

**HIS MAJESTY GREETES  
PRESIDENT OF URUGUAY**

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Luis Alberto Lacalle Pou of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Luis and the people of Uruguay. **-ONA**



**HIS MAJESTY SENDS GREETINGS  
TO PRESIDENT OF MOLDOVA**

**MUSCAT:** His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Maia Sandu of the Republic of Moldova on her country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and her country's people. **-ONA**



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2023/2024 ACADEMIC YEAR

## More than 60,000 teachers return to schools on Sunday



Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** More than 60,000 teachers will return to schools in the Sultanate of Oman today as the 2023/2024 academic year begins on Tuesday.

All the teaching staff, supervisors, members of the educational and administrative bodies, and support groups will start their work in various schools in preparation for receiving the students.

The number of teachers in government schools this year reached 60,840, with an Omanisation rate of 87.5 percent, distributed over 1,270 schools in the country. The number of administrators and technicians in government schools reached 11,509, of whom 4,587 were males, and 6,922 females with 99.8 percent Omanisation rate.

The number of teachers in private education schools are 284, with an Omanisation rate of (93.5 percent), and the total number of administrators in special education schools stood at 65, with 85.4 percent Omanisation rate.

Within the framework of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology's keenness to organise school transport activity, the ministry stressed the need for bus drivers to be fully prepared and adhere to security and safety requirements for the transportation of students.

The ministry has asked to register buses on its transportation platform, in addition to adhering to the approved technical specifications and ensuring the provision of safe and comfortable travel for students.

## SALALAH FREE ZONE ATTRACTS OMR727 MILLION INVESTMENTS

The cumulative agreements have reached 127 with a total value of OMR4.5 billion

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Salalah Free Zone has signed five new usufruct (land lease) agreements with a total investment of OMR727 million during the first half of 2023.

The free zone, affiliated to the Asyad Group, said that the cumulative agreements have reached 127 with a total value of OMR4.5 billion.

"The new agreements signed for projects in the first half of this year include a factory for the production of washing powder and detergents, another for manufacture of ferrous alloys and wrapping paper, and a factory for manufacturing textiles. Also, a project for plastic packaging for healthcare purposes, a urea and ammonia production project and a project to set up a centre for hosting data processing and cryptocurrency mining," Dr. Ali bin Muhammad Tabuk, CEO of the



Dr. Ali bin Muhammad Tabuk, CEO, Salalah Free Zone Company

Salalah Free Zone Company, said.

He stressed the free zone's keenness to attract private investments in the technology sector and the digital economy. Taking a step forward the free zone in mid August opened a data hosting and cryptocurrency mining project. This project is being executed by an international company, Exahertz, to build a huge blockchain data centre. This new project indicates the success

of the Salalah Free Zone in attracting local and international investments and strengthening the technical sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr. Tabuk explained that the Salalah Free Zone, with its modern facilities and logistical capabilities, supports investments in the third-generation Internet technology and the fourth industrial revolution, to be a strong pillar for expanding computing capabilities in the Sultanate of Oman for blockchain technology.

This will open new horizons for innovation and growth of the digital economy in the country, taking advantage of its strategic location adjacent to the points of connection of international submarine cables for data transmission, located in Salalah.

The CEO of the Salalah Free Zone Company pointed out that the free zone provides a highly efficient energy network that suits the needs of large-scale technical projects. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

### OMAN

#### Oman aims to develop hydrogen economy

**1** Energy analysts have confirmed that green hydrogen will contribute significantly to mitigating the effects of global climate change and help in shift towards a sustainable green economy from fossil fuels that are used in heavy industries. **>A2**

### WORLD

#### 9 passengers killed in India train fire

**2** Nine passengers travelling from the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh were killed and over 50 persons were injured after a fire broke out inside a stationary train compartment near the Madurai Railway Station on Saturday. **>A6**

### SPORTS

#### National sailing squad of Oman decided

**3** Three days of competition in Ras Al Hadd produced many extraordinary performances as 30 young sailors, aged from 10-18 years of age, from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools raced in Optimist, ILCA 4, and ILCA 6 classes for the chance to represent the nation in upcoming regattas. **>B6**

# Oman and Vulcan Green Steel: Making History with the World's Largest Green Steel Plant



### On track to ship the first Green Steel Vessel in 2026



Oman is on the cusp of making history in the steel industry with the ambitious launch of Vulcan Green Steel in Duqm, a ground-breaking initiative by Jindal Steel Group. This project aligns with Oman's commitment to reaching Net Zero Emissions by 2050 and positions the country as a trailblazer in green steel production.

Scheduled for completion by 2026, the mega green steel project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) will establish a six million metric tons per annum (6 MTPA) green hydrogen-ready steel plant. This project is estimated to achieve an astounding 12 million tonnes per annum CO2 savings, making a significant positive impact on global emissions reduction. The project represents a marquee initiative in the fight against climate change and marks a new era of large-scale green steel production. Powered entirely by renewable energy and green hydrogen, it is set to become one of the largest green steel investments

in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, generating anticipation and excitement worldwide.

In a statement regarding this project, Her Excellency Ibtisam Ahmed Al Farooji, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, affirmed, "The Green Steel project, to be carried out by Vulcan Green Steel and Jindal Shaded Iron & Steel in Duqm with investments exceeding 1.3 Billion Omani Rials, represents a pioneering step in Oman's journey to become a global hub for green industries. These industries will benefit from green hydrogen and renewable energy projects. The project will mark the beginning of large-scale industrial projects that will solidify Oman's presence on the world map as an attractive destination for foreign direct investments in this promising sector and its role in providing meaningful employment opportunities for national talent."

Her Excellency, the Undersecretary, added, "Since its inception in Oman in 2010, Jindal Shaded Company has been actively engaged in the comprehensive development journey of the country and has established itself as a reliable partner and active contributor to this journey. With the completion of the new projects announced by the group, it will contribute to enriching the national economy and participating in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the carbon neutrality goals of 2050."

Under the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Oman fully embraces this transformative initiative as a critical step towards establishing itself as a prominent hub for green industries on the global stage. Decarbonisation is at the core of the Jindal Group's agenda as they proactively reduce the industry's carbon footprint. Their dedication to implementing greener technologies and investing in talent development has earned them

recognition as one of the Gulf region's lowest-emission steel producers.

Aligning with the sentiments expressed by Her Excellency Ibtisam Bint Ahmed Said Al Farooji, Khalid Jashmi, Senior Advisor from the Jindal Steel Group, expressed pride in Oman's pioneering spirit and commitment to a sustainable future. He stated, "The Vulcan Green Steel project is a testament to Oman's pioneering spirit and commitment to a sustainable future. We are proud to be frontrunners in the global Green Steel transition, and we are confident in making the world's one-of-a-kind green steel project a reality. This venture sets a new standard for green energy to green steel projects, contributing to Oman's journey towards becoming a global hub for green industries."

Duqm's SEZAD is rapidly emerging as a global hub for the supply of green hydrogen, solidifying Oman's position as a pioneer in environmentally sustainable industries. This state-of-the-art Steel

facility in Duqm is revolutionising eco-friendly industrial operations and catering to the automotive, wind turbine and consumer goods sectors across the GCC, Europe, and beyond. As Oman aims to cement itself as a worldwide leader in sustainable steel production, the SEZAD project is a significant step towards achieving this goal.

At its core, this ground-breaking initiative supports international efforts to combat climate change by harnessing the power of green hydrogen. By utilising this innovative technology, the project significantly reduces the carbon footprint inherent in steel production, making it an irresistible choice for environmentally conscious industries worldwide. Unlike conventional methods of transporting green hydrogen in the form of green ammonia with minimal value addition, this project will process green hydrogen within Oman to do value addition and make green steel. This strategic approach encourages the creation and development

of a robust green hydrogen ecosystem within the nation.

Furthermore, by focusing on in-country value addition, the project takes significant strides in reducing transportation-related carbon emissions while simultaneously supporting the growth of green technology and steelmaking expertise within Oman. This commitment to sustainability and the utilisation of renewable resources serves as a powerful testament to Oman's dedication to becoming a global leader in environmentally responsible practices.

As the SEZAD expands in Duqm, it promises to be a shining example of how industrial development and environmental stewardship can coexist harmoniously. With its cutting-edge facilities and forward-thinking approach, this project positions Oman as a trailblazer in the global steel and automotive industries. It showcases the nation's unwavering commitment to forging a more sustainable future for generations to come.



# OMAN

## PRAYER TIMINGS



|                       |         |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Dhuhr .....           | 12:14pm |
| Asr .....             | 3:41pm  |
| Maghrib .....         | 6:35pm  |
| Isha .....            | 7:48pm  |
| Fajr (Tomorrow) ..... | 4:29am  |

# Oman aspires to develop green hydrogen economy

Shift to green hydrogen will significantly contribute to mitigating the effects of global climate change and boost sustainable green economy

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** Energy analysts have confirmed that green hydrogen will contribute significantly to mitigating the effects of global climate change and shift towards a sustainable green economy from fossil fuels that are used in heavy industries.

This will open up great potential for industrial development, especially in countries that enjoy abundant sources of renewable energy.

Dr. Abdullah bin Suleiman Al Abri, advisor and representative



of the Sultanate of Oman at the International Energy Agency, said: "The Sultanate of Oman aspires to develop a hydrogen economy. Therefore, an analytical study was conducted on the possibility of creating a local demand for hydrogen to support achieving zero neutrality in 2050 and revitalising local industries and economic competitiveness."

The consultant and representative of the Sultanate of Oman at the International Energy Agency reviewed the detailed study to assess the possibility of replacing natural gas used to provide heat for industrial processes and current raw materials, while taking advantage of the existing industrial and export infrastructure in the Sul-

tanate of Oman, indicating that the study included the technical and economic aspects of five industrial zones, which are Sohar, Muscat, Sur, Duqm and Salalah.

### Expected revenues

He explained that the study included technical evaluation, cost and expected revenues from sales of hydrogen, oxygen and natural gas, in addition to the financial payback period and the expected impact in terms of reducing emissions, the amount of natural gas saved and the land area required for solar energy fields.

Mariya bint Zaher Al-Tubi, an industrial energy analyst, explained that this study was conducted on the assumption that

the life cycle of each project is 25 years, and that production begins in early 2027.

She added: "The study showed that the total expected demand for hydrogen is 8,0846 tonnes per day. The highest demand was recorded in Sohar with a rate of 45 percent, followed by Duqm with 28 percent, then Salalah with 14 percent, Sur with 9 percent, and the lowest in Muscat with 4 percent.

Al-Taubi indicated that the expected demand for hydrogen comes to provide heat for high-temperature industrial processes in various industries, including cement, copper, aluminum, chemicals and petrochemicals, in addition to being a clean energy carrier.



# Applications for 'Read for Young People' competition begins from today

*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The Sultan Qaboos Higher Centre for Culture and Science at the Diwan of the Royal Court will start receiving applications for participation in the “Read for Young People” competition 2023 in its twelfth session from Sunday until October 19.

The competition is one of the programmes of the cultural initiatives implemented by the center, believing in the importance of reading in human life, as it is the way to reach a knowledgeable society that is conscious and enthusiastic about reading and reading.

The competition aims to inculcate the concepts of reading among young people and urge them to go to libraries, consolidate the principles and values of good citizenship, spread the spirit of culture and national identity to enhance the values of good citizenship and the Omani identity among young people, develop their intellectual, linguistic and abilities to express, and provide participants with reading skills, and fill their free time with what is useful.

In its twelfth edition, the competition was divided into two levels, and each level has a special mode to compete in, and the contestant must participate in one of the following two levels: The first level in which the contestant reads 3 books on various topics (Omani personalities and flags, Islamic values and morals, customs Omani traditions, tourism in Oman, Omani civilization), or any other titles in the same fields, and are of the contestant's choice, taking into account the controls and conditions included on the competition site. The contestant will write 3 summaries on the topic in a form designated for the competition, taking into account several criteria: Arabic grammar, language style and wording, clarity of idea, writing and calligraphy quality.

