

‘Rifi’ empowers rural women for self-employment

The first batch of women trained under the ‘Rifi’ products programme are all set to engage in self-employment. The programme is a joint venture of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Al Moheet Training Institute and Dar Al Atta’a Association. The first batch graduated under the auspices of Her Highness Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant V-C, Sultan Qaboos University for International Cooperation. **SEE P5**



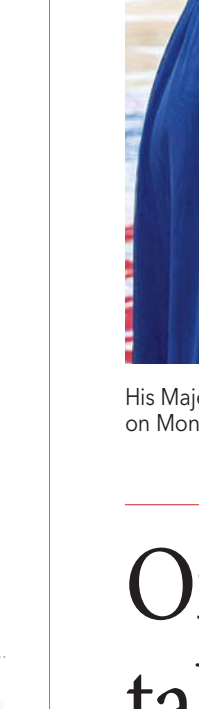
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IRAQ CROSS OMAN TO REACH WEST ASIA FINAL



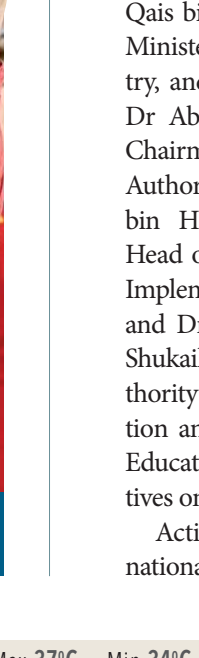
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OMANI ECONOMY CONTINUES TO GROW, INFLATION CONTAINED AT LOW LEVELS: IMF



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NEW MADRID MUSEUM SHOWCASES SPAIN'S ROYAL TREASURES



MUSCAT

253 LEADERS GRADUATE FROM ETIMAD

The graduation ceremony for 253 graduates of the second cohort of the national leadership programme to upskill and empower the potential Omanis for middle and senior management positions in the private sector ‘Etimad’, was held under the patronage of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, member of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management, and in the presence of Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, their excellencies, CEOs, government officials and representatives from the private sector. Dr Ali al Lawati stated that the Etimad programme has qualified Omani nationals as leaders and empowered them to work in an integrated institutional framework, which is one of the most prominent pillars of Oman’s future vision. **SEE P3**

KHARTOUM

SUDAN TRUCE HOLDS ON SECOND DAY

An international donors’ conference is set to begin in Geneva for Sudan, where a ceasefire was holding but the UN says the humanitarian situation is worsening after two months of war. The conference comes mid-way through a three-day ceasefire which appeared to have brought calm to the capital Khartoum, after the failure of earlier truces to ensure secure aid corridors. Several Khartoum residents said that they heard no air strikes, artillery or other fighting on Monday, a rare respite for the war-weary suffering shortages of medical care, electricity, water and other essentials. **SEE P6**

HM RECEIVES ENVOYS’ CREDENTIALS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik receives credentials from Lenka Mihalikova, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, at Al Barakah Palace on Monday. **FULL REPORT ON P2**

Oman hails resumption of Qatar-UAE diplomatic relations

MUSCAT: In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman has expressed its welcome to the resumption of diplomatic representation between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The resumption of diplomatic ties stems from the two sides’ willingness to implement Al-Ula Accord, said the statement, noting that the move constitutes an extension of fraternal relations and historical ties. The statement pointed out that the resumption of Qatar-UAE diplomatic ties consolidates the GCC joint action aimed to boost pillars of security, stability and prosperity for all countries in the region. — ONA

Oman Vision 2040 takes steps to boost progress, economy

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

Oman Vision 2040’s long-term potential to drive transformative socio-economic development was highlighted at a media briefing held under the auspices of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit on Monday.

Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Head of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit; Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion; Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority; Sayyid Dr Munther bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Head of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, and Dr Jokha bint Abdullah al Shukailiyah, CEO of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, shared their perspectives on this visionary roadmap. Acting as an umbrella for national programmes, Oman

Oman Vision 2040 stands as a proven blueprint for comprehensive national development, driving economic and social transformation towards the vision’s ambitious goals

Vision 2040 stands as a proven blueprint for comprehensive national development, driving economic and social transformation towards the vision’s ambitious goals, said Dr Al Jabri. He emphasised that the Vision not only provides clear direction but also expedites the implementation of plans derived from it.

“It has become the national reference for comprehensive development and the primary framework for national programmes led by relevant government agencies in achieving economic and social transformation,” he stated. **TURN TO P4**

MUSCAT METRO ROUTES FINALISED

BAUSHER-AL AMERAT TUNNEL UNDER STUDY



STAFF REPORT
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

The routes of Muscat Metro, first-ever mass transit network across the capital city of the Sultanate of Oman to provide world-class urban transport, have been finalised and a study to construct Bausher-Al Amerat tunnel is under consideration, said a top

official of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) in Muscat on Monday. Both are part of the master plan for Greater Muscat, which is an integrated spatial and developmental plan to accommodate population growth, attract investments, enhance the economy, develop the system of transport and communication

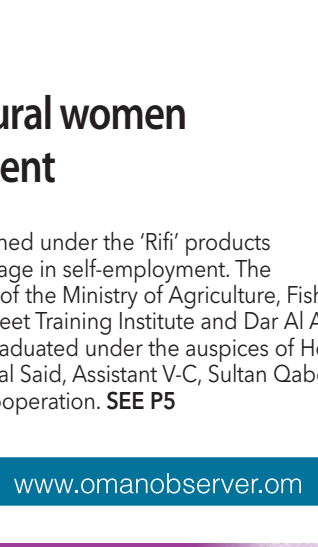
within an integrated and multi-modal transportation network. Speaking at a workshop on Greater Muscat master plan organised by MoHUP, Ibrahim bin Hamoud al Waeli, Executive Director of the Urban Strategy at MoHUP, said that the master plan for Greater Muscat has reached the final stages of preparation and design. **TURN TO P3**

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INSIDE



SPAIN WIN SHOOTOUT TO DENY CROATIA

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HM receives ambassadors’ credentials



Vladimir Andres Gonzalez, Ambassador of Cuba



Guy IBrahim Membourou, Ambassador of Gabon



Saso Podlesnik, Ambassador of Slovenia



Carlos Rodolfo Zapata, Ambassador of Peru

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received credentials of Ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman at Al Barakah Palace on Monday

His Majesty the Sultan received credentials of the following ambassadors: Lenka Mihalikova, Ambassador of Slovakia; Pascal Huber Gregoire, Ambassador of Belgium; Alfred Gakuba Kalisa, Ambassador of Rwanda; Guy IBrahim Membourou, Ambassador of Gabon; Dang Xuan Dung, Ambassador of Vietnam; Vladimir Andres Gonzalez, Ambassador of Cuba; Nuno Vaultier Mathias, Ambassador of Portugal; Carlos Rodolfo Zapata, Ambassador of Peru; and Saso Podlesnik, Ambassador of Slovenia.

During their meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries’ leaders and their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty. They also wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty.

They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert sincere efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries’ citizens.

