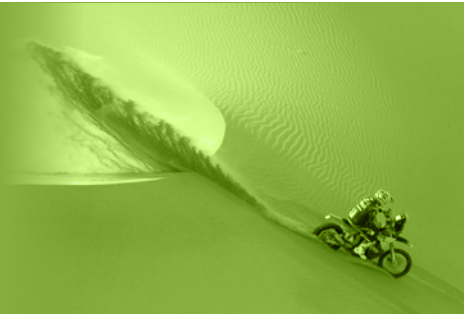


HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the inaugural ceremony of the first edition of 'Oman Conference on Environmental Sustainability' tomorrow January 16. The four-day conference will focus on air pollution, climate change and other issues. The event will include the launch of the 'Green Branch Award' designed for contributors and supporters of environmental action. **SEE P2**



P10

LOEB'S SIX
APPEAL
MAKES DAKAR
HISTORY



P13

OMAN MAY
ACHIEVE FISCAL
SURPLUS
AGAIN IN 2023



P20

AN ILLUSTRATION
OF DETERMINATION,
CREATIVITY AND
RESOURCEFULNESS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO ITALY CONVEYED

HH Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda bin Majid al Said, presented his credentials as the accredited ambassador to the Italian Republic. The credentials presentation took place when Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy, received HH Sayyid Nizar. HH Sayyid Nizar conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Italian president and his wishes of good health and happiness and more progress and prosperity for the Italian people. The Italian president asked HH Sayyid Nizar to pass on his greetings to His Majesty the Sultan and his wishes of continued development under His Majesty's leadership. **SEE P2**

OQ'S AMMONIA PLANT OPENING TODAY

His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, will preside over the inauguration of OQ's Ammonia Plant in Salalah on Sunday. The plant is one of OQ's main development projects and will contribute to enhancing the utilisation of Oman's natural resources. It will support the economic diversification plans and will boost the export of Omani products to international markets. Eng Kamil al Shanfari, Executive Director of OQ's Projects in Salalah, said: "OQ's Ammonia Plant is integrated with the methanol plant and was designed to retain the hydrogen-rich purge gas generated by the methanol plant as feedstock. The demand for ammonia products in the global markets is witnessing constant growth leading to higher returns and rendering the project highly feasible."

INSIDE



CHINA REPORTS HUGE RISE IN COVID-RELATED DEATHS **P6**



THIS KENYAN SLUM HAS SOMETHING TO TEACH THE WORLD **P7**

ZERO DEGREES CELSIUS IN JABAL SHAMS



Low temperatures were recorded in various governorates of the Sultanate on Saturday, including zero degrees Celsius in Jabal Shams, and 8.4 degrees Celsius in Saiq.

Muscat Nights details to be unveiled today

STAFF REPORTER
Muscat, Jan 14

Muscat Municipality will unveil the details of Muscat Nights today, according to a statement issued to the media. It may be noted that Qurum Natural Park will be one of the venues of the newly announced Muscat Nights. The municipality also recently announced the closure of Al Naseem Public Park. Both these parks have been closed for preparations for the activities of Muscat Nights 2023, which will start on January 19 and continue till February 4. This year's event will be a successor to the Muscat Festival, which was held in the capital annually since its inception in 1998. The last edition of the festival was held in 2019 as the mega event was suspended following the Covid-19 related restrictions.

UK to ban single-use plastic cutlery, plates

LONDON: Single-use plastic plates, cutlery and a host of other items are set to be banned in England from October, the British government has said. The Department for the Environment said that a new ban will also cover single-use plastic bowls, trays as well as certain types of polystyrene cups and food containers, as the government seeks to curb the "devastating" impact of plastic on the environment. Department officials said that England uses around 2.7 billion items of single-use cutlery per year, with only 10 per cent recycled. The change will mean that from October this year, the public will not be able to buy the banned items from retailers, takeaways and food vendors. Under new legislation, it is expected that the ban will be enforced through civil sanctions - but with the possibility of repeated breaches ending up in a criminal offence. "We all know the absolutely devastating impacts that plastic can have on our environment and wildlife. We have listened to the public and these new single-use plastics bans will continue our vital work to protect the environment for future generations," Environment Secretary Therese Coffey said. "I am proud of our efforts in this area: We have banned micro beads, restricted the use of straws, stirrers and cotton buds and our carrier bag charge has successfully cut sales by over 97 per cent in supermarkets." — dpa



Vegetables wrapped in plastic packaging are seen at a supermarket in London. — AFP

Metro on track as Greater Muscat project takes off



VINOD NAIR
[@vinot_nair](#)

The upgradation of the public transport system will be key as the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning embarks on the ambitious Greater Muscat Development Plan. The project aims to accommodate the increasing future population, attract investment, develop transportation, raise the quality of services, strengthen infrastructure and protect the environment. The Greater Muscat project will focus on making the capital easy to navigate with the provision of an integrated transport network

suitable for sports and health activities. **TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS** Giving importance to transport and logistics sectors such as roads, ports and airports, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), said, "Studies have been conducted on the economic impact of the Muscat Metro through a special technical team established in this regard to avoid any problems in the long run." Apart from Muscat, the Greater Cities project will also be implemented in Nizwa, Suhar

and Salalah as the government plans to introduce the Urban Planning Law in the second quarter of 2023. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Greater Muscat will include all parts of the current Muscat Governorate and parts of South Al Batinah, especially parts of Barka, covering an area of 137,218 hectares, 80 km from Muscat in the West to Barka in the East with a 100-km coastline. The stage 1 and 2 of the project have been completed while phase 3 (planning of the structural phase) is in progress with phase 4 yet to be started.



Environmental Sustainability Conference from tomorrow

GREEN BRANCH AWARD SET FOR LAUNCH
PROMOTION OF 'YOUTH ECOTHON' FOR OMANI STUDENTS

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the inaugural ceremony of the first edition of 'Oman Conference on Environmental Sustainability' tomorrow January 16. The four-day conference will focus on air pollution, climate change and other issues.

The event will include the launch of the 'Green Branch Award' designed for contributors and supporters of environmental action. The prize, up for grabs by institutions and individuals, is aimed at encouraging outstanding contributions to environment sanitation and sustainability.

An environmental exhibition will be held on the sidelines of the conference.

It will showcase the latest technologies, solutions and techniques in addressing common ecological challenges. It will also include specialised workshops



focusing on green hydrogen energy and methane management.

The conference promotes the values of research, development and innovation through the establishment of a 'Youth Ecothon' within an initiative codenamed 'Manafei' (benefits), which paves the way for Omani students to participate in improvising solutions for environmental start-ups that generate developmental revenue against less risk to air pollution or climate change.

The conference will be held as part of events marking Oman Environment Day. — ONA

Oman at 'Voice of the South' summit meeting



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the Voice of the South summit meeting hosted by India via videoconference on Thursday, with the participation of the foreign ministers of a number of brotherly and friendly countries, within the framework of India's presidency of the G20 and inviting the Sultanate of Oman as a guest of honour this year.

Foreign Minister, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, in his speech stressed the importance of international cooperation with regard to the concept of social justice in order to ensure the well-being of all, and by exchanging views on best practices on important issues such as food and water security,

development cooperation, and giving priority to the needs of the most vulnerable groups in communities.

Sayyid Badr also highlighted the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman in developing a comprehensive social protection system in line with Oman Vision 2040 and its national priorities.

India hosted a two-day Voice of the South summit on January 12-13, 2023. The Summit was held in virtual format, with 10 sessions in total. It saw the participation of leaders and ministers from 125 countries of the Global South.

India convened this one-of-a-kind summit to focus international attention on the priorities, perspectives and concerns of the developing world.

Oman citizens can travel visa-free to 83 countries



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman has been ranked 65th by the 2023 Henley Passport Index, an agency responsible for ranking the world's passports according to the number of destinations their holders can access without a prior visa.

With an Omani passport, citizens can travel to 82 countries visa-free compared to 178 countries with a UAE passport (rank 15), 100 countries with a Qatar passport (rank 55), 82 countries with a Saudi Arabian passport (rank 65), 87 countries with Bahrain passport (rank 67) and 97 countries with Kuwait passport (rank 57). The Index compares the visa-free access of 199 different passports to 227 travel destinations.

If no visa is required, then a score with a value of 1 is created for that passport. The same applies if you can obtain a visa on arrival, a visitor's permit, or an electronic travel authority (ETA) when entering the destination.

Where a visa is required, or where a passport holder must obtain a government-approved electronic visa (e-visa) before departure, a score with a value of 0 is assigned. This also applies if you need pre-departure government approval for a visa on arrival.

Japan is number one on the list, which is based on exclusive data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) – the largest database – and enhanced by Henley & Partners' research team.

Japanese citizens are now able to visit 193 destinations out of 227 around the world visa-free, while South Koreans and Singaporeans, whose countries are tied in second place on the index, enjoy a visa-free/visa-on-arrival score of 192. Germany and Spain are joint third, with visa-free access to 190 destinations worldwide.

Finland, Italy and Luxembourg are fourth with 189 destinations, followed by Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden in fifth with 188 destinations.

Ambassador to Italy presents credentials

ROME: HH Sayyid Nizar bin al Julanda bin Majid al Said presented his credentials as the accredited ambassador to the Italian Republic.

The credentials presentation took place when Sergio Mattarella, President of Italy, received HH Sayyid Nizar at Quirinal Palace in the Italian capital, Rome.

HH Sayyid Nizar conveyed the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Italian president and his wishes of good health and happiness and more progress and prosperity for the Italian people.

The Italian president asked HH Sayyid Nizar to pass on his greetings to His Majesty the Sultan and his wishes of continued development under His Majesty's leadership.

The president welcomed the ambassador, wishing him success in his job and hoping that bilateral relations between the two countries would see more development. — ONA



Dhofar hosts 'Operetta January 11'

SALALAH: The Nana Centre for Culture and Creativity in Dhofar Governorate organised on Thursday at Al Murooj Theatre 'Operetta January 11', which comes on the occasion of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's accession to power, under the auspices of Shaikh Saba bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Committee.

The ceremony is part of the centre's activities and events, with the aim of documenting and preserving traditional folk arts by passing them on to future generations.

Ali bin Muslim Kashoub, Head of the Centre, in his speech mentioned that the ceremony comes on a precious occasion for all of us, and it is an immortal date in the memory of the Sultanate of Oman, which is the glorious January 11, the day His Majesty



Sultan Haitham bin Tarik assumed the reins of power.

He further added, "The Nana Centre for Culture and Creativity is the first of its kind in the Dhofar

Governorate and aims to pay attention to the Omani cultural heritage and pass it on to future generations."

During the ceremony, an audio

recording was presented by Shaikh Bakhit bin Said al Maashani, through which he introduced the Nana Centre for Culture and Creativity in the rural dialect, translated into Arabic.

The activities of the ceremony included a folklore show that was performed by the youth of the Governorate through three paintings of the art of habot (cities, the countryside and the desert), in addition to a poetic passage by a number of poets. It also included a gala concert performed by artists from the Sultanate of Oman and Yemen, as well as singers from the Sultanate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In conclusion, the winners of the first six places were honoured in the Nana and Aldabaret Art Competition, which was held on the occasion of the 52nd Glorious National Day. — ONA



Oman, Cyprus sign MoU on diplomatic studies



NICOSIA: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Cyprus last week held the third round of political consultations in the capital city of Nicosia. The session was chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Diplomatic Affairs Under-Secretary at the Foreign Ministry and Kornelios Korneliou, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cyprus.

On the sidelines of the session,

the two ministries signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on cooperation in the fields of diplomatic studies and training. The MoU was inked by the two countries' heads of delegations.

Al Harthy also held a meeting with Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus, on issues that serve bilateral relations between the two countries.

Al Harthy also met with Evgenios Evgeniou, Chairman of

Cyprus Investment Promotion Agency. They discussed opportunities to attract investment and ways to enhance cooperation between the two sides within the framework of Oman Vision 2040.

The consultation session and meetings were attended by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Nahdi, Ambassador of Oman to Cyprus, and Zainab bint Ali al Qasimiyah, Head of the Diplomatic Institute. — ONA

North Al Sharqiyah OCCI delegation concludes visit to Saudi Arabia

IBRA: The trade delegation at the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry branch in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate concluded its visit to Saudi Arabia on Friday.

The visit comes within the framework of the mutual visits carried out by trade delegations from the Chamber's branches in the Sultanate of Oman to various countries of the world, in order to exchange experiences in the commercial and economic fields.

The trip also aimed at attracting investors to establish commercial projects in the country, and discussing partnership with business owners and commercial institutions in those countries.

The Saudi visit included many meetings held by the delegation of the North Al Sharqiyah Chamber, headed by Muhammad bin Nasser Al Maskari, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Chamber's branch.

Al Maskari stressed that the visits enabled joint cooperation



between the Omani and Saudi sides in exchanging and encouraging investment between the two brotherly countries.

The delegation also held a number of meetings with Iman Al Mutairi, Saudi Deputy Minister of Commerce, and CEO of the National Competitiveness Centre, in addition to meeting with stakeholders in the Riyadh Chamber, where they discussed many aspects of cooperation and partnership in attracting capital

between the two countries.

A number of businessmen and owners of SMEs from North Al Sharqiyah Governorate visited factories and commercial and economic establishments in the Kingdom, to the Dates Factory in Riyadh, the farm project of Sheikh Muhammad bin Abdulaziz Al Rajhi, and to the Royal Commission to the city of Riyadh, in addition to the United Riyadh Factory. — ONA

Regional aviation sector on the rebound

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Middle Eastern aviation sector is on the path of rebounding and has seen a rise in traffic of 84.6 percentage compared to the same period the previous year, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA) which earlier predicted the air travel recovery in 2023.

Similarly, the capacity increased 45.4 per cent vis-a-vis the numbers existed a year-ago while load factor climbed 16.5 percentage points to 77.7 per cent.

The international traffic rose 85.2 per cent versus 2021 while the Asia-Pacific continued to report the strongest year-over-year results with all regions showing improvement compared to the prior year and 2022 international RPKs reached 73.7 per cent of November 2019 levels.

Additionally, the total traffic in November 2022 as measured in revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs) rose 41.3 per cent compared to November 2021 against a global traffic growth of 75.3 per cent of 2019 levels.

"By and large, the recovery in passenger numbers from Covid-19 was not changed by the various variants that we experienced post Corona and as we understand, people are in a 'revenge travel' mode after the travel restrictions are lifted. The forecast for the evolution in passenger numbers gives good reason to be optimistic and the aviation sector would rebound by 2024," says Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General at a Doha conference.

The IATA forecast, in the backdrop of countries lifting restrictions across the globe, that the overall traveller numbers would reach 4.0 billion in 2024 including multi-sector connecting trips as one passenger, exceeding pre-Covid-19 levels by 103 per cent of the 2019 total has given a new sense of purpose to the Oman travel and tourism sector.

"The IATA predictions were realistic and Oman's travel and tourism sector is on the path of rebounding. The IATA report says by 2024 number of passengers traveling would reach 4 billion, which is 3 per cent more than peak of 2019 numbers which is highly realistic based on current growth and future trends," says Sunil D'Souza, CEO of Travel City Group. On the other hand, the report suggests that global air cargo markets showed a softening demand pattern and the demand fell by 13.7 per cent compared to 2021.

■ RAFO CARRIES OUT MEDICAL EVACUATION



One of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) helicopters on Saturday carried out a medical evacuation of an Omani woman who was in a critical health condition. The patient was transported from Kamzar Health Centr to Khasab Hospital in Musandm Governorate to receive healthcare. The operation comes within the context of the humanitarian services provided by the Sultan's Armed Forces and the other departments of the Ministry of Defence to citizens and residents.

Drone industry set to grow with new norms: CAA

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is developing an online platform (Tahleeq) to register and manage licences for operating unmanned aircraft (drones) for various purposes in the country.

The project, which is in the final stages, will also manage and control the movement of aircraft, according to Naif bin Ali al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).

In February last year, a project was launched to deliver parcels by drones was launched in the Sultanate of Oman, while a licence was issued for the first training institution in the field of drones.