As for the second level, it will be directed to the participants from grades seven to nine, during which the contestant will read four books on various topics, such as: self-development and



building, artificial intelligence, science fiction, innovation, social media, the fourth industrial revolution, or any other addresses in the same domains. The contestant will write four summaries of the selected topics in a form designated for the competition, taking into account several criteria: Arabic grammar, style, linguistic formulation, clarity of idea, writing, and calligraphy quality.

This edition of the competition includes all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, distributed among 13 centres, namely: the Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Khasab in the Musandam Governorate, the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque Library, the Public Knowledge Library in the Muscat Governorate, the Ibra Cultural Center in the North A'Sharqiyah Governorate, and the Sultan Mosque Library, Qaboos in Sur in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, Fida Al Ahlia Library in Dhank in Al Dhahirah Governorate, Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, Al Wasil Public Library in Rustaq in Al Batinah South Governorate, Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Sohar in Al Batinah North Governorate, Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Nizwa, and Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Nizwa Al-Shumukh Fort in Al-Dakhiliyah Governorate, the library of the Institute of Islamic Sciences in Al-Buraيمي in Al-Buraيمي Governorate, and the General Directorate of Education in Al-Wusta Governorate.

It is worth noting that participations can be sent via e-mail: [RCY@DIWAN.GOV.OM](mailto:RCY@DIWAN.GOV.OM), or delivered manually at one of the competition centres.

# Cultivated area rises by 3.9% in 2022



*Times News Service*

**MUSCAT:** The total estimated cultivated area in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2022 increased by 3.9 percent to reach 276,000 acres, compared to 266,000 acres

by the end of 2021. The total agricultural production amounted to 3.501 million tonnes, according to preliminary statistics issued by the NCSI.

Furthermore, statistics indicated that fodder crops accounted for

42.5 percent of the cultivated lands with a total area of 117,298 acres and a production of 1,821,690 million tonnes.

This was followed by fruit crops with a rate of 29.4 percent, with a total area of 81.129 acres and a to-

tal production of 484,270 tonnes, then vegetables with a total area of 69,074 acres and a production of 1.137655 million tonnes. The total area cultivated with field crops reached 8,408 acres, and production of 57711 tonnes.



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# INVITATION TO TENDER


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ALUMINIUM**

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hereby invites qualified Suppliers/Contractors for the following tender:**

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Tender No.</b>   | : <b>2023-ENG-SOW-0036</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Tender Title</b> | : Replacement of fabric hoisting doors                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Scope</b>        | : Sohar Aluminium Co. LLC (SA) manufactures and produces liquid and solid metals and intends to replace curtain/fabric door in some of its industrial building doors. The work will be to design, supply, install & commission new Industrial heavy duty curtain door assemblies (that includes drive, fixtures, curtain etc.) in SA. Detailed specification and scope of work to be shared to vendors expressing their interest to participate in this tender.                               |
| <b>Tender No.</b>   | : <b>2023-ENG-SOW-0037</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Tender Title</b> | : High-Speed Bus Transfer Systems for 11 KV Switchboard Main-Tie breaker                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Scope</b>        | : Sohar Aluminium Co. LLC (SA) manufactures and produces liquid and solid metals and requires a vendor for supply, installation, and commissioning of High-Speed Bus Transfer Systems for 11 KV Switchboard Main-Tie breaker. The vendor who will be identified for this work shall be able to provide services on turnkey basis for the full scope of the project. Detailed specification and scope of work to be shared to vendors expressing their interest to participate in this tender. |
| <b>Tender No.</b>   | : <b>2023-ENG-SOW-0034</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Tender Title</b> | : Supply of Road sweeper                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Scope</b>        | : Sohar Aluminium Co. LLC (SA) manufactures and produces liquid and solid metals and intends to purchase one high performance outdoor sweeper for road facilities as described below. Detailed specification and scope of work to be shared to vendors expressing their interest to participate in this tender.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Tender No.</b>   | : <b>2023-ENG-SOW-0029</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Tender Title</b> | : Vertical Milling Machine in SA workshop                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Scope</b>        | : Sohar Aluminium Co. LLC (SA) manufactures and produces liquid and solid metals and is looking to acquire a new Vertical Milling Machine to improve its workshop capabilities. The Vendor shall provide all management, supervision (including safety) labour, tools, equipment and materials to carry out the works as described in SOW. Detailed specification and scope of work to be shared to vendors expressing their interest to participate in this tender.                          |

**Last Date  
For Applying** : 3 September 2023

**Document  
Issue Date** : 4 September 2023

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# Oman to set up its first debate training academy

The registration process of the academy has already begun though the programme is expected to be launched by the end of the year

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman Debate Centre (ODC), in cooperation with the Qatar Debate Centre (QDC), has recently announced the setting up of the first of its-kind academy in Oman known as Durba Academy. The national-level academy aims to train qualified Omani debaters, and debate arbitrators, to be certified trainers in debating. The registration process of the academy has already begun though the programme is expected to be launched by the end of the year. More than 200 Omanis have applied to join the academy so far, but only 40 would be selected according to a top official of the ODC. In her remarks to *Times of Oman*, Yaqeen Al Sinani, technical coordinator at the academy, said: "Oman Debate Centre received many applications



**FIRST OF ITS-KIND ACADEMY:** Zwinah Al Mazani, one of the 40 candidates at the Oman Debate Centre.

from different groups of the community. These included lecturers, graduates, high school students, and university students, which reflect the eagerness the community has toward debate activities." The 40 shortlisted candidates will go through a selection test to examine their knowledge in debate and training. The top 20 candidates will then go through an interview, the final stage of the selection with only 15 to be finally inducted in the academy. Al Sinani said, "Oman Debate Centre seeks to empower youth in the field of debating that will make them more competent, confident and critical thinkers." Zwinah Al Mazani, one of the 40 candidates, said, "I believe that

debate is an important field for personality shaping and critical thinking. I want to spread debating culture with a wider range but with a better knowledge of debate so that I can better contribute to other people's knowledge" The training at Durba Academy will last for two years. Al Sinani said, "The selected 15 candidates will receive intensive training for two years. The training venues will be in Oman for one year and the remaining session will be held abroad according to the training requirement." The 15 candidates of the Durba Academy will include men and women certified trainers who will be prepared then to join, enrich, and support the Oman Debate Centre.



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FAAXY

# Music video brings spotlight on Oman's tourist attractions

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** He is an upcoming star who has set up a musical studio in the Sultanate of Oman. An Indian expatriate, Cheru Kun-nath Paijas, popularly known by his stage name, Faaxy, has been making musical videos to highlight the tourism potential of Oman. The latest video, "You Are The One" is another encouraging attempt by Faaxy to promote Oman with the musical clip already garnering more than 100,000 views. Faaxy has taken upon himself to promote his remarkable journey through Oman, his adopted homeland and the latest musical release on Vevo showcases stunning visuals of Oman's diverse landscapes. From the breathtaking backdrop of Ad Dimaniyat Islands to the soaring heights of Jebel Shams mountain, the video has made a good impression on his fans and music lovers. Speaking about the music video, Faaxy recollected the shooting experience at Jebel Shams as "exhilarating", with his team enduring cold temperatures to capture the video. Faaxy said: "When we did the shoot at the Ad Dimaniyat Islands, we had to face a lot of



challenges. But the team showed determination as carrying the musical instruments to the island was a risky option on the boat. "Following couple of attempts we managed to get it to the island and our director Monika Sommer was delighted with the end result." The video and song has earned praise and interest worldwide and is available on Apple Music, YouTube, Spotify, Deezer and Amazon Music. The official page of Faaxy [www.faaxy.com](http://www.faaxy.com) Born in Kerala, Faaxy's musical journey began early and he was introduced to hip-hop during high school, where he developed a deep passion for its sound and culture. In 2013, Faaxy established his music studio in the Sultanate of Oman, a testament to his dedication to music and his love for the country where he was raised.

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# Ministry issues licence for first private museum in Dhofar

**MUSCAT:** The Museum of Generations Continuity in the Wilayat of Taqah is the first private museum licenced by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in the Dhofar Governorate.

The museum is located in the old neighbourhood near Taqah Ca and Al Askar Tower. It was inaugurated in February 2023, and it includes an “external square” in addition to four main halls: the “reception” hall, the “Umm Salem” hall, the Great Hall, and the “Deirhom” hall for coins.

Salim bin Ahmed Al Omari, the owner of the private museum, said that he began collecting various archaeological holdings in 1983, explaining that the museum promotes the preservation of authentic Omani heritage and implants it in the hearts of young people.

Al Omari indicated that the museum's outer yard contains a wall of palm fronds with the cultivation of some local trees, models of windows and doors of old design, the Ghanja ship, and some types of fishing nets and stones used in construction in the past.

He explained that the “reception” hall in the museum embodies the Bedouin environment, with its tent woven from animal wool, handicrafts, palm fronds, some cooking tools, Bedouin clothing and musical instruments such as the dargham and the rebab, as well as a miniature cultural library, in addition to some ancient fossil holdings.

Al Omari explained that the “Umm Salem” hall is for the late craftswoman, Taful bint Ramadan, which includes antique collections and tools that represent the urban environment and what the bedroom contains, and ancient decorative and cooking tools. This is in addition to wooden chests and handicrafts related to the urban environment, such as the palmette craft called “Al Qaff”.

The owner of the private museum also pointed out that the Great Hall includes two sections: a section for men's and women's adornment in Dhofar, and the section for the rural environment. He indicated that the section for traditional costumes represents urban, rural and Bedouin environments, in addition to used adornments, Omani daggers, silver industries and incense.

Al Omari pointed out that the section of the rural environment in the Great Hall embodies a rural house consisting



of wood, straw, ropes, kitchen utensils, rural clothing for men and women such as dyeing, Nile dress, leather industry, pottery, palm fronds, tools for extracting municipal ghee, which is locally called “Qatamim”, and a “cradle” bed for the child.

He added, “The hall of their monastery in the local dialect, meaning money, contains multiple models of banknotes, coins, and commemorative coins circulated in the past in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to highlighting pictures of the Sultans of Oman and some models such as castles, forts, towers, and ships.”

Al Omari added that work is underway to develop the museum by adding a new hall dealing with old traditional crafts in Dhofar, used in trade, carpentry, construction and agriculture.





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CR No. 1/20249/4

# Culture is the driving force behind growth

New Delhi meeting discussed a range of aspects related to cultural fields, including protecting and reclaiming cultural property, employing cultural heritage for a sustainable future

Times News Service

**NEW DELHI:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, participated in the meeting of the Ministers of the Culture Working Group within the G20 meetings, being held in the Republic of India from August 24-27.



of aspects related to cultural fields, including protecting and reclaiming cultural property, employing cultural heritage for a sustainable future, benefiting from digital technologies to promote and protect culture, and promoting cultural and creative industries and the economy.

Sayyid Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, delivered a speech of the Sultanate of Oman in which he spoke about the importance of culture as a driving force for global development and prosperity.

He said culture plays an important role in ensuring sustainable development and providing

real value that goes beyond mere social and economic benefits, stressing the importance of supporting human rights. and pride in cultural diversity.

He referred to the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman to enhance its cultural identity and its contribution to the global cultural scene.

The vision of Oman 2040 has adopted, among its national priorities, national identity, heritage and culture, and has adopted many policies represented by the cultural strategy, the most important of which are the promotion of cultural identity, work on the sustainability of culture, the preservation and development of cultural knowledge, international

cooperation and the preservation of intangible heritage.