His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his gratitude for their leaders’ greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed that they would receive all support from him, the Government and the Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties. The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of the Royal Protocols and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA



Dang Xuan Dung, Ambassador of Vietnam



Alfred Gakuba Kalisa, Ambassador of Rwanda



Nuno Vaultier Mathias, Ambassador of Portugal



Pascal Huber Gregoire, Ambassador of Belgium



Etimad programme graduates 253 Omani leaders



The Etimad programme has qualified Omani nationals as leaders and empowered them to work in an integrated institutional framework, which is one of the most prominent pillars of Oman's future vision

DR ALI BIN QASIM AL LAWATI
President, Royal Academy of Management



MUSCAT: The graduation ceremony for 253 graduates of the second cohort of the national leadership programme to upskill and empower the potential Omanis for middle and senior management positions in the private sector 'Etimad', was held under the patronage of Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, member of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management, and in the presence of Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, their excellencies, CEOs, government officials and representatives from the private sector.

Dr Ali al Lawati stated that the Etimad programme has qualified Omani nationals as leaders and empowered them to work in an integrated institutional framework,

which is one of the most prominent pillars of Oman's future vision.

Dr Ali al Lawati added that this is one of the national priorities that Oman strives to achieve in collaboration with the private sector. Etimad has boosted the graduates' leadership skills through a specialised programme that was designed in partnership with international and local institutions in the field of managerial skills and developing leaders, highlighting the Royal Academy of Management's aspiration to lead this journey with renewed vision.

Shaikh Waleed bin Khamis al Hashar, member of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management, said, "Etimad is a pioneering and ambitious programme, investing in and developing



Omani graduates. It refined their skills, creating an ability to steer the private sector with leaders capable of assuming leadership positions in today's economy." The programme consisted of various

aspects of training, including face-to-face and remote educational units, group projects, leadership camps, and development workshops. It also included follow up with graduates to assess their career development, as well as with those private companies who invested in the graduates.

Bodour bint Younis al Zadjali, graduate of Etimad, said, "This journey has been a rich experience that has been the highlight of my professional career." An example of the success was that I was able to move to the Omani Investment Authority, widening my professional focus to eight sectors that are rich in knowledge and relationships and made possible with the motivation I gained from Etimad, especially in leadership skills," she added.

Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Wahaibi also shared his own story emphasised the importance of leadership. "Etimad programme exceeded all our expectations, providing us with a solid foundation to achieve systematic development. It taught me an understanding of the responsibility we bear to empower those around us, extending beyond titles, to inspire, advance, and nurture other people's capabilities to enhance work environments."

Almost 100 graduates, 39 per cent of the cohort have already been empowered in their organisations and assumed new leadership positions. This is a strong indication of the commitment made by the private sector to provide opportunities to Etimad graduates.

Drizzle prevails in Dhofar as Khareef approaches

SALALAH: With the Khareef season just around the corner, some mountainous areas in Dhofar Governorate are covered in green as harbingers of the monsoon season began in the governorate's niyabats and mountains. Some parts of Salalah city witnessed scattered drizzle on Monday bringing temperatures down to 28 degrees Celsius.

The coastal areas of Dhofar Governorate from the Wilayat of Dhalkout in the west to the Wilayat of Mirbat in the east are affected



by the monsoon (khareef) season every year as clouds pours in the governorate from the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. — ONA

Muscat Metro routes finalised

FROM PAGE 1

The master plan will enter implementation stages early next year, after approval from the competent authorities, he said.

Al Waeli referred to the multiple themes of the master plan. He said that the first theme deals with systematic urban expansion, the theme of greenery and landscaping expansion, protection dams and means of addressing climatic conditions.

Speaking about Muscat Metro, Al Waeli pointed out that the project's routes have been determined, based on a set of main objectives: reducing the volume of compensations to be offered, ease of access and the availability of main stations in strategic areas in Muscat. This is in addition to expansion beyond the metro course, notably via express buses and other means of transport to and from the metro, he added.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) had invited qualified international consultants to bid for its contract to provide advisory services linked to the landmark



Ibrahim bin Hamoud al Waeli, Executive Director of the Urban Strategy at MoHUP.

project.

Al Waeli said that another project known as Bausher-Al Amerat tunnel is under study by the departments concerned, including Muscat Municipality and the Ministry of Finance.

The master plan also helps upgrade the quality of services and bolster the infrastructure, while at the same time preserving the environment and protecting its unique components.

Population density and jobs constitute one of the major aspects of the master plan, which focuses on the distribution of human activity in a manner that integrates with the public transport network's plan.

The master plan also aims to provide urban and economic requirements, bearing in mind the development of projects in urban boundaries to ensure the availability of basic services.

As for the land uses linked to the economic sector, the master plan will lend support to the idea of 'economic blocs'. These include the bloc of innovation and knowledge, represented by Knowledge Oasis Muscat, the Sultan Qaboos University and Al Rusayl.

Another segment related to land use in the economic sector is seen in the 'industrial and logistic sectors bloc', namely in the areas of Khazaen, Ruwi, Al Misfah and Al Rusayl.

The 'tourism and economy bloc' will be represented in the master plan by the areas of Muscat, Muttrah, Al Khoudh, the Airport zone and the sector of food industries in Barka.

The master plan explored options to converting valley beds or Wadis into public places, while at the same time developing them in tandem with nature. Emphasis will be laid on four valleys out of 12 in the area.

Announcement

OPAZ stops paper-based transactions



Backing its efforts towards digital transformation, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) announces that 30th of June, 2023 is the last day for receiving and sending **paper transactions except documents of a special nature.**

All documents and transactions will be received via email of Archives Department: **records@opaz.gov.om**. In case attachments cannot be uploaded via email, it can be submitted on various types of storage devices.

For inquiries, please contact our Call Centre: 1919



Copies of credentials of ambassadors received



MUSCAT: The Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, received on Monday copies of credentials of a number of their excellencies ambassadors of friendly countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. This came during his meeting at the General Court of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Muscat.

They are: Dr Geremo Emilio Nielsen, Ambassador-Designate of the Argentine Republic to the Sultanate of Oman, Gerard Cunningham, Ambassador-Designate of the Republic of Ireland to the Sultanate of Oman, Mohamed Habibu Tijani, Ambassador-Designate of the Republic of Ghana to the Sultanate of Oman, Nelson Jamil

Shaaban Labadi, Ambassador-Designate of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay to the Sultanate of Oman, Anno Erika Villianen, Ambassador-Designate of the Republic of Finland to the Sultanate of Oman, Ambassador Petra Menander, Ambassador-Designate of the Kingdom of Sweden to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

■ MOTCIT, MSC SIGN MOC



The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) and the Maritime Security Centre (MSC) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) to enhance cooperation in the field of investigating aircraft and marine accidents. The MoC was signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Chairman of the Maritime Security Committee. — **ONA**

SAF Chief receives Japanese, Kuwaiti delegation



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday a delegation from the Ministry of Defence in Japan, headed by Miura Jun, Director General for International Affairs of the Bureau of Defence Policy in the Japanese Ministry of Defence. The two sides exchanged views and discussed several topics of common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamed bin Abdullah

al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning and the Military Attaché at the Embassy of Japan in Muscat. Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, also received in his office a delegation from the Retired Officers Association in the State of Kuwait, headed by retired Maj Gen Faisal Al Jazzaf, Chairman of the Retired Officers Association of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces, Vice-President of the World Veterans Federation for the Middle East. — **ONA**