It may be noted that the global drone market size is forecast to reach \$55.8 billion by 2026 at 7.8 per cent, with the commercial market growing at 8.3 per cent.

Al Abri also said, "The Civil aviation sector of the Sultanate of Oman has made rapid progress over the five decades with the country's airports competing with the best in the world. The government has signed bilateral air travel and open skies agreements with several countries to attract more airlines to the country and boost the sector's contribution to the GDP."

He added, that to consolidate the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by diversifying sources of income through a focus on sectors such as tourism, commercial civil flights were launched in the Wilayat of Masirah on November 3 while



Aviation sector to get a boost with 100 agreements

licences were permitted to Salam Air to operate regular flights to Duqm Airport.

These efforts follow the constant efforts to operate commercial flights to and from several international destinations, which will also help expand the services of two national airlines, Oman Air and Salam Air, to different markets.

The Sultanate of Oman has 122 air transport agreements, including 66 agreements on open skies, while a final agreement will be signed with the EU.

A licence will also be issued to operate amphibious aircraft services that will link tourist attractions in the Sultanate of Oman with commercial flights.

There has been an increase in the number of international and domestic flights arriving and departing through the various airports of the Sultanate of Oman until the end of October 2022.

The number of international flights arriving and departing from the airports of Muscat, Salalah, and Suhar recorded a growth of 137.6 per cent, from 21,466 flights in 2021.

Wadi Al Sahtan doors display cultural, archaeological symbols

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Well-known in the past as 'Mandus Oman', Wadi Al Sahtan is famous for its green orchards and water springs flowing from the mountain slopes.

The valley is adorned with many agricultural villages. 'Ain Al Khadra', is one such which is characterised by hot water springs seeping from the high mountains. It takes the visitor on his journey to the villages of Al Huwaijer and Al Tawyan.

This leads to spacious village of Fasah, which serves as an outlet for the people of Wadi Al Sahtan, where trade has been active for many years.

Delving deeper into exploring natural and archaeological secrets of this valley, a visit to the village of Amq, one of the largest village, is an absolute necessity. Schools, health centre, municipality branch and other institutions, in addition

Due to the abundance of castles, forts, and old houses, the designs of doors and windows vary according to the geometric shapes of the old buildings and forts that still exist in the valley

to shops that provide essential goods and merchandise can be found here.

Exploring further, one can pass by villages such as Al Jaw, Al Sawa, Al Mazraa, Al Bashouq and Salama.

Each of these villages has its own tale of beauty. The village of Wajma at the top of the mountain is considered one of the most beautiful villages due to its mild climate in summer and winter.

While the village of Al Faraa remains the most beautiful of all



because of the abundance of water throughout the year. It is also characterised by lush green trees that offers a panoramic views and is characterised by mild climate unlike the rest of the villages in the valley.

Wadi Al Sahtan is named Mandoos Oman because it is rich

in agriculture, where corn and wheat are grown, in addition to garlic, onions, lemons, fodder and others.

These are mainly sold in Rustaq market, which in the past was the trading location between Rustaq, the Green Mountain and the Al Batinah coast.



Most of the villages of Wadi Al Sahtan are famous for breeding honeybees, which made the valley famous for the quality of honey of all kinds due to the presence of natural pastures, especially Sidr and Samar trees.

Wandering around this beautiful valley, one notices the

inhabitants of the mountain villages who practice jobs like weaving, making swords and daggers which are found at the 'Palm Center' in Rustaq, which supports the craft.

What distinguishes the villages of this valley are the historical towers and forts that confirm the architectural nobility, the most important of which are the 'Al Safil' fort, 'Sharia' fort, 'Owl' fort, and 'Hubeish' fort.

Many ancient inscriptions dating back to the third millennium BC are scattered in this valley, and these inscriptions are writings and drawings that embody the events.

BLURB: Due to the abundance of castles, forts, and old houses, the designs of doors and windows vary according to the geometric shapes of the old buildings and forts that still exist in the valley

The doors of Wadi Al Sahtan differ in their shapes and colours, but they are all similar in the raw materials which were used.



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

SEAT BELT is the first line of defence against injury and it is an absolute necessity. Road traffic injuries often arises when seat belts are not used which causes death or permanent disability. Many people think that wearing a seat belt while driving is uncomfortable and restrictive, but this is not really the case, as getting used to wearing a seat belt while driving will automatically lead to feeling of comfort. Some others avoid wearing seat belts while driving for short distances, believing that they do not need it to quickly reach their destination. However, most accidents occur at a distance of less than 50 km from moving in the car, which indicates the necessity of wearing a seat belt to avoid accidents, even if the distance is short.

The Sultanate of Oman is considered one of the first countries in issuing legislation requiring the use of seat belts in vehicles. Decision No (P/13/1989) issued on April 24, 1989 for stipulating the compulsory use of seat belts, which was implemented on January 1, 1990. There is absolutely no doubt that seat belts are of great importance in reducing the size of serious injuries among passengers during traffic accidents.

The Royal Oman Police posted on its social media account that "wearing seat belts reduces the risk of death for front seat passengers by 40 per cent to 50 per cent. It also reduces the death risk of rear seat passengers by between 25 per cent and 75 per cent".

The idea of personal safety systems such as seat belts and airbags are to keep the drivers from running out of the car, or hitting the steering wheel or windshield in the event of a sudden stop.

When you drive a car at a high speed, and have to press the brakes suddenly, the car will stop, while you will not.

The simple reason is inertia - the tendency of objects to move continuously until their speed is slowed down by any obstacle.

And without a seat belt or airbags on, you will either shoot out, or will hit the steering wheel or the windshield at the same speed to stop the collision.

One of the benefits of wearing a seat belt is the protection of all parts of the body, the most important of which are the spine and the brain. Injury to these two parts causes many health problems. It is also worth noting that it is important for the pregnant mother to wear the seat belt to protect herself and the child. Also, as for children whose height is less than 145 centimetres, it is better for them to sit in the child seat inside the car with the seat belt on, as this ensures more protection for their bodies, and it is recommended that children sit in the back seat not the front.

The General Traffic Department also published on its Twitter account the emergence of a new study supervised by American researchers that wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of people suffering liver damage by more than 20 per cent.

According to the British newspaper website Daily Mail, researchers found that among people who suffer from car accidents, seat belt bucklers are 21 per cent less likely to suffer severe liver injury, which rises to 26 per cent when airbags are present.

The lack of commitment to wearing seat belts is still a 'widespread bad habit' despite the fact that laws in most countries have laws that require passengers to wear seat belts, and that many of those countries have laws that require passengers to wear seat belts.

Statistics from the WHO show that wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injuries and 75 per cent for front-seat passengers and 54 per cent for those in the back seats. In addition, laws that require children to be seat-belted and young children in securely secured seats, as well as to prevent children from sitting in front seats, reduce the risk of death by nearly 70 per cent for infants and between 54 per cent and 80 per cent for young children.

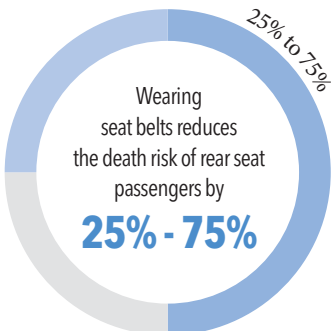
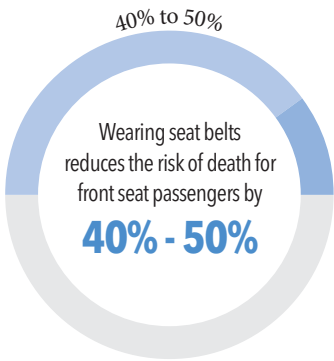
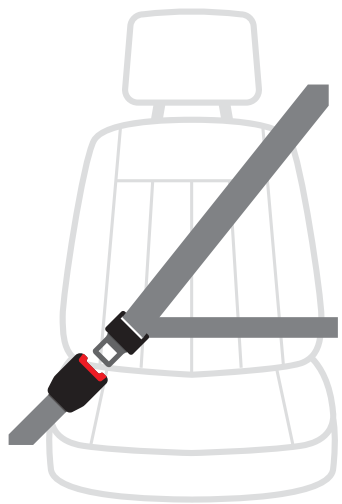
There is also a prevalent misconception among people that the back seat in the car is safer in the event of an accident, but this is confirmed to be incorrect, as the danger to the passengers sitting in the back seats is not limited to themselves only, but extends to others as well.

The enormous force that can throw the passenger's body forward in an accident also poses a great danger to others.

Airbags, which were designed mainly to provide additional protection for vulnerable parts of the body, such as the head and face, may become a danger to a person whose body rushes quickly towards them at the moment of their inflation.

The risk is for adults, so it is also recommended that young children not ride in the front seat of the car.

CLICK, CLACK, FRONT AND BACK



THE SULTANATE OF OMAN
IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE
FIRST COUNTRIES IN ISSUING THE
LEGISLATION REQUIRING THE
USE OF SEAT BELTS IN VEHICLES.
DECISION NO (P/13/1989)
ISSUED ON APRIL 24, 1989 FOR
STIPULATING THE COMPULSORY
USE OF SEAT BELTS



المتميزة للسيارات
Premium Motors

AUDI VEHICLES RECALL CAMPAIGN MODEL TT R8 Year 2015/2016/2017



Sultanate of Oman
Consumer Protection Authority



Campaign Date : 15 / 01 / 2023
Campaign Type : Safety Action
Campaign Section : Mechanical / Replace Driver Airbag
Product Description : Audi Vehicles

Production Year	Vehicle Model	VIN No.		No. of Affected Vehicles
2015/2016/ 2017	TT / R8	TRUAFBFV1G1000388	TRUC5AFV0G1033517	15
		TRUAFBFV2G1000402	WUAANBFX6G7901299	
		TRUBFBFV8G1000425	TRUBFBFV7H1012857	
		TRUBFBFV3G1000431	WUAANBFX8H7902035	
		TRUBFBFV9G1000434	WUAANBFXXH7902375	
		TRUBFBFV9G1000580	WUAANBFX7H7902754	
		TRUSFDFV2G1000626	WUAANBFX1H7903205	
		TRUT5CFV8G1010045		

- Description**
On Audi vehicles with TAKATA driver airbag manufactured within a specific period it is possible that the gas generator housing may be damaged if the driver airbag is deployed. This could cause small metal parts to become dislodged from the housing and potentially injure the driver.
- Action:**
Replace Driver Airbag.
- For More Information:**
Owners of affected vehicles may contact Premium Motors to book an appointment starting 15/01/2023.
- Contact Data:**
Premium Motors service center, Ghala, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman.
Tel: 22845112 – Mob: 95700737
P.O. Box: 94, P.C: 105
Sunday to Thursday, From 8:00 AM To 5:00 PM



JORDANIAN DELEGATION VISITS MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE



A delegation from the Command and Staff College in Jordan visited the Maritime Security Centre last week. The delegation was headed by Brigadier General Ali Abdul Qadir Abdul Hafez al Matar. He was received upon his arrival at the headquarters of the centre by Brigadier General Adel bin Hamoud al Busaidi, head of the Maritime Security Centre. The delegation listened to a briefing on the roles of the Maritime Security Centre and its various efforts concerned with the protection and safety of the marine environment in the territorial waters. — ONA

Equestrian endurance race for 100 km ends in Barka



BARKA: The equestrian, Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Abdulsalam, was crowned with the title of endurance race for the 2022-2023 season for a distance of 100 km organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation. The competition included a local race for a distance of 100 km. There were about 42 horses in the local race for a distance of 100 km. The competition also included qualifying 40 km race and an 80 km qualifying race. The race witnessed strong competition among the participants, as 12 horses reached the finish line out of 42 horses. At the end of the competition, Ahmed bin Saif al Abri, Secretary-General of the Federation, honoured the race champions and those who completed in the first ten spots. The youngest rider in the race, who managed to reach the finish line for a distance of 100 km, was also honoured. — ONA

Al Sharqiyah International Film Festival concludes



TIRE: The cinema and architecture symposium was launched last week at the Youth Preparation Centre of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in the Wilayat of Sur as part of the Al Sharqiyah International Film Festival. Local and the complementary role between cinema and architecture through ancient buildings such as castles and forts were discussed. The symposium also presented the experience of the Lebanese cinema in caring for the artistic installations presented by the Lebanese director and actor Kassem Istanbuli by working on restoring 'Ampire' theatres in Tripoli, Lebanon, and restoring the cultural and artistic activities. The first day of the festival saw screening of 21 short films as part of the festival's narrative and documentary competition themes and Omani architecture at the Sur Plaza Hotel. On the sidelines of the festival, the Saudi cinema experience in producing feature films and marketing them to global platforms was reviewed through the film 'Forty Years and One Nights' directed by Muhammad Hillel. Director Adnan Belais presented a workshop on writing



the script for the short narrative film, in which he dealt with how to obtain and write cinematic ideas, method of writing the script, and the stages of the short film before and after implementation. The dialogue session with Kuwaiti artist Saad al Faraj received wide interest from the audience stressing the importance of the presence of artists in social media. The festival organised a dialogue session with the Jordanian artist, Suhair Fahd, who talked about her artistic activity and her interest in cinema and TV and their role through the works in which the artist starred, such as the children's series 'Captain Majid', in which she played the character Majed. About her views on Omani films, she said: "I am very happy with the abundance of Omani films. When I participated in my film in the Muscat Festival in 2018, I loved the beautiful mixture of stories of personal life, family life,

and heritage in the city. The efforts of those working in the cinema sector must be strengthened by focusing on social life in order to get acquainted with. The world is proud about the ancient Omani treasures, beauty of nature and the terrain that qualifies it to be a global destination for film-makers, trying to create narrative and documentary stories. I hope that Omani films will be translated into several languages, including English and French, and that the films will not only be shown in festivals, but broadcast on electronic platforms to reach out to more viewers." The activities accompanying Al Sharqiyah International Film Festival continued, as the guests embarked on a tour to Khor Al Battah and Ras Al Jinz Reserve on Friday, to get acquainted with some of the tourist attractions in Sur. The festival will also complete screenings of short films competing for awards, in addition to organising a cinematography workshop by director Jean al Balushi, which will focus on the stages of film implementation, types of shots and angle, lighting distribution, and the implementation of a representative scene (practical application). — ONA

Oman set to host Middle East Aviation Security meeting

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority, will host, on January 16, the third meeting of the Middle East Aviation Security and Facilitation Group, in cooperation with the Regional Office for the Middle East of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The meeting aims to provide a regional structure for cooperation, coordination and implementation of an action programme that supports the regional performance framework for aviation security and facilities, to reduce risks related to aviation security in the Middle East region and to enhance state security initiatives in line with the global plan issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). It also aims to develop and update the civil aviation security and facilitation plan for the Middle East region, promote the achievement of aviation security and regional facilitation goals, identify and prioritise countries' needs with regard to the aviation security and facilitation programme, including capacity-building projects and coordinate necessary assistance activities with the concerned countries. The meeting sheds light on



identifying opportunities to equip resources and encourage countries and stakeholders to provide voluntary financial and in-kind contributions to support aviation security assistance and facilities projects in the region. The meeting will discuss about 30 working papers, including 6 working papers for the Sultanate of Oman, to be presented by aviation security experts at the national

Aviation security experts to discuss 30 working papers, including 6 working papers for the Sultanate of Oman and operational levels, specialists in the Civil Aviation Authority and the General Administration

of Airports Security, airport and aircraft operators and ground service providers. The opening of the meeting will be attended by Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, President of the Civil Aviation Authority, in the presence of the Director of the Regional Office for the Middle East of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). — ONA

وزارة المالية
Ministry of Finance

وزارة الصحة
Ministry of Health

رؤية جيل جديد
New Generation Vision

15 January 2023

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Operation, Expansion, and Management of Al Taafi Suhar Center as a Center of Excellence under Public Private Partnership Agreement

As part of Public Private Partnership (PPP) projects and in order to encourage private sector to invest in infrastructure projects and public services, the Ministry of Finance (MOF), in coordination with the Ministry of Health, seeks to engage the private sector in the design, build, finance, operation, and maintenance (DBFOM) of Al Taafi Suhar Center as a Center of Excellence to provide treatment and rehabilitation services for drug addicts and psychotropic substances, under PPP agreements, which would contribute in fostering innovative services delivery and sustainable growth.