It is worth noting that the Sultanate of Oman - in order to activate its participation in the meetings of the cultural group of the Group of Twenty - is also participating in the Bihar Museum Biennial 2023, which is a distinguished artistic event that brings together the best artists from around the world.

This year, the exhibition included the participation of 20 artists from around the world, where the Omani plastic artist Abdul Majeed Al Balushi participated with his painting 'The Gate' using bright colours and exciting dynamic lines to show the artist's vision for a better and brighter future for humanity.

Through his picture, he expressed the message of peace, brotherhood and cohesion among the peoples of the world. the world.

On the literary side, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the literary edition (Under One Sky), which brings together selected poems and texts from poets and writers from all twenty participating countries, with the poem "Letters on Love and Desolation" by poet Dr. Hilal Al-Hajri.

## BILATERAL RELATIONS



## Ambassador of Oman to Seychelles presents credentials

**DARUSSALAM:** President Wavel Ramkalawan of the Republic of Seychelles received here on Thursday Ambassador Saud Hilal Al Shidhani, who presented his credentials as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to Seychelles.

During the meeting, the ambassador conveyed His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's greetings and best wishes of continuous good health and wellbeing to President Wavel Ramkalawan. He also conveyed His Majesty's wishes of further progress and prosperity to the people of Seychelles.

President Wavel Ramkalawan asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people. He also expressed his keenness to consolidate bilateral relations between the two countries.

Moreover, the meeting reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in all fields.

FROM AUGUST 27 TO SEPTEMBER 3

## Oman team to take part in Taekwondo Championship

**MUSCAT:** The Omani taekwondo team will participate in the World Taekwondo Championship in Bosnia and Herzegovina from August 27 to September 3, 2023.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, represented by the Omani Taekwondo Committee, will participate in the World Taekwondo Championship, which in Bosnia from August 27 to September 3, 2023. The Omani team includes seven Omani players and coaches.



**International competitions**  
Dr Talal bin Mohammed Al Balushi, head of the delegation, explained that the World Taekwondo Championship is one of the most important international competitions that work to refine

the players' skills and provide them with the necessary expertise and capabilities to be among the top world's players.

The coach of the national team,

Waleed bin Yousef Al Balushi, confirmed that the Omani players need to come into contact with international experts and get used to the atmosphere of international tournaments.

While Coach Mohammed bin Sultan Al Mahrrouqi indicated that the Omani Taekwondo Committee contributes effectively to creating a promising generation of players who will undoubtedly contribute to spreading the sport of taekwondo in the Sultanate.

Dr. Talal Al Balushi added that the World Taekwondo Championship is held every two years, and Oman participates in this version with the rest of the world.

This tournament is included in the international calendar of the Omani Taekwondo Committee for the year 2023, which includes a number of participations at various local, regional and international levels. — ONA

SALALAH FREE ZONE

## <FROM A1 Cold sea water to help save energy



In addition to benefiting from the mild climate in Dhofar Governorate, the free zone has the possibility of using cold sea water within advanced cooling systems.

This contributes to reducing energy consumption and enhancing the efficiency of air conditioning and ventilation systems, which is a key factor in ensuring the integrity of devices in large data centres.

He further stressed the importance of this project and its strategic dimensions, explaining

that this partnership with Exahertz affirms the region's commitment to supporting the digital and knowledge economy in accordance with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, besides promoting advanced technology sectors and stimulating private investment.

This also includes major projects, due to the presence of an advanced infrastructure network in the region, and the integrated Asyad logistics system, in addition to other investment services and incentives.



The Salalah Free Zone, in cooperation with the concerned authorities, aims to provide support facilities for the industrial projects and to find stimulating opportunities for various economic sectors, in line with its vision represented in building a long-term partnership with its customers by establishing a modern integrated infrastructure in a strategic geographical location, attractive incentives, a safe environment and reliable services.

It is noteworthy that the Salalah Free Zone is a leading centre

for high-quality industrial and logistical activities.

It offers many economic incentives, advantages and facilities to investors, the most important of which are tax exemptions, and the right to full foreign ownership of investment projects, in addition to enjoying a strategic location adjacent to the port of Salalah overlooking the path of the most prominent global shipping lines, where it has infrastructure and equipment that places it among the elite commercial ports in the world.

### INDIAN SCHOOL AL SEEB

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#### TENDER NOTICE

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|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 01. | <b>A.M.C. FOR AIRCONDITIONERS, ELECTRICAL /PLUMBING &amp; MAINTENENCE</b><br>Tender Number : ISAS/TEND/2023/028 |
| 02. | <b>CLEANING AND PEST CONTROL SERVICES</b><br>Tender Number : ISAS/TEND/2023/029                                 |

Competitive Tenders are invited from the establishments specialized in the above services for the school.

**Collection of Tender Documents: from 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023.**  
**Last date of submission: 07<sup>th</sup> September 2023.**  
**Non refundable Tender Fee per tender : RO.10/-**

Scaled tenders to be addressed to:-  
**The Chairman, Purchase Sub Committee, Indian School AL Seeb.**

*\*The School reserves the right to reject any Tender without providing any reason and does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.*



## U.S. EMBASSY - MUSCAT

### ONLINE AUCTION SALE OF USED ITEMS

The U.S. Embassy Muscat is auctioning used vehicles, household and office furniture, furnishings, appliances, and IT equipment by online auction.

Interested bidders may view the auction items online starting on Wednesday, August 23, 2023 at 10:00a.m. by going to <https://online-auction.state.gov/en-US>. Online bidding for all items will open on Thursday, August 24 at 10:00a.m. Bidders must first register on the website before placing a bid. Bidders interested in the vehicles only may request to view them on August 23 or 24 between 10:30am and 1:30pm. Please contact [MuscatOnlineAuction@state.gov](mailto:MuscatOnlineAuction@state.gov) to schedule a viewing time.

All items offered for sale will be sold "as is, where is," which means that there are no warranties, either expressed or implied. Bidding closes on Sunday, August 27, 2023 at 2:00p.m.

After the auction closes on August 27, successful bidders will be notified and must make full payment in the **Bank Muscat U.S. Embassy account** before the payment deadline of August 29, 11:00a.m. Prospective bidders can view payment instructions in the "How it works" link on the auction website after the auction goes live. **Please note payment instructions may be different from previous auctions and failure to follow payment instructions will result in the forfeiture of your lots and possible bank fees. Please read instructions carefully. Late payments will not be accepted.**

Successful bidders with fully paid lots must collect their items or arrange for someone to collect them on Saturday, September 2 at the Gala warehouse during the specific scheduled time (BEFORE 2:00pm). If you are unable to arrange pickup on that date, please do not participate in the auction as there are no alternate pickup dates. Directions to the Gala warehouse will be provided to winning bidders.



LEGAL ACTION TO BE TAKEN

# British Museum director resigns over stolen antiquities



**LONDON:** British Museum director Hartwig Fischer stepped down on Friday after numerous artifacts were stolen.

A number of items in the museum's collection were reported stolen two years ago, including gems and jewellery from centuries ago.

"The responsibility for that failure must ultimately rest with the director," Fischer said. Fischer is originally from Germany and was the first non-British head of the museum in more than two centuries. The outgoing director said lapses in museum procedures allowed the items to be taken.

"Over the last few days I have been reviewing in detail the events around the thefts from the Brit-



ish Museum and the investigation into them," Fischer said.

"It is evident that the British Museum did not respond as comprehensively as it should have to the warnings in 2021, and to the problem that has now fully

emerged." The museum's board of trustees, chaired by former British finance minister George Osborne, accepted Fischer's resignation.

"I am clear about this: we are going to fix what has gone wrong," Osborne said.

According to the museum, the stolen items included gold, jewellery and semi-precious gems dating from the 15th century B.C. to the 19th century A.D.

It previously said that the items were mostly "small pieces kept in a storeroom belonging to one of the museum's collections."

None of the items had been on public display recently, and they were kept mainly for academic and research purposes, it added.

London's Metropolitan Police said on Thursday it had interviewed a man in relation to the reported thefts, and the museum said it was taking legal action against the same individual. No arrests have been made.

The British Museum is one of the most famous galleries in the world, but in recent years it has come under pressure to address the legacy of items that were acquired during the British Empire.

Critics say some priceless artifacts in the museum's were stolen from around the world.

These include some of the museum's prized exhibits, the Parthenon Marbles from Greece and the Benin Bronzes from Nigeria. — DW

# UN warns of hunger, disease and displacement in Sudan



Fighting has been primarily centred around the capital, Khartoum, and the conflict-torn Darfur region



**KHARTOUM:** The fighting between Sudan's military and its paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which has gripped the country since mid-April, threatens to "consume" all of the country, the UN warned on Friday.

Under General Abdel-Fattah Burhan and Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo's RSF, the military has

been locked in a deadly fight for power. Fighting has been primarily centered around the capital, Khartoum, and the conflict-torn Darfur region.

"This viral conflict, and the hunger, disease and displacement left in its wake, now threatens to consume the entire country," said the United Nations' humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths. He added

that the conflict was "fueling a humanitarian emergency of epic proportions."

Thousands have died since the start of the war, with millions more displaced within Sudan and neighboring countries. The UN estimates the number of those displaced to be around 4.6 million.

Griffiths warned on Friday that some places in the country have

already run out of food.

"The longer the fighting continues, the more devastating its impact," he said. "Hundreds of thousands of children are severely malnourished and at imminent risk of death if left untreated."

He said that in Kadugli, South Kordofan state, "food stocks have been fully depleted, as clashes and road blockages prevent aid work-

ers from reaching the hungry."

UN's World Health Organization figures showed that over 42% of Sudan's population, some 20.3 million people, are facing acute food security.

The United States condemned "pervasive" conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) in Sudan, in a statement issued by the State Department on Friday.

"The numerous reports of rape, gang rape, and other forms of gender-based violence against women and girls in West Darfur and other areas are deeply disturbing," the statement read. "These acts of brutality contribute to an emerging pattern of targeted ethnic violence."

The State Department attributed the reports of sexual violence to credible sources, including victims, who blame the Rapid Support Forces and their allied militias.

## Number of malnourished children rises

**KABUL:** The physicians in Badakhshan province of Afghanistan reported more than a hundred malnourished children in the province's hospital, raising fresh public concerns on public health, Khaama Press reported, adding that it points to a significant surge in malnutrition cases among children in Badakhshan.

According to the medical professionals' report, most of the cases feature severe acute malnutrition, often accompanied by various disorders.

In Badakhshan's provincial hospital, the children's treatment unit, which has 12 beds, usually attends to around 24-30 patients monthly, Khaama Press reported.

Mohammad Akbar, head of the provincial hospital's children's treatment department in Badakhshan, said due to the gravity of the medical condition of the children, their recovery takes two weeks.

MILITARY RULERS



# Niger junta gives French envoy 48 hours to leave

**NIAMEY:** Niger's military rulers on Friday ordered the French ambassador to leave the country in the next 48 hours, but said a letter calling for a similar order for the US ambassador was fake.

A US State Department spokesperson said "no such request has been made to the US government," Reuters news agency reported.

The spokesperson added that Niger's Foreign Ministry told the US government that a widely-circulated letter online, calling for the US ambassador to be expelled, was not released by it.

Reports earlier stated that Niger's coup leaders had also asked the ambassadors of Germany and Nigeria to leave the country in the next 48 hours.

The AFP news agency reported that these reports were declared "unauthentic by authorities."

The junta said the French ambassador had refused an invitation to meet with Niger's junta-appointed foreign minister on Friday.

The Foreign Ministry said the actions of the French government were "contrary to the interests of



Niger."

But France said Niger's "putschists have no authority" to expel its ambassador in Niamey.

"The putschists do not have the authority to make this request, the ambassador's approval coming solely from the legitimate elected Nigerien authorities," Paris said, adding: "We are constantly evaluating the security and operating conditions of our embassy."