Oman Vision 2040 steps up development, boosts economy

FROM PAGE 1
The unit was established to meet the vision's requirements and provide support to government agencies involved in its implementation. It aims to foster effective partnerships and assist in overcoming the challenges encountered while pursuing their objectives. The unit is committed to principles such as partnership, responsibility, flexibility, and integration. Dr Al Jabri mentioned that ongoing collaboration with government agencies is focused on improving indicators related to the Oman Vision 2040 priorities. Currently, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator is receiving particular attention, and national programmes play a vital role in achieving the vision's priorities. According to Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, the Sultanate of Oman witnessed a 5 per cent increase in the actual value of private investments and a 10.5 per cent increase in foreign direct investment compared to 2021. Foreign investment flows accounted for 4.2 per cent of the country's GDP. The National Program for Investment and Export Development, known as Nizdahar, aims to enhance the private sector's role in economic



development by creating an attractive investment environment and streamlining investor procedures through digitisation and simplification. Al Yusef also emphasised the development of investment partnerships between Oman and the international and local business communities. Sayyid Dr Munther al Busaidy, Deputy Head of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, explained that the focus has been on indicators with the highest impact within the Oman Vision 2040. The number of indicators has been reduced from 68 to 39, consisting of 5 international indicators and 34

national indicators. Dr Al Busaidy confirmed that 40 government agencies have reached agreements and obtained approval for their indicator cards. The second phase aims to involve additional government agencies and develop indicator cards for the governorates. These cards serve as a reference for setting annual plans and defining future directions aligned with the vision's objectives, leading to effective projects and initiatives. Dr Abdullah al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, highlighted the extensive environmental efforts and initiatives undertaken

by the authority and relevant government and private entities. These initiatives focus on elevating the environmental sector in Oman in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Dr Al Amri emphasised the timeliness of Oman's national strategy for transitioning to carbon neutrality, given the global attention to environmental and climate issues, which have become key guiding factors for the economy. Regarding education, Dr Jokha alShukailiyah, CEO of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education, stated that the education sector holds

a prominent position within the Oman Vision 2040 priorities. The goal is to establish an effective educational system that enhances the quality of education and fosters scientific research and innovation. Dr Al Shukailiyah outlined numerous programmes and initiatives across all educational levels. These include the issuance of the Higher Education Law and the School Education Law, as well as the launch of the National Leadership Framework. She noted the significant progress made by Omani universities in global rankings, with five Omani universities,

in addition to Sultan Qaboos University, competing among 500 universities worldwide for advanced ranks. Oman Vision 2040 is based on four axes: human and society, economy and development, governance and institutional performance, and sustainable environment. It encompasses 12 national priorities, and the Follow-up Unit has successfully collaborated with relevant authorities to complete numerous projects related to each priority. These projects include the construction of 42 public schools through public-private partnerships, initiatives to develop national capabilities in investment and economic fields, the construction and expansion of 49 new public schools, and the maintenance and renovation of existing schools. Efforts have also been directed towards strengthening the global rankings of Sultan Qaboos University, enacting legislation to encourage private sector investment in research and development activities, and implementing the Maken programme to enhance research capabilities in the economic field for national talents. Initiatives have also been launched to equip school students with essential skills, she added. **Photo by Shamsah Al Harthy**



MoH: Strengthen efforts to curb lifestyle diseases

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Prevention & Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) on Monday held its first meeting for the current year at the Ministry of Health's headquarters.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, in the presence of HH Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice Chancellor for International Cooperation in Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) and Chairperson of the Committee along with representatives of various sectors and authorities.

The Minister of Health stressed the importance of strengthening the efforts of various authorities in reducing the significant burden of non-communicable diseases, noting that the NCDs represent economic and social burdens to the world and Oman.

On her turn, HH Dr Mona underlined the need for redouble efforts in the prevention of NCDs.

During the meeting, Dr Shadha bint Saud al Raisi, Director of Non-Communicable Diseases at the Directorate General of Primary Healthcare and Rapporteur of the Committee, reviewed the global and local burden of NCDs.

She highlighted the efforts



exerted to prevent and control the NCDs including the progress in implementing the National Policy and Multisectoral Plan for Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), which was approved and launched in February 2018.

It is estimated that non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, chronic respiratory diseases and cancer are responsible for 80 per cent of all deaths in the Sultanate of Oman, and that one in five adults dies due to non-communicable diseases before the age of 70.

The prevalence rates of risk factors causing non-communicable diseases are also high and increasing, as the prevalence of overweight and obesity is estimated at 66 per cent. In the Sultanate of Oman, the average daily consumption of salt

is high, reaching 8.5 grams per day, while the daily average salt consumption recommended by the World Health Organization is 5 grams per day.

The NCDs annually cause economic losses estimated at RO 1.1 billion annually. 74 per cent of this cost is due to direct medical costs, therefore the prevention of non-communicable diseases is an essential pillar to reduce the burden of these diseases.

The feasibility study of investing in NCDs indicated that it is possible to avoid the death of 19,000 people in the next 15 years if emphasis is laid on four packages of interventions, namely policies to reduce salt consumption in food, reduce tobacco use, interventions to raise awareness of physical activity and to expand clinical interventions to control cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

'Rifi' empowers rural women for self-employment

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

The first batch of women trained under the 'Rifi' products programme are all set to engage in self-employment. The programme is a joint venture of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Al Moheet Training Institute and Dar Al Attāa Association.

The first batch graduated under the auspices of Her Highness Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant V-C, Sultan Qaboos University for International Cooperation.

The 'Rifi' programme is designed to finance rural women's projects in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources and the Oman Development Bank.

Dr Masoud bin Suleiman al Azri, General Director of the General Directorate of Planning, said, "The participation of rural women and entrepreneurs reflects their national responsibility. They have worked and contributed to creating a conducive rural economic environment."

Sabrah al Shuaili, a trainee, thanked the ministry for enhancing their administrative, technical, and marketing capabilities.



The training covered financial and marketing management and the use of modern production and manufacturing methods, aligning their skills with the plans of Oman Vision 2040.

The targeted projects for rural products encompass the breeding and production of honey bees and derivatives, poultry and egg production in greenhouses or barns, strawberry cultivation and production in greenhouses, rose cultivation and production in greenhouses, and food processing units for agricultural products.

The programme also aims to provide the market with high-quality products and self-employment opportunities, improving the quality of life for rural families.

Aisha al Balushi, another graduate said, "Participating in the programme allowed me to enhance my product to market requirements, particularly packaging. With the support and participation, we could test and offer the product to the market with the highest quality," she said.

In its first edition, the 'Tamkeen' course provided over 100 hours of theoretical and practical training by local and international experts. It aimed to empower 60 trainees and business leaders with skills in establishing and managing projects based on solid entrepreneurial foundations.

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Ministry of Social Development

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
188/2023	General cleaning services for the Ministry's General Office building at the airport heights and its directorates and departments at Muscat Governorate	Companies specialized in the field of cleaning, washing and pest control services and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first or excellent degree.	Sunday 9-7-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 30-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
189/2023	The business of purchasing central management software (Panorama) to manage all type firewall devices (PaloAlto)	Companies specialized in the field of design, installation and maintenance of software and information systems registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with the excellent, first, second or third degree.	Sunday 9-7-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 30-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>), On **Tuesday 20/6/2023**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (24402200).