Requirements

01

Minimum 10 years of experience in providing treatment and rehabilitation services for drug addicts and psychotropic substances under PPP agreement.

02

Previously provided detoxification and rehabilitation services in no less than 2 centers with minimum of 20 beds each.

03

At least one center that was set up by bidder.

Interested local and international companies can obtain the RFP document by sending an email containing company profile, name of staff in-charge, contact number and email ID to:
(drc.ppp@mof.gov.om)

RFP No.	Last date for obtaining RFP document	Last date for clarification	Deadline for submitting the RFP	Cost of RFP document
PPP 1/2023	29 Jan 2023	13 Mar 2023	13 Apr 2023	RO 1,500 thousand (One Thousand Five Hundred Omani Rial)

N.B: Any company fails to meet any of the requirements, it will be disqualified automatically.

For further information, please contact us via an email:
drc.ppp@mof.gov.om or phone number: 0096824470503 (Sunday to Thursday from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm).

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وزارة المالية-سلطنة عمان

Russian missiles strike vital infrastructure in Kyiv

KYIV: Russian missile attacks hit critical infrastructure in Kyiv and the eastern city of Kharkiv on Saturday morning, and the governor of another region warned that a massive missile strike could follow in the coming hours.

A series of blasts hit Kyiv before the air raid siren even sounded, which is highly unusual. No one was reported hurt, but missile debris caused a fire in one place and houses were damaged outside the capital, officials said.

“Explosions in the (eastern) Dniprovskiy district. All agencies heading to the site. Stay in your shelters!” Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko wrote on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia, which invaded last February, has been pounding Ukraine’s energy infrastructure with missiles and drones since October, causing sweeping blackouts and disruptions to central heating and running water as winter bites.

“An infrastructure facility was hit. No critical damage or fire. All emergency services are working at the site. No one is wounded,” Kyiv’s military administration said in a statement.

Ukrenergo, which runs the power grid, said its workers were racing to fix the damage and that



Ukrainian Border Guards take their positions on the frontline in Volyn. – Reuters

the network was grappling with a power deficit caused by earlier attacks even though it was -2 Celsius (28 Fahrenheit) in Kyiv, only mildly cold.

Kyiv’s mayor said the debris of a missile came down on a non-residential area in the Holosiivskiy district in the west of Kyiv, causing a fire but hurting no one.

Residential infrastructure was also hit in the village of Kopyliv in the region just outside the capital. The windows and roofs of 18 privately owned houses were shattered or damaged by the

blast, Oleksiy Kuleba, the regional governor, said.

Air Force spokesperson Yuriy Ihnat said Russia’s missiles had likely been fired along a high, looping ballistic trajectory from the north, which would explain why the air raid siren did not

sound. Ukraine is not able to identify and shoot down ballistic missiles, he told the Ukrainska Pravda online outlet.

MISSILES STRIKE KHARKIV
In Ukraine’s northeast, Oleg Synhubov, Kharkiv’s regional

governor, said two S-300 missiles struck the city near the Russian border early on Saturday.

The attacks hit critical energy infrastructure and industrial facilities in the Kharkiv and Chuhuev district of the region, he said. “Our emergency services units and energy workers are working to liquidate the consequences and stabilise the situation with energy supplies,” he said.

The governor of the central Cherkasy region warned that a massive Russian missile strike could follow later on Saturday, while the governor of Mykolaiv to the south said that 17 Russian Tupolev warplanes had taken off from their air bases.

But after their statements the air raid alarm in Kyiv and the surrounding region was lifted.

The strikes on Saturday came as Ukrainian and Russian forces battled for control of Soledar, a small salt-mining town in eastern Ukraine that for days has been the focus of a relentless Russian assault.

Russia said on Friday that its forces had taken control of Soledar, in what would be a rare success for Moscow after months of battlefield reverses, but Kyiv said its troops were still fighting in the town.

— Reuters

Three frontrunners as Czechs vote for new president

PRAGUE: Polling ended on Saturday in the first round of the Czech presidential election with a billionaire, a general and an academic vying for spots in a likely run-off later this month.

The winner will replace Milos Zeman, an outspoken and divisive political veteran, following a period marked by the country’s 2022 EU presidency as the war in Ukraine raged.

The victor will face record inflation in the central European country of 10.5 million people, as well as bulging public finance deficits related to the war in Ukraine.

Results of the first-round pitting eight candidates were expected later in the day.

Unless a candidate wins more than 50 per cent outright — which



Czech former Prime Minister and current presidential candidate Andrej Babis poses for a selfie with a child outside a polling station in Pruhonice near Prague. – Reuters

is considered unlikely — the two top-placed contenders will go head-to-head in a second round on January 27-28.

Populist ex-prime minister Andrej Babis, retired general Petr

Pavel and university professor Danuse Nerudova are vying to become only the fourth president since the Czech Republic was founded in 1993 following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Casting her ballot at a school in Prague, Alina Kravchuk, a longtime Ukrainian resident of Prague, said the new president should be above all “honest and unimpeachable.”

She added that like the Czech government, the country’s new leader should also promote help for Ukraine, which has been battling a Russian invasion for almost a year.

“We’re Slavic nations, we are close to each other and as close nations we should help each other in these difficult times,” Kravchuk told reporters. — AFP

China reports 60,000 Covid-related deaths in a month

BEIJING: China’s health authorities reported on Saturday almost 60,000 Covid-related deaths in just over a month, the first major death toll released by the government since it loosened its virus restrictions in early December.

China has been widely accused of underreporting its number of coronavirus fatalities since the abandonment of its zero-Covid policy.

Only a few dozen deaths had been recorded officially in December before Saturday’s announcement, despite evidence of crematoriums and hospitals being overrun.

But a National Health Commission (NHC) official said on Saturday China had recorded 59,938 Covid-related deaths between December 8, 2022, and January 12.

The figure refers only to deaths recorded at medical facilities, with the total number likely to be higher.

The data includes 5,503 deaths caused by respiratory failure directly due to the virus, and 54,435 deaths caused by underlying conditions combined with Covid, Jiao Yahui, head of the NHC’s Bureau of Medical Administration, told a news conference.



Covid-19 patients being treated at a hospital in Fengyang county in east China’s Anhui Province. – AFP

Health officials insisted on Wednesday it was “not necessary” to dwell on the exact number.

Beijing revised its methodology for categorising Covid fatalities last month, saying it would count only those who die specifically of respiratory failure caused by the virus.

This was criticised by the World Health Organization, which said the new definition was “too narrow”.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the organisation was continuing to “ask China for

more rapid, regular, reliable data on hospitalisation and deaths, as well as... viral sequencing”.

Beijing, however, has insisted it has been transparent with the international community about its data, urging the WHO to “uphold a scientific, objective and just position”.

ELDERLY AT RISK
Health officials said on Saturday the average age of those who had died was 80.3 years, with more than 90 per cent of fatalities above 65 years old. — AFP

Greta Thunberg joins rally to save German village

LUTZERATH: Climate activist Greta Thunberg and thousands of demonstrators marched in a large-scale protest in Germany on Saturday against the demolition of a village to make way for an open-cast coal mine extension.

Crowds of activists marched on the hamlet of Lutzerath in western Germany, waving banners, chanting and accompanied by a brass band.

Lutzerath — deserted for some time by its original inhabitants — is set to disappear to make way for the extension of the adjacent open-cast coal mine, one of the largest in Europe, operated by energy firm RWE.

Protesters arrived in buses, holding banners that read slogans such as “stop coal” or “Lutzerath lives!”

Thunberg marched at the front of the procession as demonstrators

converged on the village, showing support for activists occupying it in protest over the coal mine extension.

Some clashed with police who were trying to move the march away from Lutzerath, which is surrounded by fences.

FINAL STAGES OF EVACUATION
In an operation launched earlier this week, hundreds of police have been working to remove activists from the hamlet.

But between 20 and 40 climate activists were still holed up in the contested village late on Friday, a spokeswoman for the protest movement said.

Authorities said they were entering the final stages of evacuating the activists. In just a few days, a large part of the protesters’ camp has been cleared by police and its occupants



Up to 40 climate activists were still holed up in the contested village, said a spokeswoman. — AFP

evacuated.

German press, quoting the police, reported that around 470 activists had been removed from the village since the beginning of the evacuation.

Demolition works were progressing slowly on the buildings that had been emptied, while surrounding trees were felled.

Large numbers of protesters — Thunberg among them — had

assembled on Saturday close to the village, which has become a symbol of resistance against fossil fuels.

“Against the evacuation — for an end to coal and climate justice,” is the rallying call for the protest.

ENERGY CRISIS
Police reinforcements have come from across the country to participate in the forced evacuation.

Organisers are hoping that tens of thousands will attend, while police have said they expect around 8,000.

In the village, many of the activists have built structures high up in the trees, while others have climbed to the top of abandoned buildings and barns. Likewise, activists said they had dug a tunnel under the hamlet in a bid to complicate the evacuation effort.

The movement has been

supported by protest actions across Germany. On Friday, masked activists set fire to bins and painted slogans on the offices of the Greens in Berlin.

The party — part of Germany’s ruling coalition with Chancellor Olaf Scholz’s Social Democrats and the liberal FDP — has come under heavy criticism from activists who accuse it of betrayal.

Following the energy crisis set off by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the government has brought old coal power plants back online. Officials also signed a compromise deal with RWE that made way for the demolition of Lutzerath but spared five nearby villages.

The energy firm also agreed to stop producing electricity with coal in western Germany by 2030, eight years earlier than previously planned. — AFP

Western Tanks Appear Headed to Ukraine, Breaking Another Taboo

LARA JAKES & STEVEN ERLANGER

Western officials, who increasingly fear that Ukraine has only a narrow window to prepare to repel an anticipated Russian springtime offensive, are moving fast to give the Ukrainians sophisticated weapons they had earlier refused to send for fear of provoking Moscow.

Over the past few weeks, one barrier after another has fallen, starting with an agreement by the United States in late December to send a Patriot air defence system. That was followed by a German commitment last week to provide a Patriot missile battery, and in the span of hours, France, Germany and the United States each promised to send armoured fighting vehicles to Ukraine’s battlefields for the first time.

Now it looks likely that modern Western tanks will be added to the growing list of powerful weapons being sent Ukraine’s way, as the United States and its allies take on more risk to defend Ukraine — especially as its military has made unexpected advances and held out against withering assaults.

While Ukraine has been requesting sophisticated tanks since the start of the war, the push to satisfy those pleas gained speed this week as the British and Polish governments publicly urged a change in the Western alliance’s stance. The British signalled that they were close to agreeing to send a small number of tanks, and the Polish government said it would happily send some of its German-made tanks, although Berlin would need to allow it.

Ukraine hopes that the increased pressure will persuade Germany’s Chancellor Olaf Scholz to authorise the export to Ukraine of German-made tanks in the arsenals of other Nato allies. The tanks, called the Leopard 2s, are among the most coveted by Kyiv, and experts say that in significant numbers, they would substantially increase Ukraine’s ability to drive back Russian forces.

“Somebody always has to set an example,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told Polish state-run broadcaster TVP Info.

A German defence ministry spokesperson said no decision had been made by the government of Scholz, a Social Democrat. But his coalition partners, the Greens and Free Democrats, support sending the tanks.

“There is a difference between making a decision for yourself and preventing others from making a decision,” Germany’s economics minister and vice-chancellor, Robert Habeck of the Greens, said in Berlin.

Tanks, designed more than a century ago to break through trench warfare, are a combination of firepower, mobility and shock effect. Armed with large cannons, moving on metal treads and built with stronger protective armour than any other weapon on a battlefield, tanks can go over rough, muddy or sandy terrain where wheeled fighting vehicles might struggle.

In Ukraine, officials say armoured vehicles will play a key role in battles for control of the fiercely contested



A woman walks past a Ukrainian defensive position built in Kyiv.

towns and cities in the eastern provinces that border Russia. Ukraine’s most senior military commander, Gen Valery Zaluzhny, has said Ukraine needs some 300 Western tanks and about 600 Western armoured fighting vehicles to make a difference.

The sense of urgency over sending more powerful weapons partly reflects the grim standoff on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine, where for months the Russians have tried to seize the city of Bakhmut and the surrounding area, suffering heavy casualties but gaining little ground. In the past week, the fighting has been especially brutal in the nearby town of Soledar, going block to block and house to house, with conflicting claims about control of the town.

Nato allies that were once part of the Soviet sphere have given their Soviet-era tanks to Ukraine. But much of Kyiv’s fleet has been destroyed or worn down by months of battle, and it is running low on ammunition, which is incompatible with Western munitions.

Since the war began nearly a year ago, the West has resisted giving some of its most potent weapons to Ukraine, fearing that would bring Nato into direct conflict with Russia. But seeing Ukraine’s determination to resist, little prospect of peace talks anytime soon, and a stalemate on the battlefield, Nato allies are relenting.

A senior Western military official said this week that altering the balance of forces in eastern Ukraine is needed to break the stalemate in the war, and that sending in enough modern Western battle tanks and other combat vehicles could help to tip that balance. Without tanks, a powerful component of ground warfare, it is unlikely that Ukraine will be able to win back significant amounts of territory, the official said.

The issue of whether to allow Leopards to be sent to Ukraine is likely to come to a head at a January 20 meeting of senior defence and military officials from dozens of nations, including Nato states, at Ramstein Air Base in Germany.

Norbert Röttgen, an opposition German legislator and foreign-policy expert, predicted that Scholz would give in on the Leopards under pressure from allies, as he did earlier with German-made howitzers and tracked armoured infantry fighting vehicles.

Scholz and his party “want to keep a relationship with Russia and with Putin for the future,” and Scholz “thinks that if he gives Ukraine the best Germany has, Russia will perceive this as breaking a special relationship,” Röttgen said. “But pressure from allies is becoming too strong.”

This Kenyan Slum Has Something to Teach the World

NICHOLAS KRISTOF

Here in the Kibera slum, life sometimes seems a free-for-all. Residents steal electricity by tapping into overhead lines, children walk barefoot through alleys trickling with sewage.

Yet this is an uplifting slum. Against all odds, Kibera is also a place of hope, and it offers a lesson in bottom-up development that the world should learn from.

The tale begins with a boy whose single mom — 15 years old when she gave birth — named him Kennedy, because she wanted him to be like an American president she had heard of. Little Kennedy Odede didn’t attend formal school, and at the age of 10 he ran away from a violent stepfather and ended up sleeping on the streets.

Kennedy taught himself to read and was inspired by a biography of Nelson Mandela that a researcher shared with him. Kennedy, ebullient and charismatic, then formed a Kibera self-help association called Shining Hope for Communities, better known as SHOFCO.

An American student from Wesleyan University, Jessica Posner, volunteered at SHOFCO and then persuaded Wesleyan to accept Kennedy as a full scholarship student, even though he had never even gone through a real elementary school. Jessica and Kennedy fell in love and married when he graduated.

One of SHOFCO’s early projects was Kibera School for Girls, which recruited some of the most impoverished girls

in the slum. Their parents were sometimes illiterate, and one-fifth of those little girls had been assaulted. Yet the girls knew that they were special, and with intensive tutoring they turned into star students, outperforming children at expensive Kenyan private schools.

I am an old friend of Kennedy and have been following his work since my first visit a dozen years ago. One girl I met then, when she was a second grader, is now studying at Columbia University. Her former classmates are studying at four other US universities as well as at Kenyan universities.

Let’s just acknowledge that development is hard, particularly in urban slums that are growing fast around the world. Billions of dollars are poured into the poorest countries, and in Haiti and South Sudan one sees fleets of expensive white SUVs driven by aid organisations; what’s missing is long-term economic development. International aid keeps children alive, which is no small feat. But it has had less success in transforming troubled places.

That’s where SHOFCO is intriguing as an alternative model. Its grassroots empowerment approach has similarities with BRAC, a Bangladesh-based development organisation that I consider one of the most effective aid groups in the world, and with Fonkoze, a similar homegrown nonprofit in Haiti.