Niger was key ally in fight against extremism in Sahel

Niger gained independence from France in 1960 and had been a key ally in Western campaigns against insurgents linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group in the Sahel.

There are concerns that the coup could open the door to greater Russian influence there.

France and the US have around 2,500 military personnel in the country who have been involved in training and conducting joint operations against Islamist insurgents.

But those security operations, as well as financial aid from the countries, have been suspended following the coup.

The German Foreign Ministry earlier this month said it supports regional efforts to resolve the crisis in Niger, saying the aim was to restore constitutional order.

Berlin has called on the European Union to impose sanctions on coup leaders. — DW

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# He’s always pushing me to limit: Djokovic

Djokovic appeared to be having physical difficulty throughout the dramatic Cincinnati final’s first set tiebreaker and the opening moments of the second set. However, he accepted the challenge, saved a match point in the second-set tie-break, and then played his best tennis

**NEW YORK :** As Novak Djokovic begins his chase for a fourth US Open title, the 23-time Grand Slam champion said World No. 1 Carlos Alcaraz is bringing the best out of him as the 20-year-old Spaniard has been “pushing him to the limit.”

The pair faced off in the Western and Southern Open final on Sunday, and it took the Serbian three hours and 49 minutes to win—extending his record—his 39th ATP Masters 1000 crown. The hard-court major US Open will run from August 28 to September 10.

“He’s always pushing me to the limit. I think I do to him pretty much the same thing. That’s why we produced a memorable final. It was one of the best, most exciting, and most difficult finals I was ever



part of in best-of-three, no doubt, throughout my career,” Djokovic was quoted as saying by ATP.

“That’s why I fell on the ground after I won the match because it felt like winning a Grand Slam, to be honest. The amount of exchanges and rallies. It was physically so demanding and gruelling that I felt very exhausted for the next few days,” the 23-time major champion said.

Djokovic appeared to be having physical difficulty throughout the dramatic Cincinnati final’s first set tiebreaker and the opening moments of the second set. However, the 36-year-old accepted the challenge, saved a match point in the second-set tie-break, and then played his best tennis.

“I love competition. I think the more you find yourself in those particular circumstances where

you’re experiencing adversity on the court, where things are not maybe moving the right way for you in terms of the performance of that day, in terms of tennis, or mentally you’re not feeling your best, that’s normally the best possible opportunity for you to grow mentally from that, to learn something. Normally in the face of adversity is where you learn the most,” Djokovic said.

For the first time since 2021, Djokovic is now back in New York. He won the first three major tournaments that year, but he fell one match shy of becoming the first person to win all four major tournaments in a calendar year since Rod Laver in 1969.

“The first feeling that I have is excitement to come back because it is the biggest arena we have in our sport, the biggest stadium, and

definitely the most fun, electric, exciting atmosphere out there in tennis, playing night session in Arthur Ashe, no doubt. I’m very excited that I’ll be able to play the opening night on Monday. Come back in front of probably the loudest fans in sport, tennis fans in sport,” Djokovic said.

“I’m just very, very [much] looking forward to that. It’s been two years when I played last here and lost finals to Medvedev in ‘21, going for four Slams in a year. I haven’t performed well that day in terms of tennis. But what I felt from the crowd, that kind of connection and love and support that they gave me throughout entire match and also in the closing ceremony, was something that I carry still in my heart, and I still feel vibes from that night of the finals two years ago,” the Serbian added. **-ANI**

## ‘Just focused on showing my best level, says Alcaraz

**NEW YORK:** After a moment at the US Open last year that saw him emerge as the newest talent in men’s tennis, World Number one Carlos Alcaraz admits that he is a “better player” now than he was a year ago and focusing on showing his best level.

The top seed and defending champion fired a warning to the rest of the field ahead of his opening match against Germany’s Dominik Koepfer. The hard-court major US Open will run from August 28 to September 10.

“I feel that I’m more mature on court. I feel that I’m a better player than I was a year ago. I got my first Grand Slam last year, but I feel like I’m more mature and I’m better,” Alcaraz said in his pre-tournament press conference.

As defending champion, Alcaraz is ready to deal with raised expectations again.

“I try to do exactly the same thing that I did last year, trying to practise the same way that I’m going to play, and focus on that. I’m not focusing on the defending champion, the points, whatever. I’m just focused on showing my best level, trying to improve in every practice, and let’s see how it is going to be in the tournament,” the Spaniard said.

Alcaraz is seeded to meet sixth seed Jannik Sinner in the quarterfinals in what would be a rematch of their epic clash at last year’s event.



Jimmy Butler, an NBA player, is likely to support the Spaniard, who is also in the same half of the draw as 2021 winner Daniil Medvedev. Since they originally connected a year ago, Butler and Alcaraz have been good friends.

“I started to know him one year ago, to have a close relationship that is pretty good. He’s a really huge fan of tennis. He trying to play. I think it’s great for tennis to have Jimmy coming to

tournaments and supporting us. It’s great. Talking about me having him supporting me, a great athlete, NBA star, so it’s for me almost crazy to have a good relationship with someone like Jimmy,” Alcaraz said.

Novak Djokovic lost to the Spaniard in the Wimbledon championship match, but the Serb exacted retribution last week in Cincinnati. And if Alcaraz’s remarks are any indication, the Cincinnati championship game is still vivid in his mind.

Prior to the US Open, Alcaraz told the media that Novak Djokovic’s mental toughness was his most treasured quality.

“Probably his mental rock. I going to say he never give up. I mean, tough, tough moment, probably he shows that he’s down and he’s going to lose, and he’s always given the chance to himself to keep playing and be able to win,” Alcaraz said. **-ANI**

### ICC WORLD CUP

## ‘Virat Kohli is perfect...’: AB de Villiers on India’s No. 4

**NEW DELHI :** Former South Africa captain AB de Villiers has said star batter Virat Kohli could be the answer to India’s No.4 conundrum at the ICC World Cup as he believes that the latter can change gears and play to the circumstances, acting as the centre of the middle order.

Over the years, De Villiers and Kohli have been close friends and teammates while playing for the Royal Challengers Bangalore. He is aware that Kohli performs best at No. 3, but he still wants the star batter to step up if necessary.

Speaking on his YouTube channel ‘AB de Villiers 360’, Kohli’s former IPL teammate said, “We’re still talking about who will be the No. 4 batter for India. I’ve heard some rumours about Virat (Kohli) possibly taking up that position. I would be a big supporter of that.”

“I think Virat is perfect for No. 4. He can put the innings together, play any kind of role in that middle order. I don’t know if he would like to do that. We know he loves his No. 3 position; he’s scored all his runs there, but at the end of the day, if the



team needs you to do something, play a certain role, you have got to put your hand up and go for it,” former South Africa batter said.

India’s middle order has come into the spotlight yet again in the lead-up to the Asia Cup and the World Cup, with concerns around the fitness of Shreyas Iyer and KL Rahul, who were named for the upcoming marquee events despite being short of match time.

Both had been out of cricketering action for a while due to injuries.

As India named their Asia Cup squad, captain Rohit Sharma emphasised the need for flexibility in the batting order, adding that players should be prepared to bat at any position. The No. 4 spot, however, is most likely to go to Iyer, who is recovering from back surgery.

However, Kohli has had great success batting at that number in the past. At No. 4, Kohli has seven hundreds at a stellar average of 55.21 and a similarly stellar strike rate of 90.66. **-ANI**

### COVID POSITIVE

## Chameera may miss Asia Cup, setback for Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO:** In what could be a huge blow to Sri Lanka ahead of their Asia Cup 2023 matches, as they will be without their star bowler Dushmantha Chameera for the entirety of the Asia Cup, and seem doubtful to have all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga in their XI for the initial stage either, ESPNcricinfo reported.

Kusal Perera and Avishka Fernando, who were most likely to be selected for the Asia Cup team, have tested positive for COVID-19 and are currently being monitored. Their acceptance is contingent on how quickly they recover.

While recuperating from an ankle operation, Chameera sustained a shoulder injury during the most recent Lanka Premier League (LPL). Although he did not participate in any official games in the ODI World Cup qualifier because of an injury sustained during the tournament’s warm-ups, he last played an ODI on June 7 against Afghanistan, taking 4 for 63.

As per ESPNcricinfo, Cha-



meera is likely to be ruled out of the Asia Cup, though the board is waiting on further reports to confirm this. Due to a thigh strain, Hasaranga missed the LPL final. Hasaranga’s management believes that he won’t be ready for Sri Lanka’s games against Bangladesh and Afghanistan (in the Asia Cup group stage). Furthermore, Hasaranga’s availability will depend on whether he can participate without running the risk of suffering additional injuries if Sri Lanka advances past the group stage.

Hasaranga won’t play in top-

flight cricket again until after the World Cup because Sri Lanka wants him to be available for it. This is also true of Chameera, who, when healthy, is Sri Lanka’s preferred pace spearhead.

Fernando has not played an ODI since January, mostly due to injury while Perera has not played an ODI since 2021, due to both injury and modest form.

Hasaranga’s return to first-class cricket will be cautious because Sri Lanka wants him to be available for the World Cup. This is also true of Chameera, Sri Lanka’s go-to pace spearhead when healthy.

Hasaranga’s injury is a particularly severe setback to Sri Lanka’s chances of winning the Asia Cup. He topped the statistics for both runs scored and wickets taken throughout the LPL. While Chameera has frequently been replaced by Dilshan Madushanka, Kasun Rajitha, and Asitha Fernando, Sri Lanka has managed its attack without him, but they lack a tried-and-true Hasaranga substitute. **-ANI**

### 50-OVER CRICKET WORLD CUP

## Cricketers to use Kashmir willow bats at ODI World Cup in India

**SRINAGAR:** For the very first time, cricket bats crafted from the renowned Kashmir willow are set to take centre stage at the upcoming 50-over Cricket World Cup, scheduled for October in India.

According to reports, 17 international cricketers will be using Kashmir willow bats during the ODI World Cup in India has stirred excitement and pride among cricket enthusiasts and fans worldwide.

This development showcases the growing recognition and quality of these bats on the global stage, reflecting the exceptional craftsmanship and talent that Kashmir has to offer in the realm of cricketing gear.

GR8 Sports, a bat manufacturing company located in the Sangam area of south Kashmir’s

Anantnag district, will be supplying these unique bats to teams like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, as confirmed by Fawzal Kabeer, the owner of GR8 Sports.

Players from the UAE, West Indies, and Oman also wielded these Kashmir willow bats during the World Cup qualifiers held in Zimbabwe.

Fawzal Kabeer, owner of GR8 Sports states that the demand for Kashmir willow bats, an industry that directly or indirectly employs around 200,000 people, surged in the global market following their use by international cricket players from Oman and the UAE in the T20 World Cups held in the UAE and Australia in 2021 and 2022.

“The reputation of our crafted



bats soared even higher after UAE’s Junaid Siddiqui, using one of our bats, smashed the longest six of 109 meters during the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 match against Sri Lanka in Australia,” Kabeer stated.

After a decade-long wait, GR8 Sports, owned by Kabeer, became the first and only brand from Jammu and Kashmir to earn International Cricket Council (ICC) approval. This milestone was achieved on July 7, 2021.

Kabeer, a 31-year-old MBA graduate from the Islamic University of Science and Technology Awantipora in Kashmir, shared with Moneycontrol that he has meticulously adhered to all the ICC’s regulations. He also spoke of his skilled craftsmen whose dedication, expertise, and determination helped elevate Kashmir Willow to a global stage.

Kabeer and his team are brimming with excitement to witness the GR8 Sports bats being used in the cricket extravaganza hosted entirely in India for the first time.

“We’re hopeful that our bats will set new records. Our desire is for players using our bats to score abundant runs, hitting numerous sixes and fours in every match.”