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

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Ministry of Social Development

2040

رؤية عمان
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Oman at Beirut Water Resources Committee meet

BEIRUT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources on Monday took part in the 15th meeting of the Water Resources Committee. The meeting is being held by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) from June 18-22 in Beirut.

Oman's delegation was represented in the meeting by Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saidi, Oman's Ambassador to Lebanon.

The meeting discussed the progress made in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in relation to water in the Arab region. It also reviewed various activities pertaining to water issues since the last meeting.

It discussed topics on improving groundwater management by using innovative tools and explored means of financing water sector.

— ONA

APSR takes part in GCC advisory committee meet

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), took part in the 55th meeting of the Advisory and Regulatory Committee of the GCC Interconnection Authority, which was held in Doha. Oman's delegation was led by Shaikh Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai, APSR Chairman.

The meeting discussed performance and activities of GCC electrical linkage from the beginning of January until May end, and the plan of introducing amendments to the general agreement.

— ONA

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Economy

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees	Last Date For Tender Submission
2023/5	consultancy service to prepare economic key performance indicators in health sector	25 Omani Rials	30/7/2023

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

etenderhd@mtc.gov.om

+ 96824402200

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tenders Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/Before 09:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/DGKH-22/2209/2023	Supply and Replacement of (UPS) Uninterrupted Power Supply (Phase 7) at Khoula Hospital.	25/June/2023	19/July/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent Grade	R.O 25.000

Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Defence, critical tech on agenda as India’s Modi heads to US for landmark visit



Flags of India adorn lampposts on Pennsylvania Avenue outside of the White House in Washington. – AFP

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi heads to the United States this week for a visit billed as a turning point for bilateral relations, with deeper cooperation in defence industry and sharing high technology in sharp focus.

The visit is expected to give India access to critical American technologies Washington rarely shares with non-allies, strengthening a new bond that is underpinned by not just global politics but also business and economics.

Washington and New Delhi have been moving closer for over two decades now with successive US presidents displaying bipartisan support for stronger ties with the emerging Asian economy and regional power.

President Joe Biden has built on that legacy and expanded cooperation as the United States sees India as a vital partner in its efforts to push back against China’s expanding influence worldwide and strengthen security in the Indo-Pacific.

Modi has made several previous visits to the United States, this will be his first with the full diplomatic status of an official state visit, just the third of Biden’s presidency and third by any Indian leader.

“It’s a milestone in our relationship...It is a very significant visit, very important visit,” India’s Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra told reporters on Monday.

A key achievement expected to be showcased is in the area of defence cooperation, especially between military industries of the two countries, Kwatra said, as India seeks to produce more weapons and equipment at home for itself and also for export.

Major announcements expected during Modi’s visit are US approval to General Electric to manufacture engines in India for its domestically produced fighter jets, India’s purchase of 31 armed MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones made by General Atomics worth \$3 billion, and removal of US obstacles that prevent smoother trade in defence and high technology. — **Reuters**

Israeli troops, backed by helicopter, kill 5 Palestinians in West Bank

JENIN: Israeli commandos backed by helicopter gunships killed five Palestinians including a teenager and wounded as many as 66 others as a raid in the West Bank led to an hours-long gunbattle with armed fighters, the military and health officials said.

Seven Israeli personnel were wounded after troops came under fire during an operation in the flashpoint town of Jenin to arrest two Palestinians suspected in attacks, the military said. At least two of the Palestinians killed in the fighting belonged to the armed Islamic Jihad group. With US-sponsored peacemaking stalled for almost a decade, Jenin and other areas of the northern West Bank have been a focus of months of stepped-up sweeps by Israel amid a spate of Palestinian street rampages in its cities.

Video showed an explosion enveloping an armoured troop transport as shots ring out. Other clips showed a military helicopter launching a missile and releasing flares.

A military spokesperson said an Apache helicopter fired on an open area in order to drive back gunmen as casualties were extricated from the troop transport.

“We’re aware Palestinians are hit, quite a big number. We’ll know more about it in the next few hours,” the spokesman said. “It will take a few hours. It’s going to be pretty harsh.”

There was no immediate confirmation the helicopter also released flares fired missiles at it.

An official from the Fatah party



Smoke billows from the aftermath of the detonation of a Palestinian explosive charge on an Israeli armoured vehicle during an Israeli army raid in Jenin. — AFP

said fighters from the nearby cities of Nablus and Tulkarem had arrived in Jenin to support the local fighters.

“We tell this occupation that all their operations are a failure, our people will win, and the dialogue between us will only be the battlefield,” Atta Abu Rmeileh said.

The use of helicopter gunships in the operation underlined the severity of the fighting in Jenin, where armed militant groups including Hamas and Islamic Jihad have long had a strong presence in the adjoining refugee camp.

An Islamic Jihad official said the use of aircraft “will push our fighters to use tools that will surprise the enemy.”

However, Defence Minister Yoav Gallant said Israel would employ whatever means it thought necessary.

“There are no compromises in the fight against terrorism, we will continue to take an offensive approach. We will use all the means at our disposal,” he said.

Hamas said its fighters also took part in the clashes. At least one Palestinian was detained during Monday’s raid, witnesses in Jenin said. — **Reuters**

Sudan truce holds on second day as donors set to meet in Geneva

KHARTOUM: An international donors’ conference is set to begin in Geneva for Sudan, where a ceasefire was holding but the UN says the humanitarian situation is worsening after two months of war.

The conference comes mid-way through a three-day ceasefire which appeared to have brought calm to the capital Khartoum, after the failure of earlier truces to ensure secure aid corridors.

Several Khartoum residents said that they heard no air strikes, artillery or other fighting on Monday, a rare respite for the war-weary suffering shortages of medical care, electricity, water and other essentials.

Across the country, the death

toll has topped 2,000, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project said.

Hundreds of kilometres west of Khartoum, up to 1,100 have been killed in the West Darfur state capital El Geneina alone, according to the US State Department, blaming “primarily” the RSF.

A record 25 million people are in need of aid, according to the United Nations, which says it has received only a fraction of desperately needed funding.

Roughly 2.2 million people have been uprooted across Sudan by the fighting, which has forced more than 528,000 to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, the International Organization for



Migration said.

The conference is to address the aid needs both in Sudan and in neighbouring countries, now bearing an increased burden.

The UN will be joined by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the African Union and the European Union in convening the event.

Donors are expected to “announce financial commitments to address the unfolding humanitarian crisis and reiterate the need for the parties to the conflict in Sudan to adhere to their obligations under International Humanitarian Law,” the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said in a statement.

It said less than 16 per cent of

the needed \$2.6 billion for aid response has been funded, while the regional refugee response plan for \$470 million is similarly underfunded.

Despite the lack of money, the looting of aid facilities and the killing of humanitarian workers, aid agencies have increased their response to the tragedy but, according to UN figures, only a fraction of those in need have been reached.

William Carter, Sudan director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, said bureaucratic delays are also hindering the aid response. He said that about 100 visa applications are still pending from more than 30 organisations. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

TUNIS

Guard fatally stabbed outside embassy

An attacker fatally stabbed a security guard on Monday outside Brazil’s embassy in Tunis before being shot and arrested, the Tunisian Interior Ministry said.

The guard “was wounded by a sharp object” wielded “by a person he was questioning over the reason for his presence in the perimeter of the embassy,” the ministry said in a statement.