SHOFCO has spread through low-income communities across Kenya and now boasts 2.4 million members, making it one of the largest grassroots organisations in Africa. It provides clean water, fights abuse, runs a credit union,



A boy runs through the Kibera slum in Nairobi.

Billions of dollars are poured into the poorest countries, and in Haiti and South Sudan one sees fleets of expensive white SUVs driven by aid organisations; what’s missing is long-term economic development

coaches people on starting small businesses, runs libraries and Internet hot spots, mobilises voters to press politicians to bring services to slums, runs public health campaigns and does 1,000 other things.

It succeeds, I think, because it exemplifies a partnership: local leadership paired with a reliance on the best international practices. SHOFCO, for example, adopted deworming and cervical cancer prevention programmes that reflect the best international knowledge, and these were accepted by local people partly because they trusted Kennedy.

I had wondered how scalable SHOFCO was: Did it depend on Kennedy’s charisma, making it hard to replicate in other slums? No, the model has actually scaled smoothly across the country — and other Kenyan slums turned out to have their own untapped Kennedys.

One woman I met on this visit to Kibera is Lauren Odhiambo, 23, a SHOFCO member whose dad died when she was young. She shares a two-room shanty with six family members and occasional rats. The home has no kitchen or running water, and evening requires some planning: The neighbourhood toilet is locked from 10 pm to 6 am.

Her mom earns \$70 a month washing other people’s clothes. But Lauren joined SHOFCO and took a computer skills class that led to a job that pays \$250 a month. Lauren has used that income to work her way through the University of Nairobi, and this year she will become the first person in her family with a college degree. After graduation, she expects to find a job paying \$400 a month.

Is ChatGPT, a blessing or a curse



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

Last week my son introduced me to ChatGPT — an AI-powered chatbot that can write essays, create scripts for movies and TV shows, solve mathematical equations and much more within seconds.

You could think of it as a much more intelligent version of Siri, with the ability to answer both open-ended and extremely precise questions. We tried it out and even goofed around by typing “is my son adopted?”.

The programme answered politely that it does not have information about my son and that it could help if I was looking for information about adoption.

ChatGPT was released last November and it became so popular that it reached one million users in less than a week – the fastest any technology gained

popularity in all time.

This is the first time that the general public has had access to advanced AI, which comes with its own pros and cons. Due to its unlimited capabilities, it can be utilised in many ways to learn new things, create businesses, automate tasks and it can even give sound advice much like a real therapist.

Even so, it is not as omnipotent as people make it to be. It is trained by humans — and just like the rest of us — makes mistakes. It can only provide input on matters that happened up to 2021 – the period where its training ended.

Even with the seemingly unlimited positive ways in which this technology can be applied, it is a double-edged sword.

There are multiple implications to consider when relying on this

CHATGPT WAS RELEASED LAST NOVEMBER AND IT BECAME SO POPULAR THAT IT REACHED ONE MILLION USERS IN LESS THAN A WEEK

kind of technology, with one of the largest concerns being academic plagiarism.

Students can easily create full descriptive essays within seconds by just typing one sentence. As it is a new technology, there are no ways to tell apart an authentic essay and one generated by ChatGPT.

Relying too heavily on chatbots could lead to a decreased reliance

on creative and decision-making skills, which could have negative impacts on personal and professional relationships.

Creative writing is an essential skill, as it allows one to properly process and articulate their thoughts. This is precisely what we see in all of the greatest authors — the creative ability to give meaning to these thoughts.

Another potential area of impact is work. As this application can pull out precise data on both technical and non-technical topics in a matter of seconds, its efficiency exceeds human capabilities by a large margin.

While many people stand to gain from this technology — whether by automating tasks or creating businesses — a portion of the less tech-savvy people stand

the risk of losing their jobs, as their job tasks can be fulfilled in a much shorter time.

As mentioned before, one of the possible uses for this application is self-therapy. While it is a great resource of information, it makes users more prone to self-diagnosis — which has its own implications.

The key in therapy is to be able to ask the right questions, which is why people seek professionals for help. On the other hand, AI-powered technologies may not be able to tailor their responses as effectively as a human, as they lack the ability to understand an individual’s unique preferences or circumstances.

Just like everything else, such technologies are a great boon, as long as they are used in moderation.

Auctioneers eye new record for Tintin artwork at sale

MATTHIEU DEMEESTERE

Known around the world for his blond quiff and daring adventures, Belgian comic book hero Tintin is setting the art world astir with an original illustration that could set a new record at auction.

The 1942 black-and-white ink drawing by creator Herge for the cover of the third volume in the series, “Tintin in America”, is set to go on sale in Paris next month.

The illustration, which shows a Native American chief pointing an accusatory finger at the tied-up Tintin, has been given an estimate of between 2.2 million to 3.2 million euros (\$2.4-3.5 million) by auction firm Artcurial.

That top figure would see it match an original illustration for the 1936 cover of the Tintin adventure “Blue Lotus” — which became the most expensive comic book art when it sold in 2021.

But there are hopes that the upcoming sale for the cover of one of the most popular Tintin books could go higher and beat that record.

“We are talking about drawings that belong to the history of art,” said Vinciane de Taux, Artcurial’s director for Belgium.

“Herge is, along with (surrealist painter Rene) Magritte, the most important figure in Belgian art.”

The illustration — put up for sale by an unidentified Belgian collector — is the centrepiece of the February 10 auction in Paris.

De Taux said it was a “larger, more impressive composition” than the record-breaking Blue Lotus work, and was a perfect example of the style used by Herge, whose real name was Georges Remi.

The picture has been displayed at exhibitions in Paris in 2009 and Lausanne in Switzerland in 2010. “It is totally documented and authenticated,” de Taux said. Tintin’s image is closely guarded intellectual property.

The sale of the Blue Lotus illustration originally drew ire from Nick Rodwell, the British husband of Herge’s second wife Fanny Vlamynck, who holds the rights to the Tintin works.

The famous picture of the black dragon on a red background was sold by members of the Casterman publishing family, who said their father Jean-Paul had been given it by Herge as a present when he was seven.

The future head of the publishing house reportedly kept the illustration folded up in a drawer for decades.

That was disputed by Rodwell, who criticised the Castermans for not returning the work and said it rightfully belonged in the Herge museum in Belgium.

But relations were eventually smoothed. “The rights-holders of Herge’s works were pleased with the outcome of the sale,” de Taux said. — AFP

With Afghan women barred from aid work, a hunger crisis worsens



Christina Goldbaum

The writer is a correspondent in the Afghanistan bureau of NYT



Najim Rahim

The writer is a reporter in the Afghanistan bureau of NYT

For years before the Taliban seized power and the economy collapsed, Jamila and her four children had clung to the edge of survival. After her husband died trying to cross the Iranian border, she and her children moved to a camp for displaced people in northwestern Afghanistan and relied on aid organisations.

One group brought her oil, flour and rice — food that kept her family from starving. Another gave her children pens and notebooks — the only supplies they had in primary school. A third vaccinated them against measles, polio and other illnesses.

But when Jamila tried to arrange an emergency parcel of food in late December, the aid worker cut the call short, explaining that the organisation had suspended its operations: Last month, the Afghan government barred women from working in most local and international aid groups, prompting many to stop their work. Jamila’s heart sank.

“If they are not allowed, we will die of hunger,” said Jamila, 27, who goes by only one name, like many women in rural Afghanistan. “We are starving.”

Just weeks since the Taliban administration’s decree, women across the country are grappling with the disappearance of lifesaving aid that their families and the country have relied on since the country plunged into a humanitarian crisis.

It has been a dual tragedy for Afghanistan, and for Afghan women in particular.

For many women and girls who had already faced increasing restrictions under the new government — including being shut away from many jobs, high schools, universities and public parks — the new edict removed one of the few remaining outlets for employment and public life. Given the conservative system that had existed in Afghanistan even before the Taliban took power in 2021 and amplified the most hard-line traditions, aid groups had relied on female workers to reach other women and their families, who were often segregated from any contact with outside men.

Now, amid a malnutrition and



Fatima, 15 months, and her mother at Indira Gandhi Hospital’s overwhelmed malnutrition ward in Kabul.

MANY INTERNATIONAL DONORS ALSO REQUIRE THAT WOMEN MAKE UP AT LEAST HALF OF THE PEOPLE AN AID ORGANISATION REACHES IN ORDER TO RECEIVE FUNDING

healthcare crisis that has worsened as the Afghan government’s changes have turned the world away, many aid groups say the banning of those female workers has made it nearly impossible for them to work in the country. Those organisations described the move as a “red line” that violated humanitarian principles and that, if it remains in place, could permanently shut down their operations in Afghanistan.

The result is likely to be millions of Afghans left without critical aid during the harsh winter months.

A record two-thirds of the population — or 28.3 million Afghans — are expected to need some form of humanitarian assistance this year as a hunger crisis looms over the country, according to United Nations estimates.

“This is not a choice. This is not a political decision. It’s actually reality. We cannot do our job if we do not have a female staff in place to work,” Adam Combs, regional director at the Norwegian Refugee Council, said in a news conference late last month.

In recent weeks, UN officials have met several times with Afghan

authorities to try to resolve the crisis, they said.

But while Afghan officials have urged the resumption of aid programmes, they have also indicated that the Taliban administration’s top leadership is unwilling to reverse the edict. Instead, the leadership has doubled down on accusations that female aid workers had not worn Islamic headscarves, or hijabs, in accordance with the new government’s laws on women’s attire, according to summaries of those meetings and other documents obtained by *The New York Times*.

In a meeting in late December between UN officials and officials with the Taliban administration in Kandahar — the heartland of the Taliban movement and centre of power of the new government — Afghan officials accused Western countries, particularly the US, of using aid as political leverage to push unwelcome Western values on the country, according to the documents.

Late last month, Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesperson for the Taliban administration, said on Twitter that all organisations within Afghanistan must comply with the country’s laws, adding, “We do not allow anyone to talk rubbish or make threats regarding the decisions of our leaders under the title of humanitarian aid.” — **New York Times**

Ethics & Business: An Unfaithful Alliance

Are you starting out in business? Or maybe you are an entrepreneur? Whatever your life's ambitions you need to be aware of the ethics of what you do. But don't become a slave to them because the rude truth is that nobody else is! Medicine is absolutely bound by its ethics, through their Hippocratic Oath, a list of obligations to, "First, do no harm." The legal fraternity's ethics are enshrined in oaths to their governments, and ironically to itself, with the bitter irony that in every court case, at least one of their professions is representing a stranger to the truth! But they still advise them, and still take their money.

However, I digress... Nowhere are casual ethics more evident than in the world of business and commerce where, when you think about it, business ethics is the most hideous of oxymorons. The reality is that in that dog-eat-dog environment, to take the ethical high ground simply ensures that your opposition will have the opportunity to cut the ground out from underneath you, and you don't need that. Ever! Because though the law guides business ethics, and is a factor in the licencing processes, the reality is that in that huge shark tank of business and commerce, ethics are only guidance, or bait for the unwary, distractions, honey traps of a different kind.

Business ethics studies are concerned with bribery, corruption, insider trading, governance, and legal responsibilities, suggesting that right and wrong, legal, and illegal are determined ethically. However, though Judge Potter Stewart of the Supreme Court of the United States wrote, "Ethics is the difference between knowing what you have the right to do, and what it is right to do," when it comes to money, his words are soon forgotten, and so are ethics.

We must look askance at those like Howard Hughes, Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Philip Green, and more notoriously Donald Trump and Elon



Ray Petersen
r.j.petersen52@gmail.com

The writer is a media consultant

ETHICS ARE STATEMENTS OF THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES THAT GUIDE US, AND WHEN WE MAKE AN OATH, WE ARE DECLARING TO THE WORLD, AND OUR FAITH, THAT WE WILL DO 'THE RIGHT THING,' SO THE QUESTION IS, AT WHAT STAGE DO BUSINESSMEN AND WOMEN DECLARE THAT THEY WILL MAINTAIN AN ETHICAL AND MORAL PERSPECTIVE?

Musk, who pontificate that 'if ethics are poor the business is poor,' that 'you can't succeed without ethical standards,' or that 'it takes twenty years to build a reputation and twenty minutes to lose it.' Yet all of them have manipulated markets, and been morally, ethically economical, to make their fortunes.

The disgraceful conduct of the banks, insurance companies, and finance markets, and their role in the fraudulent real estate/mortgage scandal that almost led to the global collapse of a banking system that was, in their own words, 'too big to fail,' hurt. Why? Because they had carefully perpetuated the belief for a hundred years that they were, and that everything would fall around our ears, not when it happened, but if, yet they still preach to us endlessly about responsibility and ethics! Just read any account opening, loan, or mortgage document.

Ethics are statements of the principles and values that guide us, and when we make an oath, we are declaring to the world, and our faith, that we will do 'the right thing,' so the question is, at what stage do businessmen and women declare that they will maintain an ethical and moral perspective? The answer is... they don't! In fact, dotcom billionaire Seth Goddin acknowledges, "the unhappy reality of business ethics is that you have a shareholder vested responsibility to make money, as much as you can, and if you let a little thing like ethics stand in your way you are cheating those investors. There's not a lot of wiggle room, so don't let ethics get in the way."

At the end of the day however, the dollar, the euro, dirham, shekel, rial, and the pound, are King, and expecting ethics to affect how those who can manipulate them to be ethical, at any level, is a naivety they'll use against you. Simply maintain your personal integrity, your own sense of self of right, wrong, good, and bad. Let them inspire you, but don't let them be your epitaph.

PLAYING WITH FIRE



A Palestinian youth shows his fire breathing skill on a beach in Gaza City. – AFP

An economy withstanding shocks without permanent rupture

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has graciously given Royal directives to boost the business sector a few days ago, which succinctly reflect attention that marks His Majesty's royalty and high-nobility with regard to consideration of what businesses need and want at this point of time.

There is no marvel that the world has been hardly hit by Covid-19, causing great confusion and disorder. The world has become filled with surprise, wonder and amazed curiosity and people were astonished and perplexed at the magnitude of the Covid-19 devastation that reduced daily life activities to chaos, disorder and helplessness.

Our memory is still vivid with Covid-19 'main shock,' involving risk to life of millions of people around the world. But the 'minor shocks,' of this distressing event, that followed have also been very great in size, amount, degree and intensity, extending over a vast scope of daily life activities without specified limits from side to side. Businesses of various natures have become powerless and ineffective. Certain economic sectors were the first to endure Covid-19 havoc, but its effect has swiftly and



Dr Musallam al Ma'ani

Dean of Al Zahra College for Women

THE LATEST ROYAL DIRECTIVES, BY HM THE SULTAN, ARE INTENDED AS AN AUTHORITATIVE ORDER TO GIVE A BOOST TO THE BUSINESS SECTOR THAT IS MARKEDLY LACKING IN STRENGTH AS A CONSEQUENCE AND EFFECT OF COVID-19

indiscriminately spread to all sectors.

However, the economy of the Sultanate of Oman has been able to stand up with firm determination against the downward turns caused by Covid-19 especially towards a decline in business and economic activity, through HM the Sultan's wise policy which has been marked with thrifty and efficient use of material resources as well as with frugality

in and careful management of expenditures.

Oman, thanks to His Majesty the Sultan's farsighted vision, has been able to pay more than \$4 billion debts, a fact that affirms not only its keenness and determination to fulfil obligations and commitment to pay to its creditors, but also reflects an assured reliance on the country's ability and strength to tackle, in a direct and effective way, such matters with hard

unbending will.

The latest Royal directives, by HM the Sultan, are intended as an authoritative order to give a boost to a sector that is markedly lacking in strength as a consequence and effect of Covid-19. This move, undoubtedly, will not only enhance the business sector vigor and position locally, but also its overall quality and character as seen or judged regionally and internationally.

As per the Royal directives, the limit of loan ceiling granted by Oman Development Bank, an establishment that provides loans at lower interest rates to facilitate development projects in Oman, has been raised up to RO 5 million, especially for those projects that would add a value and promote the growth of development (tanmyia) in Oman.

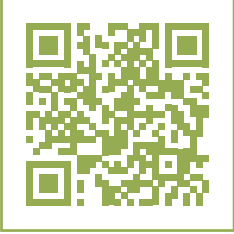
The list of commercial activities financed by ODB has also been raised by furnishing necessary funds for projects which are especially carried out outside the Governorate of Muscat, with the aim to make development generally and widely spreading out to all parts of the country.