Over the past two years, more

than 185,000 cricket bats crafted in Kashmir have been exported to various cricket-playing nations. However, Kabeer’s ultimate aspiration is to witness top-ranked players opting for these bats, genuinely showcasing the prowess of Kashmir-made cricketing gear.

“This achievement by GR8 Sports is a matter of immense pride for our region. Seeing our hometown Kashmir willow bats being used on the world stage is a dream come true,” said Ishfaq Ahmad, a local cricket enthusiast.

“As a cricket lover, it’s heartening to know that the quality of our Kashmir willow is gaining global recognition. This is a testament to the talent and craftsmanship of our people,” said a cricket coach of Srinagar. **-ANI**

## RENEWABLE ENERGY JOBS

Growing Southeast Asia's solar photovoltaic (PV) cells, battery, and electric two-wheeler industries presents an estimated \$90-100 billion revenue opportunity by 2030, with a potential 6 million renewable energy jobs to be created by 2050.

# MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



## BOOSTING SME GROWTH

Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has further strengthened its support for the pivotal role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman with the announcement of Tumouhi

# Muscat Stock Exchange continues to trade sideways

Improving trading volumes compared to the last few weeks could help stir the main index away from its current trend and toward a more consistent direction

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Omani stock market continued to see strong volatility this week but remained in an uncertain direction, trading mostly sideways, according to an industry analyst.

"The main index maintained the same trend since the beginning of July after it recorded wider swings and more pronounced directions during the first half of the year," said Daniel Takieddine, BDSwiss CEO MENA.

Improving trading volumes compared to the last few weeks could help stir the main index



away from its current trend and toward a more consistent direction, he said.

Despite the volatility, the financial sector was able to remain in positive territory. "Banks could benefit in the coming weeks if financing costs remain stable, loan growth stays strong and the local economy supports a positive sentiment," Daneil said.

Current global uncertainties could continue to impact the Omani stock market's direction. Traders have been monitoring the developments in energy markets in particular in addition to the changing expectations regarding monetary policy in the US. "This week, attention was centred around the speech from Jerome Powell, the Federal

Reserve's president," Daneil added. Jerome Powell reiterated the Federal Reserve's goal to pull inflation down to 2 percent and that the necessary measures would be put in place in this regard. The Federal Reserve could raise or leave interest rates elevated if required, impacting investors' sentiment and potentially pressuring Oman's economy.

Alternatively, sentiment was somewhat positive this week in the US stock market thanks to the optimistic expectations for AI growth. In this regard, Nvidia surpassed forecasts. The ensuing enthusiasm could spill over to other stock markets globally and could help fuel some risk appetite.

However, concerns about the state of the global economy re-emerged after a series of economic data releases in the US and Europe in particular. Services and manufacturing activity levels continued to decline in major European economies with some deterioration as well as in the US.

Declining economic activity has also affected oil markets which have been retreating this week before recovering to a certain extent. "Oil markets' performances could continue to see risks and volatility as traders' concerns shift between demand and supply issues. A fall in crude prices could affect sentiment on the Omani stock market," Daneil said.

## MSX records best trading value in 8 weeks

**MUSCAT:** The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) recorded last week the best trading value in eight weeks, benefiting from investors' interest in the shares of a number of leading companies and the increase in trading in the bond and sukuk market.

Last week's trading jumped to OMR19.3 million, recording the best level of weekly trading since the week ending July 6, which witnessed transactions worth OMR21.6 million.

Trading volumes on the MSX returned to an increase during the past two weeks, with investors focusing on the shares of a number of leading companies in various sectors, to increase trading from OMR9.8 million in the week ending on August 10 to OMR11.8 million in the following week, and continued its rise last week to OMR19.3 million, an increase of about 64 percent.

Last week also witnessed an increase in the number of deals executed which jumped above the 3,000 level for the



first time since last July 13. The number of executed deals last week reached 3,096 compared to 2,289, 1,598 and 1,881 deals in the previous three weeks.

In last week's trading, investors focused on the shares of Bank Muscat, Ooredoo, Omanel, Bank Sohar International,

Bank Nizwa, Abraaj Energy Services and Ominvest.

In the bond and sukuk market, Omvest Perpetual Bonds 2023 attracted investors to witness transactions worth OMR4.8 million, representing 25 percent of the total trading value. - **ONA**

## OMANI EXPORTS

# Credit Oman's volume of insured sales up 5% to top OMR161 million

**MUSCAT:** Credit Oman's volume of insured sales for Omani exports increased by 5 percent to more than OMR161 million during the first half of this year compared to OMR153 million in the same period in 2022.

Sheikh Khalil bin Ahmed Al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman, said that domestic sales within Oman during the first half of this year increased by 8 percent to OMR64.51 million compared to OMR59.77 million during the same period last year.

Insured sales of Omani exports to the world witnessed a growth of 3 percent to reach OMR96.67 million in the first half of this year compared to OMR93.63 during the same period last year.

The petrochemicals and plastics sector witnessed a growth in the volume of insured sales for exports by 161 percent to reach OMR6.84 million, the CEO of Credit Oman said in a statement to ONA.

The domestic insured sales for the same sector recorded a growth



of 546 percent valued at 6.72 million compared to OMR1.41 million in the same period in 2022, indicating that the materials related to this sector were polypropylene, which is used in plastic industries of all kinds, and urea, which is used in the manufacture of industrial fertilisers.

He further added that insured sales in the mining sector rose by

133 percent to OMR2.19 million during the first half of this year compared to OMR940.15 million during the same period in 2022. He said that the products of this sector included calcium, gypsum and metal, silicate, marble and others.

He pointed out that the clothing sector's insured sales registered a decrease of 36 percent to OMR807,541 in the first half of this

year compared to the same period last year.

Value of insured sales in other sectors like food and consumer goods decreased by 5 percent, to OMR73.79 million in the first half of 2023 compared to OMR76.83 in the same period last year.

The CEO of Credit Oman confirmed that this growth came as a result of the continuous efforts to enhance Omani exports and local sales and stand with Omani manufacturers through the innovative services and insurance solutions provided by "Credit Oman" according to their needs and support them to sell and enter new and promising markets around the world.

On the other hand, statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NSCI) indicated that the value of foreign trade for non-oil products amounted to about OMR2.73 billion at the end of May 2023, decreasing by 11.7 percent compared to the same period last year. - **ONA**

## TACKLING INFLATION

# Prepared to raise interest rates further if appropriate: Federal Reserve Chair

**WASHINGTON:** Chair of the United States Federal Reserve, Jerome H. Powell said that his central bank would continue its efforts to combat high inflation and that officials are prepared to raise interest rates further if needed.

At the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City's annual Jackson Hole conference in Wyoming, Powell addressing the "Structural Shifts in the Global Economy" symposium provided an update on the central bank's efforts to combat high inflation and outlined the outlook and uncertainties that lie ahead.

He acknowledged the emergence of high inflation as a result of strong demand and pandemic-related supply constraints.

"Although inflation has moved down from its peak - a welcome development - it remains too high," Powell said. "We are prepared to raise rates further if appropriate, and intend to hold policy at a restrictive level until we are confident that inflation is moving sustainably down toward

our objective," he said.

He noted that the Federal Reserve had already raised policy rates significantly over the past year, with the expectation that these moves would help slow the growth of aggregate demand, giving supply time to catch up.

However, he emphasised that even though inflation had started to come down from its peak, it remained too high.

The key interest rate has been increased to a 22-year high by policymakers in an effort to limit growth and lower inflation to their 2 per cent objective. Consumer inflation is currently 3.2 per cent, down from its peak of 9.1 per cent last year.

Home sales have fallen as a result of mortgage rates rising beyond 7 per cent to their highest levels in two decades.

Powell discussed two key inflation metrics, headline Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation and core PCE inflation, which excludes food and energy prices. - **ANI**

## CONCESSION AGREEMENT

# DP World to invest \$510 million to develop Tuna-Tekra mega-container terminal in India

**NEW DELHI:** DP World signed a concession agreement with the Deendayal Port Authority to develop, operate and maintain a new 2.19 million TEU per annum mega-container terminal at Kandla in Gujarat on India's western coast.

The concession agreement was signed between S. K. Mehta, Chairman of Deendayal Port Authority and Rizwan Soomar, MD and CEO, India Subcontinent, Middle East and North Africa, DP World. It was signed in the presence of Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of DP World, Shantanu Thakur, Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, at a ceremony in New Delhi.

The Deendayal Port Authority awarded the concession in January to develop the mega-container terminal to Hindustan Infralog Private Limited -- a joint venture between DP World and National Investment and Infrastructure



Fund, India's collaborative investment platform anchored by the Government of India. The concession is on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis for a period of 30 years with the option to extend for another 20 years.

The project involves the construction of a mega-container terminal at Tuna-Tekra near the existing Deendayal Port, at a cost of approximately \$510 million through a Public Private Partnership.

Once completed in 2027, the 2.19 million TEU per year terminal will have state-of-the-art equipment and a 1,100 m berth capable of handling next-generation vessels carrying more than 18,000 TEUs. As part of this concession agreement the berth can be further extended to 1,375 m.

The terminal will connect to the hinterland through the network of roads, highways, railways and Dedicated Freight Corridors,

supporting the growing demand for logistics solutions from across Northern, Western and Central India, connecting businesses in the regions to global markets.

DP World currently operates five container terminals in India - two in Mumbai, one each in Mundra, Cochin and Chennai - with a combined capacity of approximately 6 million TEUs. With the addition of Tuna Tekra, DP World will have a combined capacity of 8.19 million TEUs.

The project is part of the National Infrastructure Pipeline and will complement initiatives of the Government of India, such as the PM Gati Shakti Master Plan and National Logistics Policy. The container terminal will be fully compliant with the green port guidelines ensuring sustainability in port operations by adopting best practices of port environment management contributing towards the long-term sustainability goals set out by the Government of India. - **WAM**

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MARKET

# OAB’s Tumouhi programme set to boost SME growth in Oman

Tumouhi customers will have access to comprehensive solutions and financial services, including a suite of offers and discounts with various strategic partners across telecommunications, legal, transport, accounting and cybersecurity industries

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has further strengthened its support for the pivotal role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman with the announcement of Tumouhi. Launched under the patronage of Dr Nasser bin Rashid Al Mawali, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Economy, the programme is targeted towards helping the nation's SMEs thrive in a sector already en-

joying vibrant growth in the country. Tumouhi customers will have access to comprehensive solutions and financial services, including a suite of offers and discounts with various strategic partners across telecommunications, legal, transport, accounting and cybersecurity industries. It will also unlock a range of exclusive benefits to create a comprehensive ecosystem for SMEs, with waived fees for online banking and chequebooks, competitive rates on car loans and



POS machines as well as a complimentary Advantage Debit Card for business owners.

**Workshops** In addition, through tie-ups with subject matter experts and specialists, the SMEs will benefit from a variety of free workshops on how to run a successful enterprise. Topics include financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, governance and compliance and

business communications. Sulaiman Al Hinal, General Manager of Wholesale Banking Group at Oman Arab Bank, said: “SMEs are the lifeblood of any healthy economy and they have long been a priority in OAB's operations across the Sultanate of Oman. With Tumouhi, OAB aims to further support SME growth by streamlining their experience and establishing a strong reputation as a pivotal partner thanks to the



suite of benefits available. SMEs represent a crucial component on our road towards realising the bold blueprint of Oman's Vision 2040, which gives even more importance to this initiative as a vital development on this journey.” He added, “Tumouhi is it is a testament to our dedication to nurturing and cultivating the advancement of SMEs.” In addition, strategic and key partners have also come on board

to provide services and products for SMEs to foster their growth and facilitate their business operations. These include Oman Academy for SMEs, Omantel, National Life and General Insurance, Talal Abu Ghazaleh Global, Asia Solutions, Corwe Oman, Dalili, Global College of Engineering and Technology, Hamdan Al-Sadi Law Firm, Rajab Al Kathiri & Partners Law Firm, OSOS and Tatweer Cyber Security.