He died at a hospital shortly after, interior ministry spokesman Faker Bouzghaya said.

“This is a criminal act unre-



lated to terrorism,” by a suspect who was “mentally troubled”, he added. Security forces fired at the suspect, wounding him in the leg, before taking him into custody, according to the ministry.

PODGORICA

Court finds crypto fugitive Do Kwon guilty

A Montenegro court on Monday found fugitive cryptocurrency entrepreneur Do Kwon guilty of possessing forged documents months after he was arrested at an airport in the Balkan nation with fake passports. The Terraform founder is still awaiting trial for another charge regarding his possible extradition.

Both Seoul and Washington are seeking Kwon’s extradition for his suspected role in fraud, which wiped out about \$40 billion of investors’ money and



shook global crypto markets.

Kwon along with a travel companion “are guilty because they used a fake passport” from Costa Rica at the airport, said the court in a statement.

ISLAMABAD

Khan gets bail extended in graft case

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan’s bail on corruption charges was extended again on Monday.

Khan’s brief detention last month on graft charges sparked days of deadly violence as thousands of his followers rampaged through cities, setting fire to buildings and clashing with police. He was freed from custody after the Supreme Court declared the arrest illegal.

On Monday, a special corruption court in Islamabad extended



bail for Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi until July 4.

He was also bailed in 15 other cases before three courts, said Gohar Khan, a member of his legal team.



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In brief

■ GUAYAQUIL



6 DEAD, OTHERS WOUNDED IN GANG SHOOTING

Six people were killed and six wounded on Monday in an apparent gang shootout in Guayaquil, a port city in the grips of a wave of violence perpetrated by drug traffickers, police said.

Police Colonel Marcelo Castillo said that Guayaquil's second mass shooting in June appeared to have been a settling of scores between rival gangs. The six injured are all in stable condition.

Castillo said attackers arrived in a black vehicle in a populous neighbourhood in the early hours of Monday, "four or five got out" and opened fire even with several people in the street.

■ BANGKOK



THAI ELECTION COMMISSION RATIFIES VOTE RESULTS

Thailand's Election Commission on Monday confirmed the results of last month's vote, in which the pro-democracy opposition trounced the army-backed parties that have ruled the kingdom for nearly a decade.

The commission officially ratified the results for the 500-seat lower house, which makes the progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) the largest group with 151 seats. MFP leader Pita Limjaroenrat is the front-runner to become prime minister, although he faces an investigation that could see him disqualified. The election commission is investigating around 200 complaints about the conduct of the May 14 poll.

■ RIO DE JANEIRO



TRAGIC SCHOOL SHOOTING LEAVES ONE DEAD

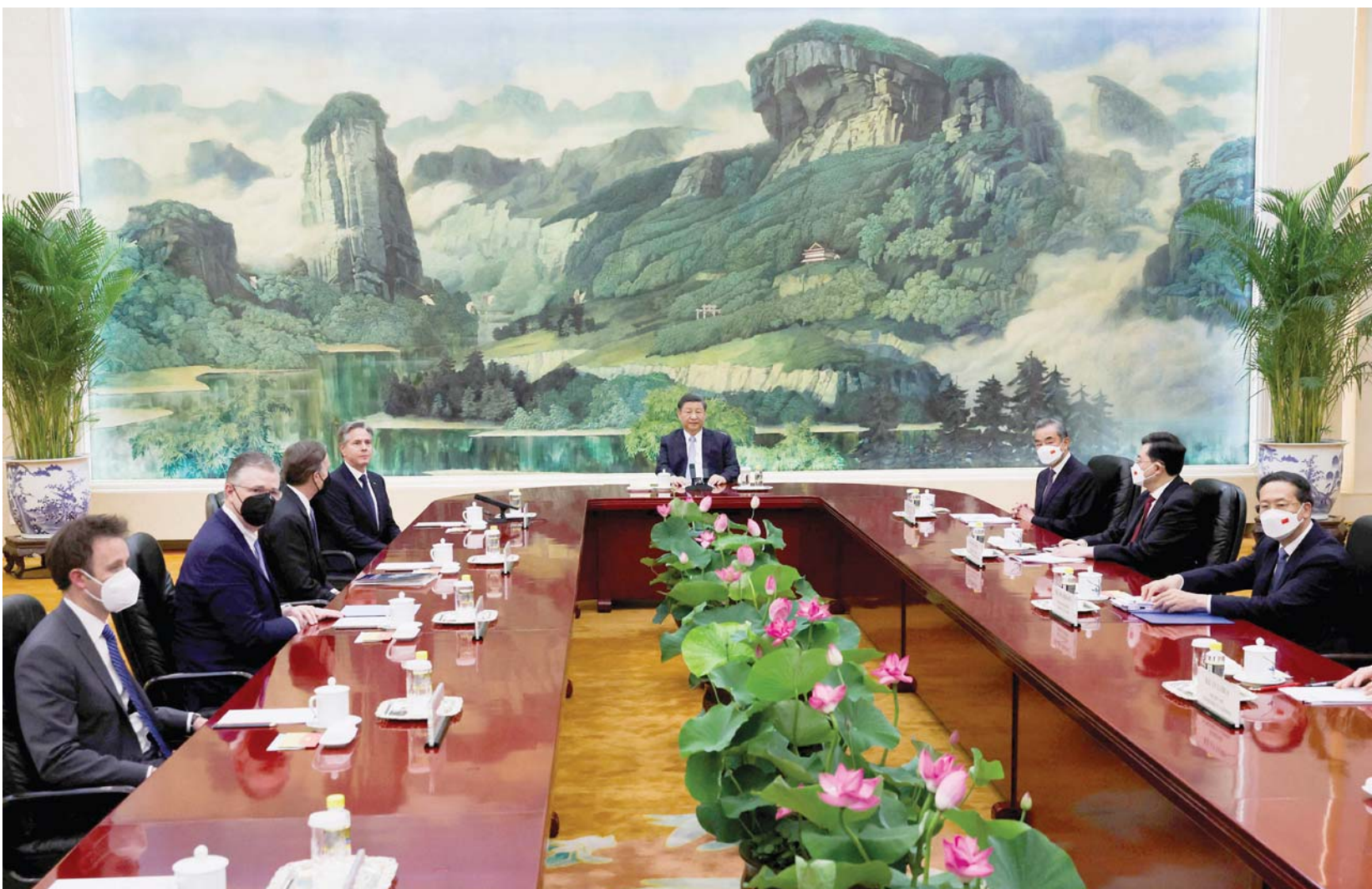
At least one student has died after a school shooting in Brazil's southern city of Cambe on Monday, the Parana state government said in a statement, adding that another wounded student has been hospitalized.

The perpetrator has been arrested and is a former student of the Professora Helena Kolody public school who entered its premises saying he wanted to request his school records, the government said.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said it is crucial that the country finds a way to build peace in schools.

"Another young life taken by hatred and violence that we can no longer tolerate inside our schools and in society," Lula said. — Reuters

Xi, Blinken agree to stabilise US-China relations in Beijing talks



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken (4th L) attends a meeting with China's President Xi Jinping (C) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. — AFP

BEIJING: China and the United States agreed on Monday to stabilise their intense rivalry so it doesn't veer into conflict but failed to produce any major breakthrough during a rare visit to Beijing by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

Chinese President Xi Jinping welcomed "progress" after shaking hands with Blinken at the Great Hall of the People, a grand venue usually reserved for greeting heads of state.