The measures currently taken by Oman are meant to give confidence not only to local businesses but also to foreign investment in the country, by proving that Oman remains, at all times, unvarying, steady in its policy and firm in resolution. This is due in part to the geographical location of Oman, but to a larger extent due to stability that the country enjoys under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.



sport

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ITTF World Veteran Championship to be opened today

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JAN 14

Oman is all set to begin the action of 2023 ITTF World Veteran Championship - Muscat 2023 which will start in Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Sunday and will run for one week.

The official opening ceremony will take place on Sunday under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Fahar bin Fatik al Said at the OCEC auditorium in presence of Petra Sorling, ITTF President, Khalil al Muhannadi, President of Asian, Arabian and Qatar TT associations, besides top dignitaries.

The opening ceremony will feature speeches by the organising committee and the ITTF president. A mixture of different heritage musical chapters and digital shows will be presented in the opening ceremony too.

As many as 1, 600 participants representing 69 nations arrived in Muscat.

The participants are representing different countries including: Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, England, Spain, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, China, Hungary, India, Iran, Ireland, Iraq,



HH Sayyed Fahar bin Fatik al Said



Petra Sorling

Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Moldova, Mongolia, Monaco, Nepal, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Poland, Portugal, Romania, South Africa,

Scotland, Singapore, Slovenia, Serbia, Switzerland, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey, UAE, Ukraine, USA, Uzbekistan, Finland and the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Table Tennis Association (OTTA), in coordination with

International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) and under supervision of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, confirmed completion of all the technical and logistics preparations for the world class TT event in Muscat. All the tables and flooring were installed in the venue beside additional lightings according to the international requirement of ITTF. The paddlers began their warm-up sessions in the venue on Saturday and they will continue gearing up on Sunday ahead of the competitions start on Monday.

TECHNICAL MEETING
The technical meeting of the championship took place and

competition schedule was released to all the participants. The competitions will be in daily basis starting at 8 am to 9 pm from Monday until closing ceremony on Saturday. Players will range from the age of 40 to over 85 and will compete in different age categories with 44 world titles to be won. The championships will be staged throughout OCEC, utilising the three exhibition halls for more than 130 competition spaces.

As many as 100 umpires will be officiating the tournament matches. The referees are from Sultanate of Oman and other worldwide countries including umpires with blue, white and international levels.

Loeb’s six appeal makes Dakar history, Attiyah on top



French driver Sebastien Loeb and Belgian co-driver Fabian Lurquin steer their BRX during the Stage 13 of the Dakar 2023 between Saybah and Al Hofuf, Saudi Arabia. – AFP



Red Bull KTM Factory Team’s Toby Price in action during Stage 12. – Reuters

HOFUF, Saudi Arabia: French driver Sebastien Loeb won a record sixth successive stage in the Dakar Rally on Saturday although barring a disaster Qatar’s Nasser al Attiyah looks set for a fifth title.

Loeb, a record nine-time world rally champion, won the 13th and penultimate stage, a 154 kilometres special from Shaybah to Al Hofuf, to break Finnish driver Ari Vatanen’s mark of five consecutive victories in 1989.

The 48-year-old Prodrive star is in second spot overall — the same position as he filled last year — 1 hour and 21 minutes behind Al Attiyah.

“It’s great, even though the record was not necessarily my goal,” said Loeb.

“I especially wanted to cement my second place.

“The gap was small and I eased into my pace from the start of the dunes, so I wasn’t going to change everything.

“I feel good on sand, I can set a strong pace, I’m confident, I can drive aggressively while watching out for broken dunes. It’s cool.”

In contrast to Loeb setting the Saudi dunes ablaze, Al Attiyah has settled for a safety first strategy having established a commanding lead going into the final week of

competition.

The 52-year-old lost just 5min 38sec to Loeb in Saturday’s stage.

“What is really important to me is winning the Dakar,” said Al Attiyah. “The race was great for us, we just have to bring the title home now.”

Al Attiyah’s Toyota team-mate, Brazilian Lucas Moraes, fills out the podium. He holds a comfortable advantage of over an hour from another Toyota driver South African Giniel de Villiers.

NEED TO PUSH
The car crown may appear done and dusted but it is far from the

case in the motorbike category.

Australia’s two-time motorbike champion Toby Price holds a wafer thin advantage following closest rival Kevin Benavides’s victory in Saturday’s stage.

The 35-year-old KTM rider holds a lead of just 12 seconds over the Argentinian.

Price maintained first spot despite a fall and a navigation error in the stage.

“I made one little mistake around 130,” he said.

“We went too far right and I took a fall while looking at the top of a dune.

“At this stage here, you need to

push to keep the lead.

“I’m happy, I’ve put a 100 per cent in every day.”

American Skyler Howes lies in third spot 1min 31secs adrift of 2016 and 2019 champion Price.

Benavides, who won the title in 2021, was awarded the stage win after having more than 23 minutes restored to him.

This was the time he took to aid a stricken rival Matthias Walkner at the outset of the stage.

The late revision dashed the cup of victory from South African amateur and debutant Michael Docherty, who had been hoisted to the top of the stage standings

after Benavides’s younger brother Luciano was penalised a minute for speeding.

Howes’s compatriot Mason Klein’s rollercoaster race — mixing impressive performances with several tumbles — came to a premature end.

The KTM rider was unable to start the stage due to medical reasons according to race organisers Amaury Sport Organisation (ASO).

Sunday’s final stage is a 417-km run — including a 136-km special — to Dammam bringing to a close two weeks of combat conducted over 8,000 km. — AFP



Phillips lifts NZ to ODI series win over Pakistan

KARACHI: Glenn Phillips smashed an unbeaten half-century as New Zealand secured a series victory over Pakistan with a two-wicket win in the third and final one-day international in Karachi on Friday.

Phillips scored 63 off 42 balls, hitting four sixes and as many fours, to rescue New Zealand from a precarious 181-5 in their pursuit of a 281-run target.

His knock overshadowed Fakhar Zaman's 101 as Pakistan made 280-9 in their 50 overs.

Walking in to bat with New Zealand needing 100 off 87 balls, Phillips added 64 for the seventh wicket with Mitchell Santner, who scored 17 in a match-turning stand.

Skipper Kane Williamson contributed with 53 and Devon Conway struck an equally steady 52 before Phillips finished off the chase with 11 balls to spare.

Phillips completed his first ODI fifty off just 28 balls, but he was dropped the following delivery when wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan failed to hold a catch off spinner Usama Mir. New Zealand's win sealed their first ODI series victory in Pakistan in six attempts and kept them top of the one-day rankings.

"He (Phillips) wasn't feeling great but he came out and played with a lot of freedom," said Williamson whose team have now won seven of their last eight ODI series.

"I thought we were in the game at the halfway stage but made a few errors. For Glenn to play that knock, and credit to Pakistan as well. It was a hard-fought series."

Pakistan captain Babar Azam said: "When Rizwan and Fakhar played it looked like we'd touch 300 but when wickets fall, it is difficult for new batters. — AFP

Rashford earns Man Utd derby triumph over Man City

MANCHESTER: Marcus Rashford scored the winner as Manchester United came from behind to beat Manchester City 2-1 and go third in the Premier League in a thrilling finale at Old Trafford on Saturday.

Both United goals came in the final 12 minutes as Erik ten Hag's side moved to within one point of their local rivals in the table after inflicting a damaging blow to City's hopes of retaining the title.

Pep Guardiola's men looked to be heading to victory when Jack Grealish came off the bench to head the visitors into the lead.

But Bruno Fernandes' controversial equaliser turned the game and four minutes later Rashford netted for the ninth consecutive match at Old Trafford.

City could now fall eight points off the top of the table should Arsenal beat Tottenham in the north London derby on Sunday.

The victory for United was sweet revenge after being destroyed 6-3 when the sides met in October.

The scoreline even flattered United at the Etihad thanks to two late goals from Anthony Martial.

However, Ten Hag's men have now lost just once in 19 games since in a stunning turnaround in the Dutch coach's first season in charge. The introduction of Casemiro has transformed United's midfield since the last Manchester derby and Ten Hag's decision to play Fred alongside his Brazilian international team-mate cut City's supply line to Erling Haaland.

United's turnaround is reflected in Rashford's revival. The England international has now scored 16 times this season.

RASHFORD THREATENS

Rashford's pace in behind was the biggest threat posed by either side



Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes and Marcus Rashford celebrate after the match. — Reuters

in the first half and he should have done better after rounding Ederson than allowing Kyle Walker to comfortably clear off the line.

Another Rashford burst then took him beyond Rodri, but again the finish was lacking as Ederson hurried off his line to smother.

United's new loan signing Wout Weghorst was watching on from the stands and Martial's lacklustre performance before being replaced at half-time by Antony underlined Ten Hag's need for more forward options.

By contrast, City are blessed with an abundance of talent in the final third and Guardiola's ability to

make game-changing substitutions looked to have swung the game in their favour.

Grealish had only been on the field three minutes before netting the biggest goal of his City career to date as he nodded in Kevin De Bruyne's cross on the hour mark.

But City have struggled this season to match the consistency that has won them four Premier League titles in the past five years and were undone by a hugely controversial equaliser.

Rashford was clearly offside as he raced towards Casemiro's pass, but crucially did not touch the ball and left it for Fernandes to sweep

home. The assistant referee initially flagged for offside and City were livid at the decision to allow the goal to stand.

City were still rocking when they conceded again as Alejandro Garnacho sprinted down the left and crossed for Rashford to prod home from close range.

There was still time for City to feel further aggrieved at referee Stuart Attwell as Haaland saw a penalty appeal waved away.

But the champions now have a huge job on their hands if they are to maintain their dominance of English football in the Guardiola era. — AFP

Hosts India make perfect start in World Cup hockey

BHUBANESWAR, India: Pool A and Pool D got under way on day 1 of the FIH Odisha Hockey Men's World Cup 2023 as the action began in eastern Indian city of Bhubaneswar and finished in Rourkela.

In Bhubaneswar, Argentina were the first to get on the board, registering a close 1-0 win against South Africa. Australia then went top of Pool A with a dominant 8-0 win against France, who played well despite the unflattering scoreline. Action then shifted to Rourkela where England got the better of neighbours Wales, winning 5-0. It was then home team India's turn against a tricky Spanish team that has caused them some trouble over the past year in the FIH Hockey Pro League. But after overcoming early nerves, the Indian attack dominated and claimed a 2-0 win to get 3 crucial points in the Pool D encounter.

INDIA BLANK SPAIN 2-0

The Birsa Munda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela was packed to the rafters as home team India took on rivals Spain in a big Pool D encounter to close day 1 of the World Cup. Spain started the game on the front foot causing India some nervy moments, but India settled down soon and were in front by the end of first quarter as Amit Rohidas capitalised on a

blocked drag flick by Harmanpreet to bury a shot in the goal, which was India's 200th goal in the competition. India struck again before the half through a goal by Hardik to take a solid 2-0 lead into the half.

All attempts by the Spanish attack to get a goal back were also well stopped by the Indian defence, led brilliantly by goalkeeper Krishan Pathak, as India carried their 2-0 lead into the full-time whistle and secured 3 crucial points in Pool D.

Home favourite Amit Rohidas was awarded the player of the match and said: "Playing here felt really good, and this was a great win. Thank you to the crowd who turned up in such huge numbers and cheered us on so loudly."

ARGENTINA EDGE SOUTH AFRICA

Both Argentina and South Africa set a fast tone for the World Cup playing all-out attacking hockey in the first quarter. Both goalkeepers had to be on constant alert as the ball entered the circle multiple times for both teams, but neither team could produce a real threat on the goal.

Argentina did finally manage to break the deadlock in the 43rd minute through a field goal as Maico Casella got in front of Gowan Jones and a slight deflection



on a shot by Toscani unsighted the in-form keeper. Maico Casella was awarded the player of the match and said: "Good to win the first match, we played well enough. I think the positive we take is the number of penalty corners we won, and we will start converting more going forward."

AUSTRALIA THRASH FRANCE 8-0

Australia were quick off the blocks showing why they are the early tournament favourites. They got

the first goal of the game thanks to a brilliant run by Tom Craig as he split the defence, passed to Tim Brand and got a deflection on Craig's shot to cap off the fantastic move. France were much better in the second quarter but failed to capitalise on their chances and Australia made them pay with 3 goals in the final 4 minutes.

Australia had all the momentum going into the half and were quick to get going in the second half as a beautiful team move saw 4 players touch the ball in the circle before it

FIH ODISHA HOCKEY MEN'S WORLD CUP 2023 DAY 1 RESULTS	
Argentina 1-0 South Africa	
Player of the Match: Maico Casella (ARG)	
Australia 8-0 France	
Player of the Match: Tom Craig (AUS)	
England 5-0 Wales	
Player of the Match: Sam Ward (ENG)	
India 2-0 Spain	
Player of the Match: Amit Rohidas (IND)	

was tapped home by Tom Craig. Jeremy Hayward then scored his third penalty corner goal to complete a smashing hat-trick. Tom Brand added a third as well in the 45th minute to become the second Australian to grab a hat-trick. Australia cruised through the final quarter adding one more goal through Tom Wickham to cap off a great 8-0 win and take all 3 points.

Hat-trick hero Tom Craig was awarded player of the match and said: "Good to get the goals but better feeling winning. We haven't

played tournament hockey since July last year, but we prepared well for this and hopefully we get even better going forward."

ENGLAND SMASH WALES 5-0

England made a fantastic start to the game as Nicholas Park scored within the first 20 seconds to stun Wales and grab an early lead. England scored at the perfect time again, doubling their lead through a Liam Ansell penalty corner goal with just 2 minutes left in the half, leaving Wales to try and chase the game in the second half.

England scored twice in the 3rd quarter to gain total control of the game. Liam Ansell scored his second goal of the game in the 38th minute from a penalty corner, and Phil Roper opened his account with a field goal in the 42nd minute to put the game beyond Wales' reach. Wales committed heavily to the attack in the final quarter trying to claw a goal back, but England stood firm and scored a 5th goal through Nicholas Bandurak in the 57th minute to seal a perfect win and 3 points for England.

Sam Ward was awarded player of the match and said: "Could not have asked for a better start to the tournament. Just want to keep the momentum going from here on out and into the next game against India."



DAHAM SECOND, HYNES THIRD; HAITHAM, TARIK SHINE

Bertens bags OIDC opening honours

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, JAN 14

Nikolass Bertens bagged the opening round honours of the Oman International Drift Championship 2023 in Muscat on Friday night.

At the Oman Automobile Association's (OAA) Muscat Drift Arena in front of a capacity crowd, the drifting stars came up good to thrill the fans.

Latvian 17-year-old Bertens known as 'Niknak' in drift circles used his past experience at the OIDC to claim the top spot.

Jordan driver Ahmed Daham continued his 'love affair' with the OAA tournament by claiming the runner-up position and Irish drifter Alan Hynes finished third for a promising start in the four-round event.

Daham edged Hynes in the top 4 contest to enter the final against Bertens. Niknak beat compatriot Edgars Krogeris to enter the title-clash.

In the Middle East and North African (Mena) category, Ahmed Daham came on top followed by Omani drivers Haitham al Hadidi and Tariq al Shaihani.

The national category was topped by



Haitham al Hadidi, while brothers Tarik al Shaihani and Ali al Shaihani claimed the second and third positions respectively.

OAA Chairman Brigadier (ret'd) Salim al Maskari said he was delighted with the turnout for the opening round of OIDC 2023.

"It was a great sight of the fans in full capacity enjoying the top level drifting experience at the OAA. Our team had worked hard to make this edition possible," he said. The OIDC 2023 started at the OAA's Muscat Drift Arena on Thursday with the qualifications for the first round.

The second round will be held on January 19-20 and the third round on February 9-10. The tournament will hold the fourth and final round on February 16-17. The winners and the top-ranking drivers will be determined by the points earned from each round. Total points will

be considered for the overall championship and rankings.

TOP DRIFTERS IN ACTION

A rich field of 60 drivers from 19 countries are in action in the fifth Oman International Drift Championship.