GLOBAL GOODS TRADE

ECONOMIC AND TRADE COOPERATION

## Goods barometer signals upturn in trade backed by strong auto demand

**GENEVA:** Global goods trade showed signs of a turnaround in the second quarter of 2023, driven by strong automobile production and sales, but further upward momentum in Q3 and beyond may be limited as long as export orders remain weak, according to the latest WTO Goods Trade Barometer. The current reading of 99.1 for the barometer index is up from the previous reading of 95.6 from last May and close to the baseline value of 100. This suggests that merchandise trade volume turned up in Q2 after two quarters of decline but remains slightly below trend. Sustained recovery in Q3 and beyond is less than certain as long as the barometer's export orders component (based on purchasing managers' indices) remains weak. The Goods Trade Barometer is a composite leading indicator for world trade, providing real-time information on the trajectory of merchandise trade relative to recent trends. Barometer values greater than 100 are associated with above-trend trade volumes while barometer values less than 100 suggest that goods trade has either fallen below trend or will do so in the near future.



The volume of merchandise trade was down 1.0 percent year-on-year and 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter in the first quarter of 2023, extending a downturn that began in the fourth quarter of 2022. Several factors contributed to the slump, including high food and energy prices, and tighter monetary policies aimed at fighting inflation in advanced economies. Global import demand remains weak, weighed down by sluggish economic growth in leading economies, including the European

Union and China. The current results are slightly weaker than WTO's most recent trade forecast issued on 5th April, which projected 1.7 percent growth in merchandise trade in 2023. However, the target is still attainable if trade growth picks up in the second half of the year as expected. Most of the barometer's component indices were slightly below trend in their latest readings. These include the export orders index (97.6), the container shipping index (99.5), the air freight index

(97.5), and the raw materials index (99.2). The main exceptions were the automotive products index (110.8), which has climbed firmly above trend, and the electronic components index (91.5), which has fallen below trend. Surging exports of automotive products have contributed to stronger-than-expected GDP growth in Japan in the first half of 2023. Vehicle exports have also been a rare source of strength for the Chinese economy, which has struggled to gain momentum in recent months. -WAM

## Chinese modernisation to provide new opportunities for ASEAN countries

**BEIJING:** China is promoting Chinese modernisation with high-quality development, which will bring new opportunities for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, an official said. Vice Minister of Commerce Li Fei told a press conference that China and ASEAN have upgraded economic and trade cooperation in recent years and achieved fruitful results. “As the dividends from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) continue to emerge, the construction of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (FTA) is forging ahead, which will cement the roles of China and ASEAN as each other's largest trading partner,” Li said. In 2022, the bilateral trade increased 11.2 percent year on year to \$975.3 billion, up significantly from 443.6 billion dollars a decade ago. By July this year, two-way investments topped 380 billion dollars, with an increasing number of Chinese-funded companies and jointly-developed innovation parks. Li said the two sides are active-



ly pushing forward the negotiation of version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN FTA to promote a higher level of opening up. In the latest efforts to deepen cooperation, the 20th China-ASEAN Expo will be held from Sept. 16 to 19 in Nanning, capital of south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. As of now, nearly 1,700 enterprises, including many Global Fortune 500 companies, and delegations from over 40 countries and regions, will participate in the event. In the period, more than 70 economic and trade promotion activities will be held to strengthen cooperation. -Xinhua



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NEW RESEARCH

## Renewable energy manufacturing in Southeast Asia can generate \$90-100 billion in revenue by 2030

**JAKARTA:** Growing Southeast Asia's solar photovoltaic (PV) cells, battery, and electric two-wheeler industries presents an estimated \$90-100 billion revenue opportunity by 2030, with a potential 6 million renewable energy jobs to be created by 2050, according to new research released on the sidelines of the ASEAN Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Bloomberg Philanthropies, ClimateWorks Foundation, and Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL). The new report, Renewable Energy Manufacturing: Opportunities for Southeast Asia, warns that the Southeast Asian region could lose up to 30 percent of its gross domestic product by 2050 due to increases in global temperature and extreme weather events, but bolstering the region's renewable energy manufacturing capacity would position Southeast Asian countries to create new jobs and meet growing energy demand while drastically reducing emissions. The report explores how to support the development of the clean energy manufacturing sector in Southeast Asia and help countries reap its immense economic potential while mitigating the impacts of climate change. Seizing this opportunity depends on government policy measures specific to each country in the region, including stimulating domestic



renewable energy demand, ensuring cost competitiveness, improving the ease of doing business, and improving access to export markets. Collaboration at the regional level is also essential to provide further support through the deepening of intraregional trade. The report identifies potential ambition and outcomes for Southeast Asia to achieve the following: Grow solar PV manufacturing capacity in modules from 70 GW to 125-150 GW by 2030. Develop a regional battery manufacturing value chain, increasing national and regional demand, and establish Southeast Asia as a regional and global export hub, producing 140-180 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of battery cells by 2030. Expand assembly capacity for

electric two-wheelers (E2W) in Southeast Asia from 1.4 to 1.6 million units annually to approximately 4 million units by 2030. “This research shows the promise of renewable energy manufacturing—with policy, technical, and financing support—in helping the region's developing countries to transition away from coal-based energy, while lowering carbon emissions, expanding local industrial capabilities, spurring job creation, and driving long-term economic growth,” said ADB Sector Group Director General and Group Chief Ramesh Subramaniam. of its gross domestic product by 2050 due to increases in global temperature and extreme weather events, but bolstering the region's renewable energy manu-

facturing capacity would position Southeast Asian countries to create new jobs and meet growing energy demand while drastically reducing emissions. The report explores how to support the development of the clean energy manufacturing sector in Southeast Asia and help countries reap its immense economic potential while mitigating the impacts of climate change. Seizing this opportunity depends on government policy measures specific to each country in the region, including stimulating domestic renewable energy demand, ensuring cost competitiveness, improving the ease of doing business, and improving access to export markets. Collaboration at the regional level is also essential to provide further support through the deepening of intraregional trade. The report identifies potential ambition and outcomes for Southeast Asia to achieve the following: Grow solar PV manufacturing capacity in modules from 70 GW to 125-150 GW by 2030. Develop a regional battery manufacturing value chain, increasing national and regional demand, and establish Southeast Asia as a regional and global export hub, producing 140-180 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of battery cells by 2030. Expand assembly capacity for electric two-wheelers in Southeast Asia from 1.4 to 1.6 million units annually to approximately 4 million units by 2030. -WAM



**SALMAN KHAN  
CLOCKS 35 YEARS  
IN BOLLYWOOD  
INDUSTRY**

With programmes like ‘Dus Ka Dum’ and ‘Bigg Boss,’ the Indian superstar has impressed his fans

**T**he superstar has conquered the industry with his charisma, dynamic screen presence, body, acting, attitude, and line delivery, which has helped to build his enormous and devoted fan base.

After dominating movie theatres and television sets, the celebrity dominated the OTT Platform with his inaugural programme, BiggBoss OTT. With programmes like ‘Dus Ka Dum’ and ‘Bigg Boss,’ the Superstar has impressed his fans.

Salman has also had success as a producer. He founded ‘Salman Khan Films’ in 2011 with the release of ‘Chillar Party,’ which was followed by ‘Bajrangi Bhaijaan,’ which not only dominated the box office but also earned multiple accolades.

The official page of ‘Salman Khan Films’ shared a post on Instagram to celebrate the superstar’s amazing journey on Saturday. Taking to their Instagram account, the production house captioned, “35 years of Salman Khan’s romance with cinema, a journey filled with action and a legacy that will go on. #35YearsOfSalmanKhanReign @beingsalmankhan”

**Salman fans even went berserk and trended #35YearsOfSalmanKhan-Reign on social media on Friday**

Meanwhile, Salman will be next seen in his much-awaited action thriller film “Tiger 3”.

‘Tiger 3’, the third part of the Tiger franchise, is directed by Maneesh Sharma. The film will be released in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu this Diwali. The upcoming action stars Emraan Hashmi as the antagonist. Katrina is also a part of the film.

Tiger 3, which is part of the fabled YRF Spy Universe, has roped in Hollywood action director Mark Scizak. Mark has previously worked with Christopher Nolan in visual spectacles like Dunkirk and The Dark Knight Rises!

As per the source, “If you look at the line-up of action directors in Tiger 3, you will realise that producer Aditya Chopra and director Maneesh Sharma mean business. They want to give audiences a pulsating action spectacle as the best of the best names from Hollywood are now part of this film. Mark Scizak, who has previously worked with Christopher Nolan, is part of this film too! The scale of this film will be epic!”

It has also been reported that Hollywood action coordinator Chris Barnes, who has worked on Marvel’s historic hit, Avengers: Endgame, is also part of “Tiger 3”.

Reportedly, Shah Rukh Khan has a cameo in the film. The official announcement is awaited. -ANI



**LIFESTYLE**



SPORTS

# Oman table tennis partnership with ITTF to develop game in the country

**Bamakahelf:** The agreement will help OTTA to take a giant leap in developing local TT

Times News Service

**MUSCAT:** The Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA) has signed a strategic partnership with ITTF, the world Table Tennis governing body. The signing agreement function took place recently as a side-line of the 2023 ITTF Annual General Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand. The ITTF quick pathway program agreement was signed by Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakahelf, OTTA Chairman, representing Oman side while Polona Cehovin Susin, ITTF Development Director, signed on behalf of ITTF. The signing function attended by Sajad Mohamed Baqir, Vice chairman of OTTA, and representatives of ITTF development team members.

The three years agreement will enable OTTA to manage and develop the athletes. Also, the deal will help on technical improvement on the coach education and Match officials' education. Beside that the agreement will support the Events related education (Competition management) and assist OTTA to implement the best practices in the Media and marketing and do proper promotion and popularization of table tennis/Sport for all.

The "Quick Pathway" is a unique program provided by ITTF for a long-term table tennis development experience tailored to Member Association's needs and realities. It provides significant support in terms of financial, material and human resources to the selected Member Associations in order to meet their greatest needs in the various areas of development and achieve sustainable growth of our sport within the Member Association and in general.

The signed agreement meant, OTTA will receive funding support from ITTF during the over the 3-year period of the program and will be based on the selected



KPIs and key activities presented. The financing of the program will be based on the achievable KPI's through different activities included in the program on annual basis.

The sponsored program by the ITTF, will support OTTA to take a giant leap towards providing a strategic plans for development of Oman national Table Tennis. The

program will provide a crucial impact on the national teams as they will get a comprehensive development plans beside the supervision from the expert represented by the

Technical Director and helping the clubs to have a perfect structure for table tennis sport. Moreover, the agreement will be a great base for "Talent identification & Youth Development Program" and OTTA will get a detailed Educational Plans for the different relative human resources in the association.

Abdullah bin Mohammed Bamakahelf, OTTA Chairman, thanked ITTF for selecting OTTA to be part of this programme. "We are very pleased with this agreement and special thanks for the ITTF officials and representatives for considering OTTA to get the desired benefits from this programme. Definitely, this agreement will move OTTA to a different level in terms of the national teams, development of human resources, improvement of the domestic competitions and many others targets," he added.