The top US diplomat and Xi both stressed the importance of having a more stable relationship, as any conflict between the world's two largest economies would create global disruption.

The two sides appeared entrenched in their positions over everything, including US actions toward China's chip industry, human rights and Russia's war against Ukraine.

At one of the most significant US-China exchanges since President Joe Biden took office, it was not clear how they would overcome their differences, but they agreed to continue their diplomatic engagements with more visits in the coming weeks and months.

At a news conference concluding his two-day trip to Beijing, Blinken said Washington had achieved its objectives for the trip, including raising its concerns directly, trying to set up channels for dialogue and exploring areas of cooperation. The trip was

postponed in February after a suspected Chinese spy balloon flew over US airspace.

But he said progress was not straightforward.

"The relationship was at a point of instability, and both sides recognised the need to work to stabilise it," Blinken said before leaving the country.

"But progress is hard. It takes time. And it's not the product of one visit, one trip, one conversation. My hope and expectation is: we will have better communications, better engagement going forward."

US officials have been playing down the prospect of a major breakthrough in talks, but they hoped Blinken's visit will pave the

way for more bilateral meetings in coming months, including possible trips by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. It had been hoped that it would even pave the way for a summit between Xi and Biden later in the year.

"The two sides have also made progress and reached the

agreement on some specific issues. This is very good," Xi told Blinken across a long table bedecked with pink lotus flowers.

Blinken responded by saying the two countries have a responsibility to manage their relationship and that the United States was "committed to doing that."

— Reuters

Ukraine says eight villages retaken from Russian forces in two weeks



Ukrainian service members are seen on their position at a front line, in Donetsk region. — Reuters

KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday it had driven Russian forces from an eighth village in its two-week-old counteroffensive, a settlement on a heavily fortified part of the front line near the most direct route to the country's Azov Sea coast.

A Russian-installed official said that Ukraine had taken control of the village, Piatykatky, in the southern Zaporizhzhia region. He later said Moscow had pushed them out and on Monday morning he said Ukraine was attacking again.

Ukraine's Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Maliar said Ukrainian forces had not only retaken Piatykatky but had advanced by up to seven km into Russian lines in two weeks, capturing 113 square km of land.

"In the course of two weeks of offensive operations in the Berdiansk and Melitopol directions, eight settlements were liberated," Maliar said, referring to two cities on the Russian-

occupied coastline.

The reported capture of the villages reflects incremental gains for Ukraine that highlight the challenge of breaking through lines Moscow has spent months strengthening. Piatykatky is significant, however, as it lies around 90 km from the coast.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the efforts of the troops and said he would continue talks with Western allies to get weapons and ammunition supplies to them as soon as possible.

"Our troops are advancing, position by position, step by step, we are moving forward," he said on Sunday evening. "The main thing is the speed of supply."

Russia, hoping to dent Western resolve, said it had repelled numerous assaults and it released a video showing what its troops say is captured Western equipment, in this case a French-made tank reportedly seized in the eastern

Donetsk region.

Ukraine has acknowledged attacks along several parts of the 1,000 km front line in its long-anticipated counteroffensive to retake the 18 per cent of its territory controlled by Russia, but carefully saves information for security reasons. Analysts say the main phase of the counteroffensive is yet to begin.

Both sides appear to have taken heavy losses in recent fighting and both say the other side's are greater.

"The enemy's 'wave-like' offensives yielded results, despite enormous losses," Russian-installed official Vladimir Rogov said in reporting the Piatykatky fighting.

The conflict has killed thousands of civilians, destroyed towns and cities and driven millions of people from their homes while exacerbating global inflation and reshaping security arrangements. — Reuters

Greek migrant tragedy death toll rises, suspects detained

MALAKASA: The suspected smugglers of scores of migrants who drowned in a Mediterranean Sea shipwreck last week are expected to answer manslaughter charges in a Greek court this week, while Pakistan detained a dozen suspects over the disaster.

Greece recovered two more bodies on Monday, bringing the confirmed toll to 80, after a fishing boat packed with hundreds of migrants sank of its south-west coast last week in a journey which started from Libya and was supposed to end in Italy.

Only 104 people are known to have survived.

Lawyers for nine suspected smugglers held by Greece, all from Egypt, sought and were approved a postponement of their arraignment hearing to Tuesday morning, the semi-official Athens News Agency said.

One of the lawyers said his client denied he was a smuggler, saying he was instead a victim who had paid to be taken to Italy.

"He left his country looking for a better life in Europe because of economic difficulties," said the lawyer, Athanasios Iliopoulos.

Greece was still scouring the sea on Monday, though the chance of finding more survivors was seen as virtually nil. The boat sank in some of the deepest waters of the

Mediterranean.

The victims are thought to be from Syria, Pakistan and Egypt. Hundreds more are feared dead.

Greece has come under increasing scrutiny over its response to the disaster, which occurred even though the boat had been shadowed by its coastguard for several hours.

Pakistan declared a national day of mourning on Monday, after counting at least 21 victims from the Koti district in the Pakistan-administered area of the Himalayan Kashmir region. It said an initial investigation suggested the boat was carrying around 800 people.

Other estimates have said at least 400 people were aboard.

Fourteen people in Pakistan have been arrested on suspicion of alleged trafficking.

The boat is thought to have set off with passengers from the Libyan coastal city of Tobruk on June 10.

Greek authorities say the vessel, which they had monitored for about 15 hours after being alerted by Italy, flipped and capsized about 25 minutes after its engine stalled in the early hours of June 14.

Authorities said the vessel repeatedly refused Greek help, saying it wanted to go to Italy.

— Reuters



Protesters carry a banner listing the cases of migrants' deaths during a protest march to Frontex and Hellenic Coastguard headquarters in the port of Piraeus. — AFP

Turn your limiting beliefs into supporting beliefs



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a neuro-transformational coach

Limiting beliefs are deeply ingrained thoughts, attitudes, or perceptions that we hold about ourselves, others, and the world around us. These beliefs significantly impact our choices, behaviour, and overall well-being.

Limiting beliefs often stem from underlying fears or concerns. They are usually formed from various life experiences, our upbringing, societal conditioning, or traumatic events.

Self-defeating acts can impose barriers and restrictions that hold us back from reaching our full potential. They are, however, often based on false or distorted assumptions and can create a self-fulfilling prophecy, as individuals tend to act in accordance with these negative stories that reinforce their perceived limitations.

This self-doubt makes us reduce our abilities to assert ourselves, take on leadership roles, or pursue our passions with conviction. This negative spiral often leads to procrastination and inaction, which perpetuates a cycle of missed opportunities and unfulfilled potential. Self-sabotaging behaviours often occur, whereby we may engage in negative self-talk, destructive habits, or set low expectations

for ourselves.

These actions reinforce our negative beliefs, prevent us from making positive changes, and cause us to focus on the obstacles and limitations rather than the possibilities and opportunities. This scarcity mindset leads to an inability to embrace abundance.

The first step to overcoming limiting beliefs is to become aware of them.

Pay attention to the thoughts that arise when faced with challenges. Confront the assumptions and biases that underlie these beliefs and consider alternative perspectives. Remember that beliefs are not facts, but interpretations shaped by past experiences and they can be changed.