Some of the top drift drivers around the world, representing 19 countries — Ghana, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, Malaysia, Lithuania, Latvia, Ukraine, the Netherlands, Britain, Ireland, USA, El Salvador and Australia — are involved in four rounds of intense drift action at the OAA's Muscat Drift Arena.

Defending champion is British contestant Steve Buggy, who ended the three-year title run of Irish James Dean. Other contenders for the title in OIDC 2023 are Ukrainian Timur Lapsky, Lithuanian Benkidesas Cherba, and Dutchman Clint van Ort along with top class drifters from the Middle East and North Africa.

Contestants from the Middle East and the region, such as Oman's Haitham al Hadidi and Jordan's Ahmed Daham and Kuwaiti driver Ali Makseed, in addition to Qatari Mohammed al Jaber said they have prepared well for this tournament.



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MAISARAH

Dhofar Governor to inaugurate OQ’s Ammonia Plant today

Value creation: Project’s ICV contribution amounts to \$199 million, primarily benefiting Omani SMEs

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JAN 14

His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, will preside over the inauguration of OQ’s ammonia plant in Salalah on Sunday, January 15, 2023. The plant is one of OQ’s main development projects and will contribute to enhancing the utilisation of Oman’s natural resources. It will support the economic diversification plans and will boost the export of Omani products to international markets. Eng Kamil al Shanfari, Executive Director of OQ’s Projects in Salalah, said: “OQ’s Ammonia Plant is integrated with the methanol plant and was designed to retain the hydrogen-rich purge gas generated by the methanol plant as feedstock. The demand for ammonia



products in the global markets is witnessing constant growth leading to higher returns and rendering the project highly feasible.” “The ammonia is being used as a key ingredient in the production of fertilisers and is an important intermediate chemical in the manufacturing of synthetic resins, detergents, coolants, synthetic

fibers, and polyurethanes, among other applications. Ammonia is also used in the production of green hydrogen, which is a key component of the OQ Energy Transition agenda,” Al Shanfari added. Commenting on the project’s in-country value (ICV) contribution, the official stated: “Like all the main development

projects, OQ’s Ammonia Plant has made an effective contribution to enhancing the in-country added value. About \$199 million were spent during the construction phase on procurements from Omani companies. Additionally, it has provided training programme that enhanced the capabilities of Omani youth in many fields.”

Oman may achieve fiscal surplus again in 2023: Moody’s

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JAN 14

International ratings agency Moody’s said in a report on Wednesday that the Sultanate of Oman is likely to achieve a fiscal surplus again this year, if the oil prices remain at an average of \$90-95 per barrel in 2023. In the report, Moody’s stated that Oman’s government debt metrics will likely continue to improve, especially if the newly established Integrated Gas Company decides to fund (some of) its spending through own borrowing rather than by reducing natural gas revenue transferred to the government’s budget. The Integrated Gas Company, created on December 29, 2022, is state-owned company that will manage all allocations, assets, rights and obligations for the purchase, sale, import, export and transportation of natural gas and related products on behalf of the government of the Sultanate of Oman. However, the ratings agency cautioned that the shifting gas-related expenditure to another government entity, which will retain some of the gas revenue



in return, will not improve the Oman’s fiscal balance. “We estimate that with an average oil price below \$80/barrel, Oman’s budget will likely slip into a deficit and the improvements in the government’s debt and debt affordability metrics, achieved in 2021-22, will begin to gradually erode,” it added. The fiscal upgrade in 2022 was due to a windfall from increased oil prices, which will make last year’s fiscal improvement difficult to sustain. With oil prices having already declined below \$80 per barrel since the start of the year from an average of around \$100 per barrel in 2022 and the peak of

\$120 per barrel last June. Sound fiscal policy reforms implemented during the past two years, coupled with the surging oil price enabled the government of Oman to reduce its direct debt burden below the pre-coronavirus level, the report noted. Based on the estimates, the Sultanate of Oman in 2022 achieved its first fiscal surplus of \$2.98 billion in nearly ten years, which is credit positive. In addition to benefitting from a strong positive denominator effect on its debt-to-GDP and debt-to-revenue ratios, the government used a part of its

2022 surplus to pay some of its outstanding debt early. As a result, the government debt burden came down to about 44% of GDP in 2022, helped by higher nominal GDP and increased revenues due to higher oil prices, Moody’s said.

IRENA members drive global energy action on the road to COP28



QASIM AL MAASHANI
ABU DHABI, JAN 14

Short-term actions must be given top priority to urgently accelerate the energy transition in the coming years and course correct the 1.5°C pathway to 2050. This is the message sent by energy leaders from the 13th IRENA Assembly, the first milestone on the global energy agenda of 2023 which kick-started with a high-level discussion on “World Energy Transition — The Global Stocktake.” The first Global Stocktake at COP28 later this year represents a pivotal point to identify gaps and opportunities for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Set out in the Agreement, it assesses the collective progress towards achieving the long-term climate goals and forms the basis to define immediate priority actions to devise a practical way forward over the next seven years till 2030. At the Assembly, IRENA members confirmed their readiness to fully support the UAE’s COP28 Presidency by establishing the latest knowledge on the renewable-based energy transition and leveraging the international cooperation

IRENA MEMBERSHIP TOOK STOCK OF ENERGY TRANSITION PROGRESS TOWARDS PARIS AGREEMENT GOALS AND IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES TO DRIVE ACTION AT COP28 AND BEYOND. through the Agency’s global platform. Building a common understanding about what the roadmap to 2030 must look like is critical to drive a global energy agenda. Energy leaders from governments, private sector and international organisations provided insights on priority actions needed over the next few years, given the 2030 timeline for halving emissions and achieving the sustainable development goals. Discussions concluded that: • The world is not on track to reach climate and development goals and is even regressing in some instances. Action cannot be delayed and must be taken with already available solutions. • While every country is different, each must find a way to balance national priorities with short- and long-term goals to accelerate the world’s nationally driven actions.

TURN TO P15



Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Private Enterprises Exempt of Paying Overdue OCCI Membership Fees

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

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

OCCI’s exemption shall be effective starting from 1 February 2023 and will stay in effect for four months



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Maysan Properties launches The Residences in Duqm

MUSCAT: Maysan Properties has recently launched The Residences, set to be the next phase of Maysan Square, the first business district in Duqm. Offering the comforts of owning a private home combined with the amenities and the kind of lifestyle provided in a work-life balanced ecosystem which is found in Maysan Square.

The Residences is within 5 minutes of walking distance from the offices, cafes, grocery shops and other commercial establishments which are located and designed to satisfy all of Maysan Square user's needs, whether the user is a single person, a couple, or for a family.

Access will be exclusive to its residents, ensured by top-notch



technology that facilitates entry to the residential facilities as much as it impedes it for outsiders.

The Residences have 102 units starting from the ground floor to the fifth floor. Various types and layouts of spacious studio units, one-bedroom apartments, and two-bedroom apartments are well zoned with topmost exposure to natural light overlooking the natural scenic encircling the property.

Marvellous reflections will be seen at any hour of the day on its mirrored glass thanks to its completely glazed projections that accent full heights openings.

“Our aim is to generate a unique layout ensuring views,

and a special experience for all the building users.

The Residences at Maysan Square Duqm strengthens our commitment in offering an unmatched work-life balance living experiences to the residents and visitors of Duqm's first business district. Duqm is one of Oman's fastest growing cities and is expected to play a pivotal role in the growth and diversity of the country's economy,” the developer said.

“The Residences in Maysan Square” is available to all nationalities with buyers getting visa residency for them and their family members. Residences prices starts at RO 22,500.

Bank Nizwa offers home, auto and personal finance at competitive rates

MUSCAT: With the launch of a new campaign, Bank Nizwa, one of the leading Islamic banks in the Sultanate of Oman, is now catering to customers seeking an affordable home, auto and personal financing option. Under the campaign, customers can take advantage of flexible tenures and generous terms along with a special profit rate of 4.5 per cent.

This campaign offers attractive and feasible options for those looking to enhance their living standards. This promotion is designed to encourage citizens and residents alike to explore more convenient and accessible Islamic financing options.

“Keeping our customers’ financial goals in mind, we develop innovative offers and solutions to support them. As customers strive toward their goals, the new campaign comes at a time when convenient payment plans are much needed. Through this campaign, we aim to enhance our customers’ financing journeys and ultimately, support the local economy,” said Arif al Zaabi Assistant General Manager – Retail Banking.

“As part of Bank Nizwa’s commitment to providing Shariah-compliant products and services, it walks that extra mile to fulfil its customers’ aspirations of maintaining comfortable lifestyles for themselves and their families. For customers seeking easy finance for big purchases, a competitive profit rate of 4.5 per cent is a major boost to acquire a house or car,” he added.

Introducing innovative financial solutions is at the core of the Bank’s strategy and expansion plans. In



addition to bridging the financing gap and attracting new clients, this campaign strives to raise awareness of the Bank’s competitive advantages. Banking Nizwa enables an individual’s choice and helps in meeting their aspirations by offering benchmark services that extend beyond financing.

With Shariah-compliant banking, the Bank enables individuals to improve their lives as part of its consultation services. With its affiliation with the Islamic Finance Initiation Network (IFIN), Bank Nizwa was the first in the country to offer on-the-spot approvals for car financing. Customers can complete car financing procedures at participating car dealers. Customers can obtain auto finance faster by using this service instead of visiting the Bank’s branches.

GWM launches first regional parts distribution centre for Middle East

MUSCAT: On January 10, 2023, the Chinese Auto manufacturer Great Wall Motor (GWM) officially announced the launch of its first regional parts distribution centre for the Middle East region, located in the UAE.

With this launch, GWM aims to enhance its after-sale services and further fulfil the needs of its customers in 22 markets across the Middle East and North Africa.

As part of GWM’s broader service excellence plan, the launch seeks to shorten the logistics cycle while enriching the parts range. The plan, which started six months ago, has raised the satisfaction rate among end-users and dealers and expect to achieve much more.

During the launching ceremony, GWM had fruitful discussions with the representatives of its dealers from the Middle East region. The discussions included a wide range of topics, on top of which how to improve after-sales service and



develop a top-notch system for parts management.

The regional parts distribution centre aims to optimise the parts supply, response speed and parts operation process, as well as accelerate the improvement of the network layout in the service system.

“The Middle East Parts Distribution centre is a first milestone towards achieving our strategic expansion objectives of

Great Wall Motor’s services in this region.

Developing our after-sales service system can give Middle East customers an enhanced experience, which is exactly the people-oriented service spirit that Great Wall Motor has always had. We expect that this strategic cooperation with our partners will push GWM forward,” said Tony Sun, Managing Director of Great Wall Motor Middle East.

Own the stylish Kia Sportage with season of winning benefits

MUSCAT: Get your hands on the stylish and feature-packed Kia Sportage and get a chance to be a winner with Kia! Buy a Kia Sportage and get a chance to win a brand new Kia Niro Hybrid Electric Vehicle. Apart from that customers will also get comprehensive service up to 50,000 kms, 1 year insurance and cash gift.

The Kia Sportage is highlighting a brand new era with a comprehensive redesign that is attractive and stunning. The fifth-generation model challenges design norms and moves the Sportage identity to the next level, while paying homage to its rich heritage.

The Sportage’s exterior is bold and its impactful lines have an assertive presence, balanced with innovation and instinctive characteristics. The elongated grille links Kia’s modern signature Tiger Nose grille – that acts as the visual focal point of the car –LED DRLs (daytime running lamps), which in turn create solid boundary lines for the striking



LED head lamps. At the rear, the all-new Sportage maintains strong road presence with a muscular swooping fastback design that flows into the rear lamps, allowing the SUV to personify strength and stability. Depending on spec and model, the 2023 Sportage rides on 17-inch, 19-inch choice of different alloy designs, colours and finishes.

The interior of the Sportage is distinctive in every sense. It offers a unique high-tech environment that is visually impressive, as well

as spacious and intuitive.

Throughout the cabin, the highest quality materials that are opulent to touch have been used, while dynamic and vibrant colour options add vibrancy and energy. Fully immersive, in-car sound is delivered to the occupants via an 8” audio display system and steering audio control. The Sportage is also equipped with rear AC vent, Bluetooth with voice recognition, Android auto and car play, drive mode select, remote engine start, paddle shifter and more.

The Sportage is equipped with comprehensive range of powerful, responsive and efficient powertrains.

A 2.0 RVC 4WD with Nu 2.0 MPI churning 157 hp at 19.5 kg.m torque. This is paired to a 6-speed AT. The Sportage is also available as 1.6T 2WD SRF, 1.6T 2WD SPL and 1.6T 4WD SPL with Gamma 1.6T GDI with 176 HP and 27 kg.m. torque. These are paired to a 7-speed DCT. Kia’s acclaimed safety technology helps the Sportage to avoid potential hazards, fully protecting occupants and other road users on every journey. The all-new Sportage features driver and front passenger airbags, anti-lock braking system (ABS), electronic stability programme (ESP), hill-start assist control (HAC), downhill brake control (DBC), tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS), blind spot collision warning (BCW) and side and curtain airbags.

Customers looking to own a Kia can visit any showroom and experience a Kia.

Sohar International an official sponsor for Ironman 70.3 Oman



MUSCAT:Sohar International has kept pace with the local population's growing interest and participation in sports activities as well as the increasing desire amongst the international community to travel to compete or spectate key sporting events.

In line with its social objectives and to complement the government's efforts to promote the Sultanate of Oman as a key sports destination, Sohar International has signed a partnership agreement with Triathlon Middle East to be the Official Sponsor for the

prestigious Ironman 70.3 Oman taking place at the Shatti Al Qurum beach-side district on February 4, 2023.

The Ironman 70.3 Oman sponsorship agreement was signed at an official ceremony on January 8, 2023 at Sohar International's Waterfront branch at Shatti Al Qurum in the presence of Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International, and Mohammed al Obaidani, CEO of Triathlon Middle East — the leading sports events company organising Ironman 70.3 Oman.



Oman Rail joins International Union of Railways

Joint vision: Oman Rail, Etihad Rail showcase network plans at world body's regional assembly in Abu Dhabi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JAN 14

Oman Rail, the national railway company of the Sultanate of Oman, has secured membership of the International Union of Railways (UIC), the world's premier rail industry body set up over a century ago to promote safe, modern and interoperable rail transport at the global level.

Paris-headquartered UIC said in a statement that Oman Rail's membership was approved at the recent general assembly meeting of the world body. Also granted membership on the same occasion was Etihad Rail, the developer and operator of the national rail network of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The announcement comes on the heels of the participation of Oman Rail and Etihad Rail among



other rail operators in UIC's 30th Regional Assembly of the Middle East (RAME), which was held in Abu Dhabi in November.

Hosted jointly by the UAE's Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure and Etihad Rail, the forum attracted high-level executives of national rail companies from Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia Jordan and the UAE. On the occasion, the RAME region's

newest entrants – Oman Rail and Etihad – were given the opportunity to showcase their respective network development strategies.

Just last September, both national rail companies announced a partnership to develop and operate Oman's first rail network – a 303-km line that connects Sohar Port on the Sea of Oman coast with the UAE network in Abu Dhabi.

Oman Rail-Etihad Rail Company – a joint venture established by the two national rail companies – pledged to jointly invest around \$3 billion in a modern freight and passenger based rail transportation system linking the two countries.

Besides facilitating a speedy and cost-competitive alternative to road and air travel, the new rail-based network also has the

potential to unlock opportunities for heightened trade and investment between Oman and the UAE across an array of economic and commercial sectors.

With membership of UIC, Oman Rail stands to benefit from the global institution's unrivalled expertise in ensuring that the design and development of rail networks is based on international standards.

Established in 1922, the world body currently has 207 members operating across five continents.

As the industry's preeminent authority on rail transportation, UIC plays an important role in the standardisation of railway parts, data and terminology. Accordingly, UIC codes have been universally adopted for everything from large containers, swap bodies and conveyance of road vehicles on wagons to standardised cables for data communication, and railway mobile communications.