"I am confident everyone in

Oman Table Tennis family will impact positively from this agreement as it will contribute to achieving the required development for national teams and finding the required talents and competencies, noting that the federation will work with all parties represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, as well as the concerned associations namely Oman Schools Sports Association (OSSA) as well as local clubs in achieving all the goals related to this agreement. I am looking forward towards the desired outputs of this program which will contribute to forming strong national teams, the implementation of high standards local events and competitions and presence of Omani qualified TT representatives at the international levels events including the umpires, competition officials, players, coaches and others," he ended

OMAN SAIL'S SAILING SCHOOLS

## Next generation of Oman's national sailing squad decided at Ras Al Hadd

**MUSCAT:** Three days of competition in Ras Al Hadd produced many extraordinary performances as 30 young sailors, aged from 10-18 years of age, from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools raced in Optimist, ILCA 4, and ILCA 6 classes for the chance to represent the nation in upcoming regattas, both at home and internationally.

After nine races in each event, the top three sailors in each class were determined and the top ranked sailors will now take the next step in their journey on the water. A separate competition was held for girls and sailors under the age of 10 in the Optimist class.

In the Optimist overall rankings, Firas Haitham Al Nabhani notched four wins and always finished within the top three of each race to take first place ahead of Tamim Sulaiman Al Balushi who also scored four wins but finished just three points behind. Abdul Rahman Khalid Al Hadi finished in the top three in five of the nine races to secure third place.

The Optimist Girls race was won by Tarteel Zaid Al Hasani after six successive race victories.

She finished four points ahead of Hadeel Yusof Al Meshafri. In the Under-10 category, Habib Abdul Aziz Al Hasini won seven of the nine races to claim victory by five points over Harib Mohsin Al Busaidi. Both competitors showed excellent sailing skills at such a young age and will be considered ones to watch in the coming years.

The ILCA 4 fleet, the largest of the competition featuring 14 sailors, was won by Hatem Mohsin Khamis Al Araimi with six wins and an eight point lead over Elyas



Bader Mohammed Al Adawi in second and Faisal Hamed Mohammed Al Adawi a further three points back. Between the three sailors they scored eight wins, seven second places and three third places, which underlined the quality of sailing on show. Visiting sailor Sultan Khalid Al Owais from the United Arab Emirates took a narrow victory in the ILCA 6 class, just one point ahead of Al Salim Ali Salim Al Hamdani after trading wins throughout. Al Owais finished with five victories to Al Hamdani's four. Salah Maqbol Al

Mabsali finished third.

The medallists received their prizes at the closing ceremony, held at Ras Al Hadd Castle. Dr Hashil Bin Obaid Al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, was the guest of honour.

Dr Khamis Al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "The skill on show over the past three days was incredibly impressive for such young sailors. We have high hopes for the future of sailing in Oman, and the young team will play an integral part in achieving our goals and realising our ambitions as part of

a national program to develop the sport. Oman Sail will now work closely with the athletes to prepare them for upcoming races as they join our Performance Pathway and represent our nation proudly around the world."

The sailors have been selected from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Barceló Mussanah Resort and Sur. Five sailors from the Al-Hamriyah Sailing Team in the United Arab Emirates were also invited to compete as part of their own preparations for the upcoming season. Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 sailors had been based in Ras Al Hadd for a summer-long training camp where they had been taking part in daily fitness sessions with Oman Sail coaches and completing courses on nutrition and boat safety.

Oman Sail also wrapped up a three-month community sailing program in Ras Al Hadd to introduce 100 local children to the sport. The kids, aged 10-15 years of age, had the chance to enjoy free Try Sailing sessions with Oman Sail coaches and develop basic on-water skills with the aim of growing the popularity of sailing locally and sharing Oman's maritime heritage with the community.

Planning will soon begin for Mussanah Race Week, held at Barceló Mussanah Resort from 18-24 October, where 50 sailors from across the region will compete in the Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 classes. Following that, the national Optimist team take part in the 2023 IODA Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship, being held in Abu Dhabi from 29 October to 5 November 2023.

PREMIER LEAGUE

## Sterling's brace helps Mauricio get first win



**London:** A brace by Raheem Sterling helped Mauricio Pochettino clinch his first victory as Chelsea defeated Luton 3-0 in an away outing at Stamford Bridge on Friday.

After a draw and loss started his Premier League campaign on a forgettable note, Mauricio secured his first competitive win of the club since his appointment and Sterling continued his fine form at the start of the season. Chelsea was also struggling with the problem of integrating a flux of summer recruits.

A defeat to Luton, who last won in the league at Stamford Bridge in 1986 and are yet to score a point in their debut Premier League season would have added more to the negative noise surrounding Mauricio's tenure, with the club having splurged over 350 million pounds on new signings this summer.

Mauricio had warned The Blues that Luton would get the better of them if they failed to match the hunger and desire to win of Rob Edwards' newly-promoted side.

Chelsea opened the scoring in the 17th minute, with Sterling

picking up the ball from the right-hand side before driving through the Luton defence and delivering a superb finish. His goal was his third attempt made in the first 20 minutes or so.

Chelsea went into the second half with a slender 1-0 lead. They could have doubled their lead in the early stage of the second half as Ben Chilwell found a hole in Luton's defence and tried to pass to Sterling, but could not make much of this opportunity.

The hosts doubled their lead with Sterling in action again, in the 68th minute. He got on the end of a perfect cross from Malo Gusto and stroked the ball right into the nets. In the 75th minute, Nicolas Jackson added more to Luton's miseries, lurking at the back post and getting on the end of Sterling's cross and tapping in his first goal for the club.

Following the match, Chelsea boss Mauricio said as quoted by Sky Sports, "I am really pleased. It was a solid performance. I am happy because the first victory is always very important, to provide the team with the confidence and trust in the way we are doing things." -ANI

# BRICS expansion sparks joy in Africa

Questions are also being asked whether the bloc will be able to iron out the difference between Cairo and Addis Ababa over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

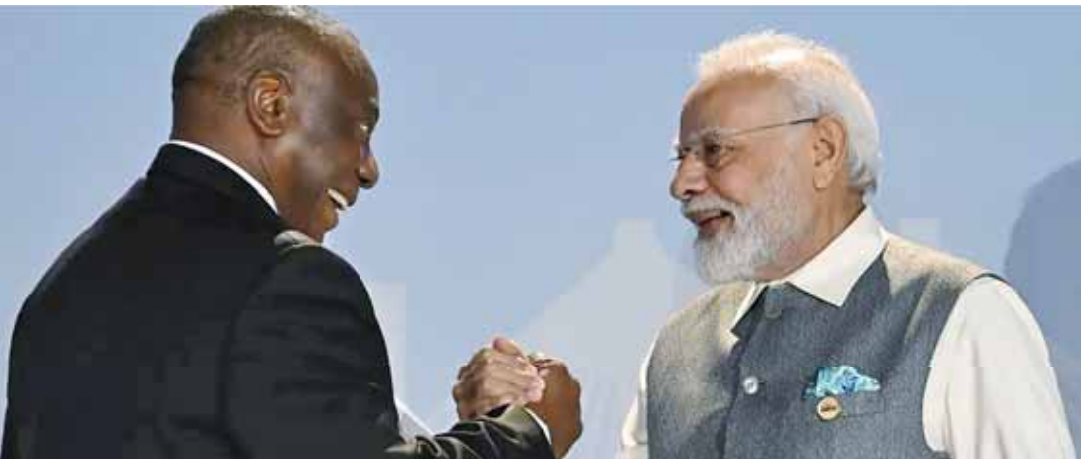
**ANALYSTS** are describing the planned expansion of the BRICS bloc as a significant shift in the geopolitical landscape. It was announced as part of the Johannesburg Declaration II that was unveiled on August 24, 2023, after the conclusion of the 15th BRICS summit at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, the current BRICS chairperson, told journalists at a media briefing that six new countries would be joining the bloc.

“We have decided to invite the Argentine Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to become full members of BRICS. Membership will take effect from January 1, 2024.”

### Africa welcomes new additions to BRICS

Zambian President Hakainde Hichilema, chairperson of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), described the African continent’s expanding partnership with BRICS as a win-win. “We see this as a rare opportunity to



address the challenges we have been talking about for a long time and on many platforms,” he said.

“We need to reform the global order in particular to address the inequities associated with critical ingredients to development such as capital. Africa pays a higher cost of capital than any other on the globe,” the Zambian leader added, stating that the BRICS platform should, and could, be used to work through and expedite the reform pro-

cesses around issues inhibiting development.”

### Africa relishes new role in the global order

The planned inclusion of two more African countries – Egypt and Ethiopia – in the bloc has generated much interest on the continent. “The partnership between BRICS and Africa goes beyond convenience,” Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who chairs the Intergovernmental Authority on Development

(IGAD), told the BRICS-Africa dialogue meeting in Johannesburg. “It is a step that places Africa in its rightful position within the global order.”

Gideon Chitanga, a research associate at the African Centre for the Study of the United States at the Witwatersrand University, told DW that the inclusion of Egypt and Ethiopia would give Africa more of a voice on global issues.

“You can see the deliberate effort to represent Africa regionally,” Chitanga told DW. “South

Africa being from Southern Africa, they [BRICS] have added Ethiopia from East Africa and Egypt from North Africa,” he noted, adding that the move would represent African interests more broadly and inclusively.

### Managing tensions within BRICS

Amidst the euphoria, questions are also being asked about whether the bloc will be able to iron out the difference between the governments in Cairo and Addis Ababa over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam being built on the Blue Nile.

Luanda Mpungose from the South African Institute of International Affairs told DW that BRICS countries had always had good relations despite existing differences between certain member states.

“Even with the original five countries, there were tensions between India and China, but you have never heard that India is not going to China to attend a conference and vice versa,” he said.

“What makes the BRICS very unique is the set of principles that

guide their cooperation.

### BRICS expansion adds economic clout

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that the new additions would mean that BRICS would represent 46% of the global population. Its combined GDP would jumps to 37% of the global economy.

The bloc has made a tactical decision to include Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, which boast rich oil reserves.

Brett Singh, a business delegate at the summit, said the expansion would mean a larger market and a better trading environment. “What I will be hoping to see is not just talking but also we can try and take action so that the ordinary citizen can also see contribution and see growth in our communities and neighbourhoods and we grow as one and prosper as one,” he told DW.

Busisiwe Mabuza, a member of the BRICS Business Council, also welcomed the expansion. “We used to have a deregulations working group, which we have now refocused into a trade and investment working group that is going to track how we are performing in terms of balancing trade amongst our respective nations,” he said.

### BRICS new currency?

The possibility of introducing a BRICS currency also generated much interest at the just-concluded summit. “We have noted that there is global momentum for the use of local currencies, alternative financial arrangements and alternative payment systems,” South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said. “As BRICS, we are ready to explore opportunities for improving the stability, reliability and fairness of the global financial architecture.”

However, he said the issue was still under consideration. BRICS ministers of finance and central bank governors have been tasked to deliberate on the use and strengthening of local currencies and payment systems and to report back at the next summit. -DW

## TRANSDERMAL MEDICINE

# Study finds bioactive material for electrospray deposition



**WASHINGTON:** For the purpose of covering a variety of medical devices with biologically active ingredients, researchers created a very accurate approach. The researchers claim that such a method might usher in a new era of transdermal medicine, including immunisations without shots.

In Nature Communications, researchers described a fresh method for electrospray deposition, an industrial spray-coating procedure.

In essence, Rutgers scientists came up with a way to better regulate the target area within a spray zone as well as the electrical characteristics of the small particles being deposited. The more effectively these two characteristics are used, the more likely it is that the spray will strike its tiny target.

By applying a high voltage to a flowing liquid, such as a biopharmaceutical, manufacturers can employ electrospray deposition to turn it into tiny particles. As each droplet moves towards its destination, it evaporates, depositing a solid precipitate from the starting fluid.

“While many people think of electrospray deposition as an efficient method, applying it normally does not work for targets that are smaller than the spray, such as the microneedle arrays in transdermal patches,” said Jonathan Singer, an associate professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering in the Rutgers School of Engineering and an author on the study.