Once you identify your limiting beliefs, work on reframing them into positive and empowering thoughts.

Replace self-defeating statements with affirmations that reinforce your abilities and worth. Practice positive self-talk to strengthen these new beliefs and create a supportive inner dialogue that uplifts and motivates you.

Actively seek evidence that contradicts your limiting beliefs instead of accepting them as absolute truths. Surround yourself with positive role models,

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stories of success, and inspiring communities.

By focusing on empowering evidence, you can reprogramme your mind to see the possibilities and potential within yourself, reinforcing the belief that you too can succeed.

Embrace the mindset of growth and continuous improvement. This process of gathering contrary evidence will weaken the grip of your limiting beliefs and open your mind to new possibilities. Turn your limiting beliefs into catalysts for growth and transform them into supporting beliefs.

Break the cycle of inaction and self-doubt by taking consistent action towards your goals. Celebrating even the smallest victories will reinforce your belief in your abilities and boost your motivation to continue moving forward.

Overcoming limiting beliefs is a transformative journey that requires self-reflection, self-awareness and compassion, an openness to change, and persistent courage to challenge your thinking.

Through reframing your beliefs, adopting a growth mindset, seeking to empower evidence, and taking action, you will undoubtedly break free from the constraints of self-doubt and transform your limiting patterns into supportive ones!

Paris Air Show back with climate, defence in focus

MATHIEU RABECHAUT, TANGI QUEMENER

Military and civilian aircraft streaked across the sky as the Paris Air Show returned on Monday after a four-year Covid-induced hiatus, with a big crowd including Ukrainian military officials and the French president.

Organisers have billed the biennial event as the “recovery airshow” after the coronavirus ravaged the sector and the event was cancelled in 2021.

This year’s airshow has a new focus on defence following Russia’s attack of Ukraine, along with the industry’s efforts to reduce its carbon footprint, with French President Emmanuel Macron arriving in a helicopter partly using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Huge traffic jams around Le Bourget airport outside Paris were testament to the interest in this year’s show, as aircraft makers field hundreds of orders and airlines brace for a near-record number of passengers this year.

The Ukraine conflict has also prompted countries to step up military spending, which could benefit aerospace defence firms.

While Russia has been excluded from the event, Ukrainian military officials toured the huge exhibition space at Paris-Le Bourget airport, some taking photos of missiles on display.

Le Bourget offers a forum to announce deals with some 2,500 firms lining up to show off their latest planes, drones, helicopters and prototypes such as flying taxis.

Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury, who heads France’s aerospace industry association GIFAS, called it “the return of the good old times of the excitement of the show”.

Macron was welcomed as he opened the event with an aerial display including Airbus’ latest A321 XLR airliner, civilian and military helicopters and a jet fighter.

Businesspeople and uniformed military visitors from around the world watched the action or headed into the guarded private spaces of the major firms’ stands.

With 125,000 square metres of exhibition space — the equivalent of nearly 18 soccer pitches — around 320,000 visitors are expected during the week-long event.

Along with the Farnborough airshow in England, which takes place in even numbered years, Le Bourget is a key sales event for the civil and defence industries.

Airbus and rival Boeing compete fiercely in announcing orders for aircraft running into the billions of dollars. — AFP

Northern India endures a heat wave, and a wave of deaths



ALEX TRAVELLI

The writer is a South Asia business correspondent for NYT in Delhi



HARI KUMAR

The writer is a reporter in the New Delhi bureau of NYT

An unusually intense heat wave has swept across northern India in the last four days, with some hospitals in the state of Uttar Pradesh recording a higher-than-usual number of deaths. Doctors there are convinced there’s a link between the punishing temperatures and the deaths of their patients, but officials are investigating what role the dangerous combination of heat and humidity played in the rise in mortality.

In Ballia District, population about three million, the daily high temperature over the same period has hovered around 43 degrees Celsius, nine degrees hotter than usual, alongside relative humidity as high as 53 per cent. Dozens of deaths were recorded at hospitals there on June 15, 16 and 17.

Dr Jayant Kumar, the chief medical officer of Ballia District, near the state of Bihar, said that 23 people died in the district on Thursday.

The next day, 11 more succumbed. “The number of deaths has been more than normal,” Kumar said.

He told the Press Trust of India, a news agency, that on average, eight people usually die per day. “Most of these are natural deaths,” he told The Times in a phone interview, “most of the dead being elderly people suffering from different ailments like diabetes.”

But Indian government officials have pushed back against linking the deaths too directly to the punishing heat.

Dr Diwakar Singh, formerly the chief medical superintendent of Ballia District, told reporters on Friday night that 34 people had died of heatstroke at the main hospital under his oversight. The next day, he was reprimanded by the state government for prematurely drawing that conclusion and removed from his position.

The government has since sent a scientific team from the state capital, Lucknow, to investigate the causes.

Singh’s replacement, Dr S K Yadav, took a more cautious line on Sunday, saying, “Elderly patients with comorbidities like hypertension and



A woman carries drinking water in an earthen pot after collecting it from a handpump on a summer afternoon in a village on the outskirts of Jabalpur in India’s Madhya Pradesh. — AFP

diabetes are expiring because of heat.”

“Still,” he added in a phone interview, “the death numbers are more than normal.”

He agreed with Kumar’s assessment that the excessive heat was to blame for the high death toll, whatever the exact link.

While an extraordinary number of patients were being admitted for heat-related distress, Yadav said, “we are able to provide beds to all the patients, and we have enough doctors and medicines.”

The nightmarish prospect of mass deaths caused by a sudden rise in temperatures has become more urgent in recent years. And the phenomenon in this area of the world may portend a warning beyond India’s borders.

The heat in this part of India has been hovering around the critical “wet-bulb temperature,” the threshold beyond which the human body cannot cool itself to a survivable point by perspiration, defined as 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit), adjusted for 100 per cent humidity. The wet-bulb reading in Ballia on Saturday reached 34.15 degrees Celsius.

It is expected that more older or infirm patients than usual will die in heat waves like this one, which climate change has made more common across India’s historically scorching plains, as

in most of the world, scientists say.

The question is whether these are “excess deaths,” of the kind that can be measured only statistically, or whether India’s incrementally more unbearable weather is playing a more direct role in causing them, for instance by heat stroke. When more deaths are recorded than were expected, they count as excess. But that leaves open the question of what exactly caused them.

Local newspapers, collecting figures from different officials and hospitals, have counted as many as 54 deaths in Ballia and an additional 44 in Bihar over the past three days.

In April, when temperatures in the western state of Maharashtra were nearing their peak, at least 11 people are known to have died of heat stroke almost simultaneously.

An especially humid city like Kolkata now crosses the anticipated limit of human survivability to heat with only perspiration for cooling several times a year; some epidemiologists are puzzled that more Indians do not drop dead of heat.

The fact that wet-bulb temperatures in much of South Asia have been inching nearer to the critical level has provoked global concern over the past few years. It has even made its way into literature.

— The New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

Colours run deep in our veins

Have you ever wondered why it is the colour you like to wear and look at?

There must be some emotional connection or memories. It could even be just an instinct.

There are warm colours and cold colours and this is not just for clothes and walls but for your face too.

As a child I used to ask my parents what were the colours they liked best. It all started with the collection of sketch pens they gifted me.