Also as part of its remit, UIC's objective are to: Facilitate the sharing of best practices among members (benchmarking), support members in their efforts

to develop new business and new areas of activities, propose new ways to improve technical and environmental performance, promote interoperability, create new world standards for railways (including common standards with other transport modes), and develop centres of competence (High Speed, Safety, Security, e-Business, and so on).

At the 30th RAME gathering in Abu Dhabi, members presented the Middle East region's Vision 2050 document, which underscores the development of railways as the "best way to contribute to the growth of national economies and societies, regardless of geopolitical tension and economic differences".

The Vision document also lists a number of initiatives to help sustain the growth of the rail industry in the region.

It includes plans for setting up a Middle East freight working group, a Safety Taskforce for the region, a separate taskforce on high temperatures and desert conditions, and the development of technical projects to support the rollout of hydrogen trains as well.

10 tips to stay away from crypto scams (Part 2)



STEFANO VIRGILI
stefano@virgili.com

The writer is a member of International Press Association

Cryptocurrencies are a polarising topic. Some love them while others totally hate them. Undoubtedly the number of users has grown significantly in 2021, but also the number of scams out there. In this second part of the column started last week, we will see more ways to avoid the most common scams in crypto.

5. Protect your personal information

It is crucial to be careful not to disclose personal information, such as your wallet address or private keys, to anyone you do not trust. Scammers may try to trick you into revealing this information in order to steal your funds.

Make sure to keep your personal and financial information private and be cautious when sharing it online. Use strong, unique passwords for your accounts and wallets and enable two-factor authentication to add an extra layer of security.

6. Seek advice from a financial professional

If you are considering investing in cryptocurrency, it may be a good idea to seek the advice of a financial professional.

They can help you understand the risks and potential rewards of investing in cryptocurrency and provide guidance on how to protect your assets.

A financial professional can also help you to create a diversified investment portfolio and provide guidance on how to manage your risk. This can be especially helpful for those who are new to investing or who are not familiar with the cryptocurrency market.

7. Be wary of unsolicited offers

If you receive an unsolicited offer to invest in cryptocurrency, be cautious. This is especially true if the offer is from someone you don't know or if it seems too good to be true. It is best to do your own research and make your own investment decisions rather than relying on unsolicited offers.

8. Avoid unfamiliar websites

Be careful not to enter your personal or financial information on unfamiliar websites. Scammers may try to trick you into visiting a fake website that looks legitimate in order to steal your information.

Only enter your information on websites that you trust and be sure to double-check the website's URL before entering any sensitive information.

9. Use strong passwords

To protect your accounts and wallets, it is important to use strong, unique passwords. Avoid using the same password for multiple accounts and consider using a password manager to help you create and manage strong passwords.

10. Enable two-factor authentication

Two-factor authentication (2FA) adds an extra layer of security to your accounts and wallets by requiring you to enter a code in addition to your password when logging in.

This code is typically sent to your phone via text message or generated by an app. It used to be something to consider as an extra layer of security, but nowadays it has become absolutely essential.

Enabling 2FA can help to prevent unauthorised access to your accounts and wallets and can be an effective way to protect your assets. Be sure to set up 2FA on all of your accounts and wallets that offer it.

By following these tips, you can help to protect yourself from crypto scams and ensure that you are making informed, well-thought-out investment decisions.

It is important to remember that investing in cryptocurrency carries risks, and it is always important to carefully consider the potential rewards and risks before making any investment.

IRENA members drive global energy action on the road to COP28

FROM PAGE 13

The Global Stocktake is an important process. What is equally important is to find common agreement on the global priorities after COP28 in Dubai.

IRENA remains the global energy transitions platform to drive action at faster pace.

"Although energy transitions are progressing around the world", IRENA's Director-General Francesco La Camera said, "efforts must be accelerated, while ensuring that benefits are

evenly spread across countries and communities.

"International cooperation will play a vital role in ensuring that all countries have an opportunity to accelerate the deployment of climate-proof technologies and secure the needed investment to achieve their goals. IRENA's membership offers a unique platform to drive a global energy agenda at COP28 and beyond."

Energy has an outsized impact on the delivery of climate action. IRENA's World Energy

Transitions Outlook lays out a direction to stay on the path to 2050. It stresses that staying on this path depends on sufficient action by 2030 and shows that the technologies to make such progress already exist.

The Outlook positions efficiency and electrification as primary drivers, enabled by renewable power, green hydrogen and sustainable modern bioenergy. Crucially, it places significant focus on policies and socio-economic implications to provide the

necessary nuance for diverse circumstances of individual countries and regions.

Through IRENA's contribution to the Global Stocktake, the Agency continues to demonstrate that renewables-based energy transitions are technically feasible, economically viable and, if properly managed, a source of solutions to policy priorities such as job creation, industrial development, energy security and universal access, among others.

Qatar, UAE energy ministers say gas will be needed for long time

ABU DHABI: The world will need natural gas for a long time and more investment is required to ensure supply security and affordable prices during the global energy transition, the energy ministers of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates said on Saturday.

Saad al Kaabi, Qatari Minister of Energy, told the Atlantic Council Global Energy Summit that a mild winter in Europe had seen prices come down, but that volatility would remain "for some time to come" given there was not much gas coming into the market until 2025.

"The issue is what's going to happen when they (Europe) want to replenish their storages this coming year and the next year," he said. Al Kaabi later told reporters that Qatar, which is working to expand its gas output, has limited volumes going to Europe that it would not divert away, "but there is a limit to what we can do".

Qatar is one of the world's top producers of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The UAE is an OPEC oil producer that is sharpening its focus on the gas market as Europe seeks to replace Russian energy imports after supply cuts since Western sanctions were imposed on Moscow over its war of Ukraine.

The Qatari minister said he believed that Russian gas would eventually return to Europe. UAE Energy Minister Suhail al Mazrouei, speaking on the same panel in Abu Dhabi, agreed that "for a very long time, gas will be there" and that while more renewable energy would be installed, more investment was needed in gas as a base load.

Field South Projects to Germany



QatarEnergy CEO and Qatar's Minister of Energy, Saad al Kaabi speaks during a press conference in Doha, Qatar, in this file photo. – Reuters

"The whole world needs to think of resources and how to enable companies to produce more gas to make it available and affordable," Al Mazrouei said.

Al Kaabi said it was unfair for some in the West as part of its green energy push to say African countries should not be drilling for oil and gas when it was important for their economies and the world needed more supply. Al Mazrouei said the "unclear" strategy of many countries made it difficult for them to commit to long-term gas contracts which in turn made it hard for energy companies to secure financing to invest in developing production capacity.

As competition for LNG heated up, Germany last year struck a 15-year supply

deal for Qatar LNG from 2026, the first of its kind to Europe from Qatar's North Field expansion project.

QatarEnergy had signed a 27-year deal to supply China's Sinopec. Al Kaabi, who is also CEO of QatarEnergy, said negotiations were taking place with many players around the world. "There are a lot of European and Asian buyers, and there is a potential that by the end of the year, the entire Qatar expansion will be sold out," he said.

Qatar's two-phase North Field expansion plan includes six LNG trains that will ramp up its liquefaction capacity from 77 million tonnes per annum to 126 million tonnes by 2027. — Reuters

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Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

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ali.almashari@omandaily.om

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92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

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99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

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Be Careful. Be Responsible! #Living_with_Covid19

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

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

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

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

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

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al Habsi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court Sayyid Khalifa bin Said bin Khalifa al Busaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Shauk Al Muhtair bin Abdullah bin Issa al Harthy, took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

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

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

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL KUTTY

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are filling our ears.

A drive around the downtown Ruwi and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves,"

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

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

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

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

TURN TO P4



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Limitless Determination and Creativity

Wafaa al Harthiyah is a talented artist from Oman who overcame significant challenges brought on by a birth condition thanks to her inspiring individuality and attitude towards life... **P20**

It was a successful Cricket Tour

BAUSHER SPORTS CENTRE, Cricket Training Academy is back to Muscat-Oman after a successful Cricket Tour of U16 Team to Hyderabad — India from December 23, 2022 till January 3, 2023. It was a joint venture with MSK International Cricket Academy from Hyderabad and has played more than 7 high packed cricket matches on a lush green turf grounds on multiple venues in which the team got more varieties and different conditions to play on. In a tournament in

which 12 teams participated from all corners of the Indian states, the BSC cricketers gained all experience and have come up with good learnings to execute them in local cricket season in Muscat. The tournament was organised by MSK Prasad's International Cricket Academy run by Mr. MSK Prasad, former Indian Cricketer and Former National Chief Selector, BCCI. These matches also included couple of night Cricket to play against top cricket U16 teams.

Such tours give great exposure in nurturing young talents to develop the game, build up international touring on different playing conditions and set their moral to high standard when they come back to play domestic cricket in Oman. Travelling along with high profile coaches from Oman who have monitored their performances and made their tour successful in terms of boosting up cricket.



READ

ONE OF US IS BACK

BY KAREN M. MCMANUS

At first the mysterious billboard seems like a bad joke: Time for a new game, Bayview. But when a member of the crew disappears, it's clear this 'game' just got serious — and no-one understands the rules.



BUSINESS

The Philippines' department of agriculture plans to import 22,000 metric tonnes of onions to address the supply gap that has caused prices to skyrocket — AFP



CELEBRITIES

US-Mexican actress Salma Hayek arrives for the 80th annual Golden Globe Awards at The Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California, on January 10 — AFP





The Frick Acquires Its First Renaissance Portrait of a Woman



FROM A GILDED frame, a red-haired woman eyes the viewer warily. Her gaze is steely, direct and somewhat confrontational.

The painting, "Portrait of a Woman" (circa 1575) by Italian Renaissance master Giovanni Battista Moroni, was a centrepiece of a 2019 exhibition of his work at the Frick Collection, "Moroni: The Riches of Renaissance Portraiture." And now, it will become the first painted portrait of a woman from the Italian Renaissance to join its permanent collection, the New York museum announced on Friday.

"We have two Titians, we have a Tintoretto, we have a Bronzino — and they're all of men," Aimee Ng, a curator who co-organised the 2019 exhibition, said of the paintings currently in the collection. "So it's a very big deal."

It will go on display on Thursday at the Frick Madison, the museum's temporary home on Madison Avenue while its Gilded Age mansion on Fifth Avenue undergoes renovations.

The painting, an anomaly among Renaissance portraits of women, which tended to promote a more modest and restrained image, is the most significant Renaissance painting acquired in more than a half-century by the Frick, which is known for its Old Master paintings and European fine and decorative arts, Ng said. It is a gift to the museum from the trust of a longtime board member, Assadour Tavitian, who died in 2020.

Neither the identity of the woman nor the purpose of the portrait is known, Ng said, and it does not seem to clearly fit into any of the reasons for which portraits were often made of women: betrothals, engagements or a couple's move to a new, grander house.

"The demureness of what was much more of a quote-unquote feminine expectation is sort of out the window here," she said. "Whoever is looking at her is definitely getting judged back."

Moroni, who spent most of his life working in northern Italy, where he was born between 1520 and 1524, was distinguished by his remarkably naturalistic portraits. In her review of the Frick's 2019 exhibition, New York Times co-chief art critic Roberta Smith wrote that Moroni "scrutinised reality with a new directness," creating work that evokes "the feeling that we are looking at real people as they existed — unidealised."

Of the approximately 125 portraits by Moroni that are known to exist, about 15 are portraits of women alone, according to the museum. The woman depicted here was probably aristocratic, Ng said, judging by her pink dress brocaded in silver-gilt and silver-wound thread, white neck ruff and fine jewellery.

Ng said she hoped the portrait, which is the first piece by Moroni in the Frick's permanent collection, would bring more attention to the artist, who has achieved much greater recognition in Europe than in America.

"There, he's ended up in Henry James' and George Eliot's novels, and become part of the culture," she said. "I'd love to think that, by having a Moroni painting of this quality and visual impact in the Frick Collection, we can bring more of this artist into an American awareness." — NYT

Savor the flavors of the newest culinary destination



IN MID-SEPTEMBER, on an artificial, palm tree-shaped island in the Persian Gulf, an avant-garde dinner service — "performance" is a better word — kicked off around 6 pm in a dimly lit restaurant on the roof of Dubai's Nakheel Mall. Outside, the twilight call to prayer echoed off skyscrapers, construction sites and neighbourhoods filled with low white villas.

Inside, electro music pulsed as servers initiated the nearly 20-course, 695-dirham (about \$190) meal with post-modern panipuri, crispy pastry cups filled with palm hearts.

A succession of theatrical props and neo-Indian dishes followed: Cinnamon bark stuck with nuggets of baked crab. A glass teapot of mushroom broth to be poured over mushroom noodles. With great ceremony, servers deposited grilled pineapple, tomato broth and other dishes. Then the lights went out and "Fly Me to the Moon" filled the room. By the time the last course — white chocolate ice cream with Emirati honey — had been consumed, Frank Sinatra's voice was fading away.

No, this wasn't a scene from "The Menu" — the new movie that stars Ralph Fiennes as an exacting chef whose dinners are rife with drama — but rather the enactment of the nearly nightly experience at the new Tresind Studio restaurant.

Anyone wanting to clap for the director of this spectacle, a 36-year-old Indian chef named Himanshu Saini, had to hold their applause. At that moment, he was bound for Madrid to attend the Best Chef Awards ceremony, where he would be honoured as one of the top 100 cooks on the planet.

After years of simmering, the Dubai food scene is at full boil. The emirate now boasts about 13,000 establishments — more per capita than New York City — and local talents like Saini are nabbing global laurels.

This year, three top gastronomic guides released their first editions for Dubai, one of the seven city-states that make up the United Arab Emirates.

The cascade began in February when the World's 50 Best Restaurants unveiled its list for the Middle East and North Africa. Dubai snagged 16 slots, more than any other city, including the top honour, for the Japanese-influenced 3 Fils restaurant. Then, in June, France's Gault & Millau held a gala for the release of its UAE guide. A week later, the Michelin guide hosted its own ceremony to shower its stars on Dubai.

"Things have evolved so much," said Gwendal Poullennec, the international director of Michelin guides, whose undercover inspectors began scouring Dubai in 2017. "There's been a real explosion in the

culinary scene."

Credit goes partly to the emirate's luxury hotels, which have long jockeyed to sign deals with Western and Asian boldface chefs like Gordon Ramsay, Heston Blumenthal, Alain Ducasse, Daniel Boulud, Heinz Beck, Bjorn Frantzen, Nobu Matsuhisa. And many top 2022 gastronomic prizes were claimed by hotel kitchens serving Continental cuisine: Stay by Yannick Alléno, Massimo Bottura's Torno Subito, Ossiano at Atlantis, The Palm.

But the more impressive story is the surge of excellent homegrown establishments, like 3 Fils and Tresind Studio, whose chefs and owners actually carry an Emirati passport or residency card.

"When I arrived in 2009, we didn't have homegrown restaurants. There were only chain restaurants, franchises and high-end restaurants in hotels," recalled Stasha Toncev, who relocated from Serbia to work at the Armani Hotel and today runs her own "Balkan bistro," 21 Grams. "Now there's a huge difference."

With such a dizzying array of dining options now available in Dubai, figuring out where to eat can be an overwhelming task for visitors eager to check out the new culinary scene. Here's a guide to some of the most notable additions.

THE FLAVOUR MALL.

Any epicurean exploration must begin at the Dubai International Financial Centre, or DIFC, a corporate complex that has blossomed over the last decade from a buttoned-down business centre into a dining hub.

Besides housing banks, investment firms and property developers, the centre houses restaurants by two pioneers who changed how and where Dubai eats: Omar Shihab and Izu Ani.

"We have double the number of restaurants here that we had three years ago," said Shihab, the Jordanian-Emirati managing director of Boca, a Mediterranean restaurant that opened in the DIFC in 2014. "It's crazy."

Sporting a blazer and a pocket square, Shihab poured orange natural wine while a noisy after-work crowd filled the restaurant. In a few days, he said, the restaurant would host yet another event valorizing Dubai restaurants: the first Middle East edition of the Star Wine List's awards.

The source of Boca's local renown lay on the table before him: a menu of sustainable dishes — a phrase not commonly associated with a consumerist desert metropolis that offers year-round indoor skiing and an annual festival devoted to shopping.

