



"The Count of Monte Cristo" starts filming this summer.

There have been more than 250 adaptations of his books, including popular takes on "Queen Margot" and "The Man in the Iron Mask", which gave a starring role to DiCaprio in 1998.

But it is the plume-hatted musketeers that have been the most popular, stretching back to the first film version in Britain in 1898.

Fairbanks became a swash-buckling megastar thanks to a 1921 version, while the story was relocated to a French Foreign Legion in North Africa for John Wayne in 1933, and thousands of marionettes were used for an

Bloom and some flying battle-ships.

Argentine, Indian, Mexican and even Soviet versions have also been seen over the years.

One of the most unlikely — particularly from the current perspective — is a 2004 Russian-language version in which the musketeers are all women and D'Artagnan is played by a young Zelensky, now president of war-torn Ukraine.

- 'COURAGE, PANACHE' -

"It's a book that travels easily through time," Martin Bourboulon, director of the latest iteration, "The Three Musketeers: D'Artagnan", told

1844 novel to appear in serialised form, which was all the rage thanks to new periodicals.

"He has a sense of rhythm, of knowing when to accelerate, when to pause and build intrigue," added biographer Sylvain Ledda.

"Plus, he's very funny with the best of the French spirit: his signature style, the fantasy, the derision."

Dumas may even have appreciated his name-check in 90s classic "The Shawshank Redemption", where the inmates enjoy the prison-break in "The Count of Monte Cristo" but mispronounce his name as "Alexander Dumb-ass". — AFP

LIFESYLE

Man buys NY's iconic Flatiron building at auction, then backs out



THE INVESTOR WHOSE \$190 million auction bid won him the world-famous Flatiron Building failed to complete the transaction, and the Manhattan skyscraper may go back on the block if a runner-up also forgoes purchasing rights, a broker said on Thursday.

In a highly contested auction on March 22, little-known bidder Jacob Garlick, founder of the Abraham Trust equity venture fund, obtained rights to the landmark with his pricey bid — only to miss a deadline to pony up 10 per cent of the money to lock in purchase.

Now uncertainty cloaks the iconic building on a wedge-shaped lot at the intersections of Fifth Avenue, Broadway and 22nd Street.

The second-highest bidder, Jeffrey Gural, one of the five current owners, offered \$189.5 million at the auction but has yet to exercise a right to purchase, broker Mannion Auctions told AFP on Thursday, meaning a new public auction may be in the offing.

The existing owners of the 121-year-old property — one of the first skyscrapers in Manhattan, designed by renowned Chicago architect Daniel Burnham — faced a stalemate over what to do with the building, and a judge ordered its auction.

Four real estate firms — GFP Real Estate, Newmark, ABS Real Estate Partners and Sorgente Group — controlled 75 per cent of the Flatiron, while a fifth partner, Nathan Silverstein, controlled the other 25 per cent.

In 2021, the four minority co-owners sued Silverstein over what they alleged was his failure to lease the building following the 2019 departure of its last tenant, Macmillan Publishers, which occupied all 22 floors.

Silverstein, who inherited the building from his father, countersued. A judge then ordered it be auctioned.

The last time the Flatiron was up for auction was during the Great Depression. It sold for \$100,000.

The 22-storey triangular edifice was revolutionary for its time, built on a steel skeleton and clad in limestone and terra-cotta with touches of both beaux arts and renaissance revival architecture.

Gural said he was not pleased with how last week's auction went.

"I was annoyed," he told the media this week. "I never thought he'd keep going to such a high price.... All he was doing was driving up the price."

Gural's firm, GFP Real Estate, owns and manages some 50 buildings in New York City. — AFP



ramadhan

Local Scene

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MONDAY | APRIL 3 | 2023

A ray of hope for children with Autism

By Kaushalendra Singh
@patkaushal

Autism calls for urgent and early intervention as the disorder affects not only the person who suffers from it, its repercussions can be seen on the family and ultimately the society in which people with special needs live. Medical science is working on the reasons and its possible remedies, to avoid such births. But the fact remains a fact for those who are born with autistic syndrome or develop it at a later stage. This is the responsibility of the society to extend a helping hand and create an inclusive atmosphere in which they develop necessary skills, realise their full potential and manage day-to-day chores.

The Sultanate of Oman has been proactively taking up the cause of children with autism through government initiatives and private participation as the current numbers and projections indicate some 27,300 cases between 2020 and 2030.

Amita Sharma Director of Al Injaz Private School has taken up the cause of the children with special needs in a proactive manner. She feels not only for such children, but also for their parents, who need moral as well as financial support to deal with the situation.

"The disorder does not differentiate between rich and poor. When it comes, it comes as an unfortunate situation for a family. Rich families manage it financially, but they are drained physically and emotionally, while others suffer on all the three fronts, as the education as well as treatment for such children is expensive and time consuming."

Moved by the necessity of education as well as rehabilitation needs of children with autism, Amita Sharma started a section for special needs children in Al Injaz Private School to provide necessary support to the "specially gifted" children to help them blend in the society.

"Our special needs section has spacious, custom made class rooms with all the safety and support measures along with special furniture and tailored facilities. This section has qualified and experienced teachers and therapists, including physio-therapist, speech occupational and behavioural therapists. They help develop the skills for daily life, language, maths, general knowledge, vocational skills and skills to interact in a society confidently," she said.

The section currently has around 60 students with different abilities within the age groups

of 3.5 to 16 years. The school believes in an inclusive education for these students once they are ready for the main school integration. The school has also been training them in vocational activities to help them be on their own, to a certain level, independently. The students are trained in vocational activities to help them try and get employment in occupations in which they can use the vocational skills taught.

"We have two students who have successfully been absorbed to receive permanent employment in a five- star hotel after their training and probation period," says Amita with a sense of pride.

She admits the challenges of working with special needs students. The qualified, trained and experienced staff members work hard to manage these students. "In some difficult cases we require parents to provide a shadow teacher who supports the student whenever needed."

Amita is proud to say that with the excellent, dedicated team that the school has in the special needs section, the school is able to achieve a near 100 per cent success rate. "This is achieved with the hard work of the team members and regular coordination with Parents," she says.

Commenting on mode of education, she says, "Such students are initially taught separately in groups as well as individually based on their abilities and skills. Once the educators observe that a student is ready to be integrated into the mainstream schooling, preparations are made to shift the student to the same along with a shadow teacher. The student is gradually weaned off the shadow teacher if he/she is able to cope independently with the support of the mainstream teacher."

She fully agrees with the idea of inclusive education with two types of inclusion at the school. One is 'partial inclusion', which is available to all students in activities like sports, arts, music, morning assembly and other events. Second is 'total inclusion' which is the integration of students who have academic abilities that allow them to join classes. They are fully integrated after obtaining the approval of the special education supervisor from the ministry, and the integrated student is completely under the supervision of the department.

"Big responsibility yet one of the most fulfilling endeavours to see smiles on the faces of parents and their 'specially-gifted' children when they leave the school after 100 per cent success," says Amita.