“Present methods only achieve about 40 per cent efficiency. However, through advanced engineering techniques we’ve developed, we can achieve efficiencies statistically indistinguishable from 100 per cent.”

Coatings are increasingly critical for a variety of medical applications. They are used on medical devices implanted into the body, such as stents, defibrillators and pacemakers.

They are beginning to be used more frequently in new products employing biologicals, such as transdermal patches.

Advanced biological or “bioactive” materials – such as drugs

– can be costly to produce, especially if any of the material is wasted, which can greatly limit whether a patient can receive a given treatment.

“We were looking to evaluate if electrospray deposition, which is a well-established method for analytical chemistry, could be made into an efficient approach to create biomedically active coatings,” Singer said.

Higher efficiencies could be the key to making electrospray deposition more appealing for the manufacture of medical devices using bioactive materials, researchers said.

“Being able to deposit with 100 per cent efficiency means none of the material would be wasted, allowing devices or vaccines to be coated in this way,” said Sarah Park, a doctoral student in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering who is the first author on the paper.

“We anticipate that future work will expand the range of compatible materials and the material delivery rate of this high-efficiency approach.” -ANI

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ROUND-UP

# Danube Home unveils its re-imagined Mabelah and Al Khuwair showrooms

Danube Home unveils reduced prices, reliable quality and renewed experience in its re-imagined Al Mabelah and Al Khuwair showrooms

**MUSCAT:** Danube Home is one of the leading home improvement and furniture retailers in the GCC. The brand announced an array of exciting changes that are set to elevate customers shopping experience and reestablish the brand as the 'Destination for Home'.

With a renewed focus on quality, affordability, and customer satisfaction, Danube Home invites one and all to explore its re-imagined stores in Al Mabelah and Al Khuwair. The brand also ran a three-day grand relaunch sale in both showrooms from August 24 to 26, where customers could avail up to 90% off on a stunning selection of products.

"We are consistently and dedicatedly working towards creating stellar shopping experiences for our customers and making world-class products easily available to them. The grand relaunch of our Al Mabelah and Al Khuwair showrooms is a step in this direction. We have taken customer feedback and worked on it.

"This is why we have re-looked our product pricing strategy as well as the quality of our products to ensure customers will get the best value for money when they shop from us," says Adel Sajjan, Managing Director, Danube Group.

Danube Home presents a fresh collection of superior quality prod-



ucts across categories like indoor and garden furniture, furnishing, décor, homeware, hardware and tools, lighting and chandeliers, electrical, bath fittings, tiling, flooring, carpets, readymade and customisable curtains, modular kitchen and more in the newly relaunched showrooms.

Discover an expansive range of new designs that cater to a variety of tastes and preferences, ensuring there's something for everyone. Danube Home also offers free interior designing service across their showrooms for customers looking to create their dream home.

That's not all – with an unwavering commitment to delivering the best value, Danube Home is offering reduced prices on a wide selection of products and offering 2-year warranty on most of the products.

"Being a customer centric brand, your shopping experience is our priority. We have meticulously re-designed our store layout to provide you with a seamless jour-



ney as you explore our vast range of products. With a spacious and inviting atmosphere, you'll find it easier than ever to envision how our products can transform your living spaces. Quality and reliability matter most to our customers. That's why we are excited to introduce a minimum 2-year warranty on the majority of our products.

Our commitment to offering exceptional value extends to our fair pricing strategy, ensuring you get the best deals without compromising on quality," says Sayed Habib, Director, Danube Home.

"We value your loyalty and are excited to introduce the Ahlan Loyalty Programme. Download the Ahlan app to earn Ahlan points

on all your purchases from Danube Home. Accumulate these points and redeem them on your future purchases, making your shopping experience even more rewarding," he adds.

Danube Home also has exciting programs like the Privileged Partners Programme for professional contractors, Sadiki program that

celebrates and rewards loyal customers, and the Danube Designers Partnership Program that aims to collaborate with interior designers.

Danube Home is excited to unveil these transformative changes, ensuring that a home furnishing journey is not just a shopping experience, but a celebration of style, comfort, and innovation.

ISLAMIC FINANCE KNOWLEDGE SERIES

## Bank Nizwa promotes Islamic finance in Salalah through knowledge sessions

**MUSCAT:** Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in Oman, held the latest edition of its Islamic Finance Knowledge Series (IFKS) in Salalah. The insightful session was led by Sheikh Dr. Ali bin Sulaiman bin Mohammed Al-Jahdhami, member of the Sharia Board at Bank Nizwa.

Sheikh Dr Ali engaged the staff of the General Directorate of Endowment and Religious Affairs in Dhofar Governorate with an enlightening session, discussing the fundamentals of Islamic finance and its impact on the banking landscape in the Sultanate. The audience received a wealth of information about Sharia-compliant banking principles, the importance of financial literacy, and the growth, and flourishing of the Islamic banking sector.

Commenting on the success of Bank Nizwa's Islamic Finance Knowledge Series and the latest session in Salalah, Sheikh Dr. Ali Al-Jahdhami, said, "At Bank Nizwa, we continue to foster economic stability and social welfare through our ethical and sustainable Islamic banking practices. It is our dedication to raise awareness across the country that has brought about the success of the IFKS sessions. We are proud of this initiative, and our



efforts to integrate Sharia-compliant principles with modern banking practices to offer innovative products and services."

As the most trusted bank in the Islamic finance sector, Bank Nizwa has contributed to the growth of Islamic banking. Over the past months, the bank has conducted IFKS sessions in different parts of the country, reaching diverse communities across Oman, in line with their mission to foster a true understanding of Islamic finance among the public and to cultivate a healthy financial outlook among communities.

The IFKS sessions have been instrumental in promoting the importance of making well-informed financial decisions in order to

achieve one's financial aspirations aligned with one's beliefs.

Since its establishment a decade ago, Bank Nizwa has been actively working towards the innovation, creation and development of fully Sharia-compliant products and services as alternatives to those offered in conventional banking. As the leading Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa is committed to maintaining its position as a trusted partner to the community, and to its mission to serve its customers with products and services to cater to their every banking need. The bank recognises that raising awareness about Islamic finance across communities is paramount to sustaining Oman's overall economic stability and welfare.

HOSPITAL



## Aster Royal Al Raffah launches state-of-the-art foot and ankle clinic

**MUSCAT:** Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital in Muscat has launched its new Foot and Ankle Clinic, a state-of-the-art facility that offers comprehensive care for all foot and ankle conditions. The clinic, a Centre of Excellence for Orthopaedics, boasts a team of highly qualified and experienced UK-trained doctors, including Dr Sandesh Shetty, Consultant with 18+ years, Dr Mansoor M K, Specialist with 20+ years and Dr Kalyan Srungavarapu with 16+ years of experience.

The launch event was attended by two special guests, Dr Mazin Al Khabouri, a Senior Consultant ENT Surgeon and ex-Director General for Private Health Es-

tablishments at the Ministry of Health Oman and John Burridge, a renowned English former goalkeeper. Both guests were welcomed by the hospital's management and staff, who were thrilled to have them as part of the event.

The Foot and Ankle Clinic offers a wide range of services, including ankle arthroscopy, ankle ligament repair and reconstruction, foot and ankle deformity corrections, foot and ankle arthrodesis/fusions, bunion surgery, foot reconstruction, Achilles tendinitis, heel pain and plantar fasciitis, tarsal tunnel syndrome, foot and ankle fractures, and metatarsalgia. With its state-of-the-art facilities and highly qualified staff,

the clinic is poised to become a leading destination for patients seeking comprehensive care for their foot and ankle conditions.

The launch of the Foot and Ankle Clinic is a significant milestone for Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital, which is committed to providing the highest quality of care to all patients. The presence of John Burridge and Dr. Mazin Al Khabouri at the event was a testament to the importance of the clinic and the hospital's commitment to providing expert care to patients. With the launch of this new clinic, Aster Royal Al Raffah Hospital has taken a big step towards revolutionizing foot and ankle care in Muscat and beyond.



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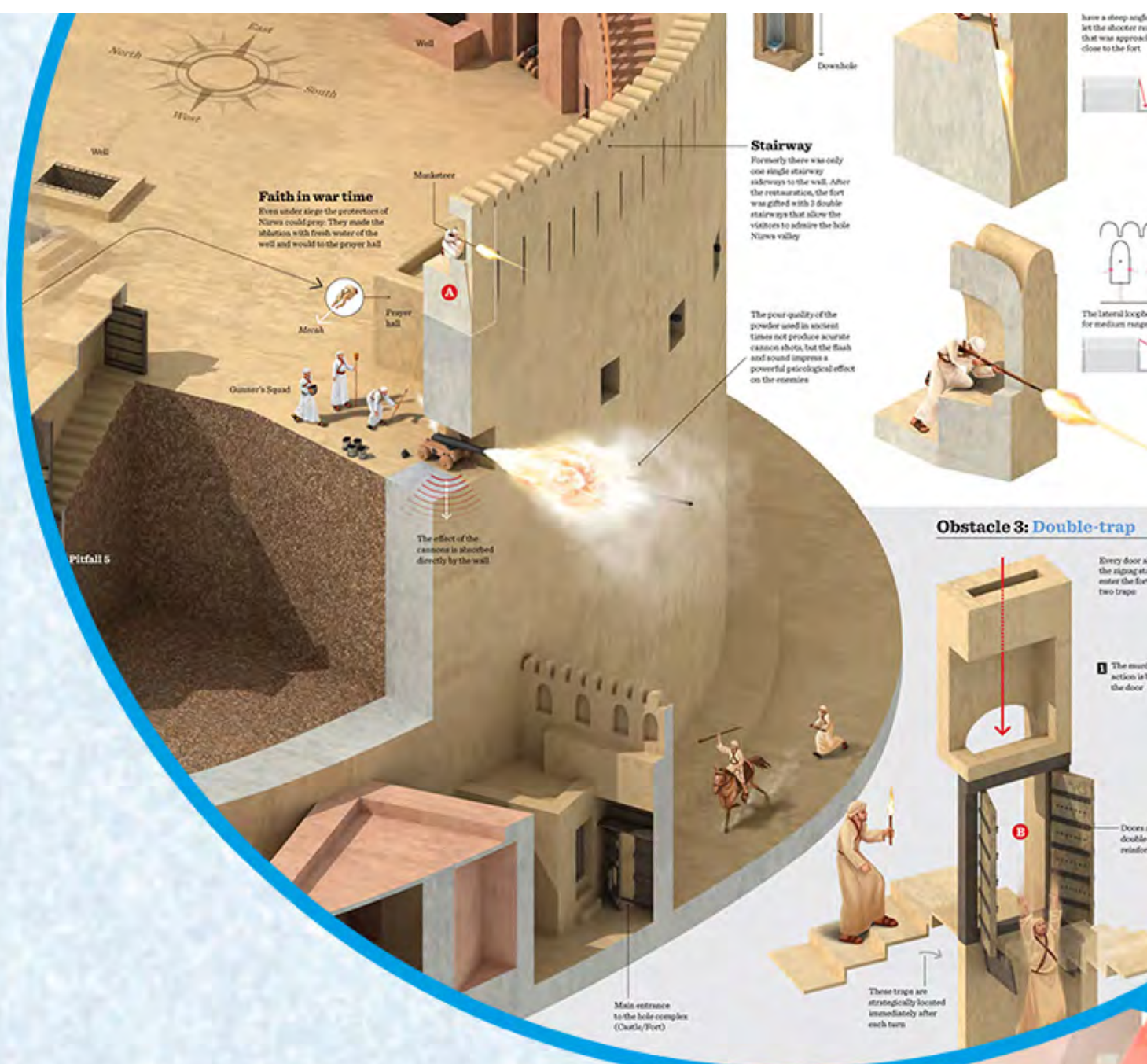
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