Some menu staples, which range

from 50 to 150 dirhams, feature Emirati ingredients, such as the "Garden in the Desert" salad, with local beetroot, desert plants, hydroponic tomatoes and edible flowers. Others are attempts to reduce food waste, like bread made from old sourdough loaves and tomato-skin powder.

The most innovative item on the menu isn't something to eat but a QR code link to Boca's carbon-emissions report, which Shihab ordered last year in his role as the restaurant's chief sustainability officer.

The green wave is now spreading to places like Lowe, a chic restaurant in a desert compound that serves healthy global dishes — tangy tartare of Japanese pumpkin, leaf-wrapped fish with tomato jelly — and periodically hosts "Waste Not" dinners for 150 dirhams. Composed of leftover food, these zero-waste banquets exemplify a new Dubai adage: One man's trash is another man's multicourse tasting menu.

Even newer, the recently revamped Teible restaurant features dishes concocted mainly from Emirati ingredients — no easy feat in a parched landscape. To wit: a 450-dirham set menu rife with shellfish from Fujairah, tomatoes from Ajman, corn from Al Ain.

Around the corner from Boca, Ani has been drawing diners to the DIFC since 2009. Born in Nigeria,

that, as a kid, he had been considered "a nothing who would go to prison."

Here, he said, "the philosophy is 'Everything is possible.'"

THE SOUL OF DUBAI

When he is not cooking, Orfali often seeks out the sunny interiors of Toncev's 21 Grams. Tucked atop a small commercial centre in a residential neighbourhood, the restaurant-cafe is a favourite hangout of cooks and restaurateurs. On a given day, you might spot Shihab from Boca; Carlos De Garza, executive chef of Teible; or perhaps Hattem Mattar, the self-proclaimed "First Arab pitmaster" behind the Mattar barbecue joint at the new Time Out Dubai food hall.

That 21 Grams even exists is a small miracle.

"Everyone told me I was crazy!" Toncev said of her declaration, in 2016, that she planned to pursue her dream of opening a southeastern European restaurant in Dubai.

"Everyone said, 'How are you going to make sarma and cevapi likable and attractive?'" she said, naming the traditional stuffed cabbage leaves and sausages that the restaurant now serves.

But Toncev — a gregarious



raised in England and trained in Michelin-starred kitchens in France, he arrived in Dubai to help launch a DIFC branch of La Petite Maison, a southern French restaurant popular in London. It was an overnight success, and he went on to create his own Dubai restaurants. Last year, Esquire magazine's Middle East edition put "Chef Izu" on the cover and declared him "Dubai's first celebrity chef."

"You know the nickname for the DIFC, right?" Ani joked as Dubai's glamorous set filled the boisterous dining room of Alaya, his new Middle Eastern restaurant. "The Dubai International Food Court!"

Known for his signature flat cap and game show host smile, Ani deserves a lot of the credit, from his Chinese-influenced Shanghai Me to Gaia, his modern Greek taverna, which placed 10th on the new Top 50 list.

On a balmy Friday night, a crowd of social media influencers, expats, Emirati men in white dishdashas, and women with Kohl-ringed eyes were packed around Alaya's big round tables. Servers delivered modern takes on Mideast dishes: rigatoni pasta with za'atar (125 dirhams), hay-smoked yellowtail dusted with sumac and Turkish chiles (160 dirhams).

When he arrived in Dubai, Ani said, he didn't plan to stay long, but the UAE won him over.

"I have to pay respect to a country that has welcomed me and given me a chance to grow," he said, confiding

40-year-old who favours leather pants and Birkenstocks — soldiered on. In 2018, she launched the restaurant in a smaller nearby location, and in 2019, it was declared "Indie Restaurant of The Year" by the local What's On magazine. This year, it snagged "Best European Restaurant" honours from Time Out Dubai.

In addition to cevapi (88 dirhams) and sarma (68 dirhams), the restaurant's chef, Milan Jurkovic, glides from comfort foods like pljeskavica — a meat patty upgraded with Wagyu beef — to fresh produce like Serbian beetroot salad (52 dirhams), which he morphs into a tender, thin-sliced carpaccio sweetened with blackberry sauce and brown butter.

Part of the restaurant's appeal is the warm décor: Vintage kilims. Red apples on the tables. Books. The other ingredient is Toncev herself, who greets regular guests with kisses, hugs her staff and organizes "Balkan Soul Music Night" concerts.

"A big part of Balkan culture is hospitality," said Toncev, who at age 9 began cooking meals for children in her neighbourhood back in Serbia.

Sitting beside windows overlooking the Burj Al Arab hotel, she mused on her decision to hatch her "crazy" scheme in this Middle East metropolis.

"I strongly believe that in life you have to always dig deeper," she said as jazz music and lively chatter filled the room. "In Dubai, if you dig deeper, you will find a soul." — NYT



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



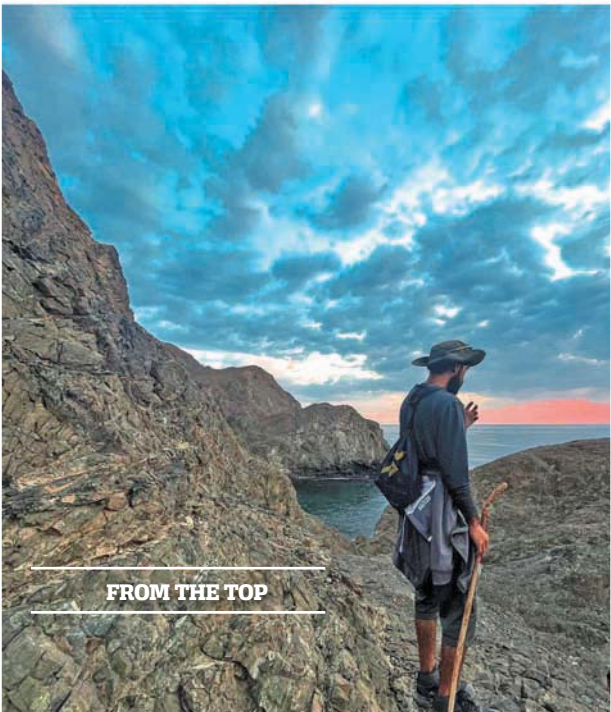
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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

How a See-Through Frog Hides Its Red Blood From Predators



AT FIRST GLANCE, you might miss the glass frog of the Costa Rican rainforest. It is, as the name suggests, nearly transparent. Apart from a lime green smear across its back, its skin, muscle and other tissues are see-through. Then there are its tiny organs, which seem to float within this clear flesh, like a pale fruit cocktail in the weirdest Jell-O salad ever to grace a tree branch.

As handy as translucence might be for evading predators, it is rare in animals that live on land. Their bodies are full of substances that light can't penetrate, many of them essential for life. Glass frogs seem to have evolved see-through versions of some of these anatomical features, but they also have some tricks to hide lingering colours when they are at their most vulnerable.

In a study published in the journal *Science*, researchers report that when a glass frog falls asleep, almost all of its red blood cells retreat into its liver. They hide in the organ and allow the frog to achieve near invisibility while it rests. In addition to revealing another remarkable adaptation in nature, the discovery could lead to clues for how to prevent deadly blood clots.

Like people, glass frogs rely on haemoglobin, a coloured protein in red blood cells that delivers oxygen around the body. Jesse Delia and Carlos Taboada, biologists and authors of the new paper, had been spending a lot of time observing the frogs when they realised that sometimes, that red colour seemed to disappear.

"When they are awake, the circulatory system is red," said Delia, who works at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. "When they are asleep, it's not."

WHERE WERE THE RED CELLS GOING?

To solve the mystery of the disappearing blood cells, the researchers and their colleagues wanted to take images of the frogs under anaesthesia — when the blood cells were clearly visible circulating through their bodies — and asleep, when the cells were nowhere to be seen. To do that, they needed to find a way to peer inside the frog's organs, which have a mirror-like exterior that helps the frog blend in. Taboada, a researcher at Duke University, said they suspected the blood would retreat to various organs when not in circulation.

The researchers wound up relying not on light but on sound to show them what was inside. They provoked the molecules within the sacs to release ultrasonic waves, which could be used to identify the contents.

As soon as they compared the images of sleeping and anaesthetised frogs, one big difference jumped out.

"All the signal was coming from the liver," Taboada said. About 89% of the frogs' red blood cells had packed themselves into that organ.

That made sense: The liver, which filters blood, is a logical destination for red blood cells, he said.

What was stranger, and what the researchers still don't understand, was how the frogs could cram all these cells together without dying from blood clots. In most vertebrates, when blood cells bump into each other, it leads to coagulation. The resulting clot can make a scab to seal a wound — or, if the clot is in a blood vessel, it can plug up the circulatory system and kill the creature. In the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as many as 100,000 people die from blood clots each year.

Glass frogs, the new research suggests, can control when their blood clots. If they are wounded, they will form a scab in the usual way. But when they are asleep, with red blood cells packed like sardines in the liver, no clot forms. — **NYT**

FASHION

On the Streets of Dakar: A Kaleidoscope of Style



THE CLASH OF cranes and bulldozers and the abundance of concrete and pipes as one walks through the streets signal where Dakar is headed and what it lacks. The atmosphere is not quite chaos. But it is quietly chaotic.

As Dakar, the capital of Senegal, has transformed, it has emerged as a fashion centre in sub-Saharan Africa. Dakar Fashion Week, a three-day showcase of collections from 20 designers, took place in December, days before Chanel held its Métiers d'Art show in the city.

But even though Dakar's profile as a fashionable destination has risen, taking candid photos of stylish people going about their day is not as easy as it is in New York or Paris.

The Senegalese are known for their friendliness and hospitality — two qualities I witnessed in most everyone I met on a trip to Dakar last month — but their relationship with Western cameras is reserved at best. Knowing I wanted to venture beyond the gentrified corners of the city, I hired a guide — Mady Camara, a journalist and former *New York Times* employee in Dakar — to help me communicate because English isn't spoken widely.

We started most mornings at sunrise and walked until sunset, breaking only during the hottest midday hours to eat. I shot on film, which presented another challenge: There was a finite number of photos I could take, forcing me



to make some hard decisions about whether to press the shutter button on my Leica M4. Wandering the beaches of Ngor, an area along Dakar's northwestern coast, and the

streets of Plateau, the city's bustling downtown, I photographed individuals young and old, in outfits that ranged from the traditional to the eclectic. An elegant student from out of town visiting friends at Cheikh Anta Diop University. An artist on a morning stroll to Plage de Virage, another beach. A woman waiting for a bus. A man standing on a street corner, his pastel striped shirt blending in with the faded colours of the surrounding buildings.

One of my fondest memories was an evening at Yoff Beach, where I watched young men play soccer barefoot as the sun set over the Atlantic Ocean. There wasn't just one game taking place, but scores of them. The men playing, more than 100 by my count, wore shirts from different soccer teams around the world, creating a colourful mosaic that stretched as far as the eye could see.

Looking at my photos from Dakar after returning home to New York, I had one nagging critical thought. I should have brought more film. — **NYT**

CULTURE

US Officials Repatriate a Looted Relic to the Palestinian Authority



US OFFICIALS met with representatives of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank on Thursday and handed back a 2,700-year-old looted item in what officials said was the first time the United States had repatriated a stolen relic to the Palestinian government.

The object, described as a "cosmetic spoon," was a tool carved from ivory and dating to between 800 and 700 B.C. It was used to ladle incense onto fires and braziers at rites venerating the gods and the dead. A winged figure was etched into its front side.

The Palestinian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Rula Maayah, who met with the US delegation in Bethlehem, said, "This artifact is important as it acquires its real scientific and archaeological value in its authentic location." She added that the item dates to the vast Assyrian civilisation, and that it was probably stolen from what is now Hebron, in the West Bank.

The chief of the US Office of Palestinian Affairs, George Noll, said at the ceremony that it was "a historic moment between the American and Palestinian people and a demonstration of our belief in the power of cultural exchanges in building mutual understanding, respect and partnership."

According to the office of the Manhattan district attorney in New York, the object was seized during a lengthy investigation into items collected by Michael H. Steinhardt, a prominent New York venture capitalist and a major ancient art collector. In 2021, after investigators seized 180 stolen antiquities valued at \$70 million from Steinhardt, he agreed to a lifetime ban on acquiring antiquities.

The cosmetic spoon, officials said, first surfaced on the international art market on January 21, 2003, when Steinhardt bought it from an Israeli antiquities dealer who has been accused of dealing in hundreds of illicit Israeli and Middle Eastern treasures, at least 28 of which were sold to Steinhardt.

Matthew Bogdanos, chief of the district attorney's Antiquities Trafficking Unit, said his investigators were able to backtrack the origins of the cosmetic spoon by examining emails seized from Steinhardt that included conversations about the item and the fact that it had been illicitly obtained.

In February, before the decision to return the spoon was announced, some Palestinians expressed dismay that Steinhardt artifacts they believed emanated from their territories would instead be handed over to the Israeli government. They have asked publicly for the return of more of the looted objects. — **NYT**

art & life

Local Scene

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SUNDAY | JANUARY 15 | 2023

Limitless Determination and Creativity



By Esraa al Saadi

It is said that creativity is born in the womb of suffering. That well-known adage may not be entirely accurate, but Wafaa al Harthiyah demonstrated its veracity by turning it into a fact.

Wafaa al Harthiyah is a talented artist from Oman who overcame significant challenges brought on by a birth condition thanks to her inspiring individuality and attitude towards life.

Al Harthiyah recalls some of her early years and claims that she suffered from Klippel-Trenaunay Syndrome, a rare congenital disorder that results in abnormal bone and soft tissue growth and causes excruciating pain and a weighty sensation.

Doctors had to amputate both of Wafaa's legs because the disease primarily affected her legs, which swelled up severely and gave her excruciating pain. Due to her medical condition, Wafaa spent a large portion of her childhood being admitted to hospitals. She was occasionally hospitalised for four or five consecutive months. People would stare at her legs and ask why she was different, which hurt Wafaa a lot as she struggled to tolerate and live with the disease. She claims that the love and support of her mother and family, however, helped her become stronger and better able to handle any unfavourable remarks she might have encountered.

In terms of her academic performance, Wafaa claims that the school turned her down due to her disability. Instead, she joined



the Al Wafaa Center, a nonprofit organisation that offers social rehabilitation programmes and care to children with disabilities.

Up until the age of 13, she completed her studies at home with the aid of some educational games and books. Since she had never attended school before, she began studying in third grade. Wafaa's enthusiasm and dedication to her studies were evident in her grades, as she consistently received the top spot throughout her study years.

When she was in grade 7, she even earned the third place on the Sultanate of Oman level.

Wafaa joined Sultan Qaboos University as a student in the College of Science and declared Statistics as

her major. She found that studying at SQU was extremely difficult because switching between classes hurt her physically so much that she had tormented thoughts of giving up. She made the decision to press on regardless of the difficulties, and in 2021 she graduated with honours.

Wafaa uses art as a means of expressing herself emotionally outside the constraints of her disability. When she was young and in the hospital, she started drawing as a form of entertainment for herself. She developed her drawing skills as she matured and rose to prominence in the art and drawing world. Wafaa has taught drawing classes at SQU and in her wilayat, Ibra, numerous times. To expose her talent to a wider audience,

she also participated in dozens of art galleries both inside and outside of Oman.

Additionally, she illustrated the covers of many books, including some novels from the Gulf countries as well as the books for a private school. She has won numerous accolades both inside and outside of Oman. She won first place in the Individuals Competition for the Daraish Gallery in the United Arab Emirates, second place in the Advanced Art competition, first place in the Microsoft

Imagine Us competition for the best environmental poster, and first place in the Tell a Friend campaign that was started by PDO, among other awards.

A significant aspect of Wafaa's personality is self-improvement. She constantly strives to not only enhance her existing skills but also learn new ones. For instance, Wafaa, a professional artist, has recently begun to experiment with digital drawing, designing, and photography. She also collaborated on the publication of a paper on Autism spectrum disorder and presented a study on the El Nino phenomenon at the Scientific Festival with some of her colleagues, making some truly remarkable contributions to the academic world.