Obviously when we begin to play with colours we begin to notice them every where. The colour attracts you but try to get a bit of it for yourself. The difficult task defines that species — wild and will only grow where it wants to. Do not expect it to be a decorative plant.

We begin to notice the distinct colour of camels and it is based on the shades of this colour that distinguishes the camels of Dhofar that provides camel milk — the camels with darker shades. Somehow the shades of camel are what the mountains sport too so do most of the forts and watchtowers in Oman.

We learn at a very young age to associate blue with water although the actual water is colourless unless it is muddy, then it is brown in colour or if it has algae then it is green. So why do we often see water as blue? The sky?

Like us, water too reflects our surroundings. We too react and respond to our surroundings. How many colours do you think we must be reflecting?

We are supposed to have energy points in our body



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD LET IT BE THE COLOUR FOR YOU. THERE ARE ENOUGH BOUNDARIES SO NOW LET US ENJOY THE SHADES AND LIGHTS IT REFLECTS

that are referred to as chakras and these chakras have been identified with specific colours. For instance the heart chakra is specified as green in colour, throat chakra as blue, third eye as Indigo and crown chakra as violet.

In modern society we also associate causes with colours. For instance, breast cancer is represented in pink colour; Alzheimer's with purple; blue and yellow are colours used for Down Syndrome awareness; and blue for diabetes. The list is endless and people wear these colours to show their support.

Would you believe there are colours linked with characteristics for instance if someone is lazy — it is light blue. Yellow is the colour of friendship, and of course you know the colour of love is red. The blue symbolises loyalty, confidence, trust, truth and intelligence.

It is a safe colour to wear at the workplace and is often considered as a corporate colour. Red is bold and adventurous and I suppose black is conservative and always safe.

Do you see how deep colours run in our veins? Whether we like it or not and realise it or not colours play a prominent role in our lives.

Now there are emojis on your phones and there are hearts in different colours. Each heart colour could convey a message.

But shall we keep that for another day because it is another story altogether.

For now let us just enjoy colours for what they are — if it makes you feel good let it be the colour for you. There are enough boundaries so now let us enjoy the shades and lights it reflects.

HEAT RELIEF



Fernando Aguilar, from El Salvador, carries his eight-year-old daughter Dannesy through the jet streams of Gateway Fountains at Discovery Green to escape the hot weather on Father's Day in Houston, Texas, US, on Monday. – Reuters

Why Kennedy Jr's bid a headache for Biden

President Joe Biden might seem to be on cruise control until the heat of the 2024 general election. Nearly all of the nation's top Democrats have lined up behind him, and the Republican nomination fight seems set to revolve around former President Donald Trump's legal problems.

But he is nevertheless facing his own version of a primary: a campaign to shore up support among sceptical Democratic voters.

As much as the president wants to turn to his looming fight against a Republican — he has signalled he is itching for a rematch with Trump — his Democratic allies warn he has significant work to do with voters in his own party. He still has to find ways to promote his accomplishments, assuage voters wary of his age and dismiss the Democratic challengers he does have without any drama.

Those upstart rivals include Robert F. Kennedy Jr, the anti-vaccine activist with a celebrated Democratic lineage who has emerged with unexpected strength in early polls even as he spreads conspiracy theories and consorts with right-wing figures and billionaire donors. Kennedy's support from Democrats, as high as 20 per cent in some surveys, serves as a bracing reminder of left-leaning voters' healthy appetite for a Biden alternative, and as a glaring symbol of the president's weaknesses.

"It's clear there is a softness that perhaps is born out of a worry about



Reid J. Epstein

KENNEDY'S POPULARITY IN POLLS IS LARGELY BECAUSE OF HIS FAMILY, WHICH HAS INCLUDED THREE DEMOCRATIC SENATORS, ONE PRESIDENT AND A HOST OF OTHER HIGH-PROFILE FIGURES.

electability in 2024," said Julián Castro, the former housing secretary who ran for president against Biden in 2020. "While he's accomplished a lot, there have been areas where I think people feel like he hasn't quite delivered what was promised on voting rights, immigration reform, police reform and some aspect of climate."

The White House is taking steps to strengthen Biden's political hand, planning a summer of events promoting his legislative achievements. This week, he is making his first overnight campaign trip since announcing his reelection bid, a fundraising swing through Northern California. Last week, he accepted endorsements from the country's biggest environmental and labour organisations, which his campaign says will help him coalesce Democratic support.

This month, his campaign began running online advertisements highlighting his record. The Biden team even paid for a billboard truck to circle the Capitol and park in front of the Republican National Committee headquarters.

Yet some of Biden's allies say they worry that the president's still-nascent campaign does not fully grasp the depth of its problems with Democratic voters, who have consistently told pollsters they would prefer that

Biden not seek reelection. Voters remain uneasy about inflation and his stewardship of the economy.

Some allies have even decided not to wait for the president's team, kicking off freelance voter outreach campaigns meant to increase his support in key places.

This month, Mayor Paige Cognito of Scranton, Pennsylvania, and three other Pennsylvania mayors hopped in a rented van for a road trip across the state to promote projects funded by the Biden administration because they were concerned voters didn't know about them.

They met in Harrisburg with Lt Gov Austin Davis, a Democrat who won office last year. Davis said Biden had done "some tremendous things" but worried that voters were unaware. He recalled campaigning in Black barbershops in Philadelphia and hearing that voters felt the country was better off under Trump.

"They've done a pretty bad job of telling the American people and Pennsylvanians what they have done," Davis said.

Kennedy's popularity in polls is largely because of his family, which has included three Democratic senators, one president and a host of other high-profile figures. A CNN poll late last month that showed Kennedy with 20 per cent support against Biden found that the main reason voters liked him

was because of the Kennedy name.

Surveys have suggested that large numbers of Democratic voters are willing to tell pollsters they would take anyone over Biden. A poll from a Baltimore TV station last week found that 41 per cent of Maryland Democrats preferred their governor, Wes Moore, over Biden, even though Moore is backing the president's reelection. Yet if Kennedy manages to maintain this level of support, he could cause Biden embarrassment in the primaries.

"Could Bobby Kennedy catch a spark? Maybe," said Michael Novogratz, a billionaire Democratic donor who supported Biden in 2020 but has pledged not to back any candidate older than 72. "He's alienated himself because of some of the anti-vax positions, but he is a bright man, articulate, eloquent, connected, has the Kennedy name and would pull a lot of the Trump voters."

A lawyer who rose to prominence in the 1990s as an environmental activist in New York, Kennedy, 69, has received a boost from conservative figures like Elon Musk, the Twitter owner who recently hosted him on a two-hour online audio chat, and David Sacks, a venture capitalist and supporter of Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida who held a Kennedy fundraiser last week in California.

Kennedy has adopted positions that put him opposite virtually

all Democratic voters. He has opposed an assault weapons ban, spread pro-Russian talking points about the war in Ukraine and suggested American presidential campaigns are rigged. He has also long trafficked in conspiracy theories about vaccines.

A super PAC supporting Kennedy has raised at least \$5.7 million, according to John Gilmore, its executive director.

The Kennedy campaign is being led by Dennis Kucinich, the former left-wing congressman and Cleveland mayor, who cast Kennedy's cornucopia of right-wing views as evidence that he is better positioned to win a general election than Biden — who won in 2020 with significant support from Trump-sceptical moderate Republicans.

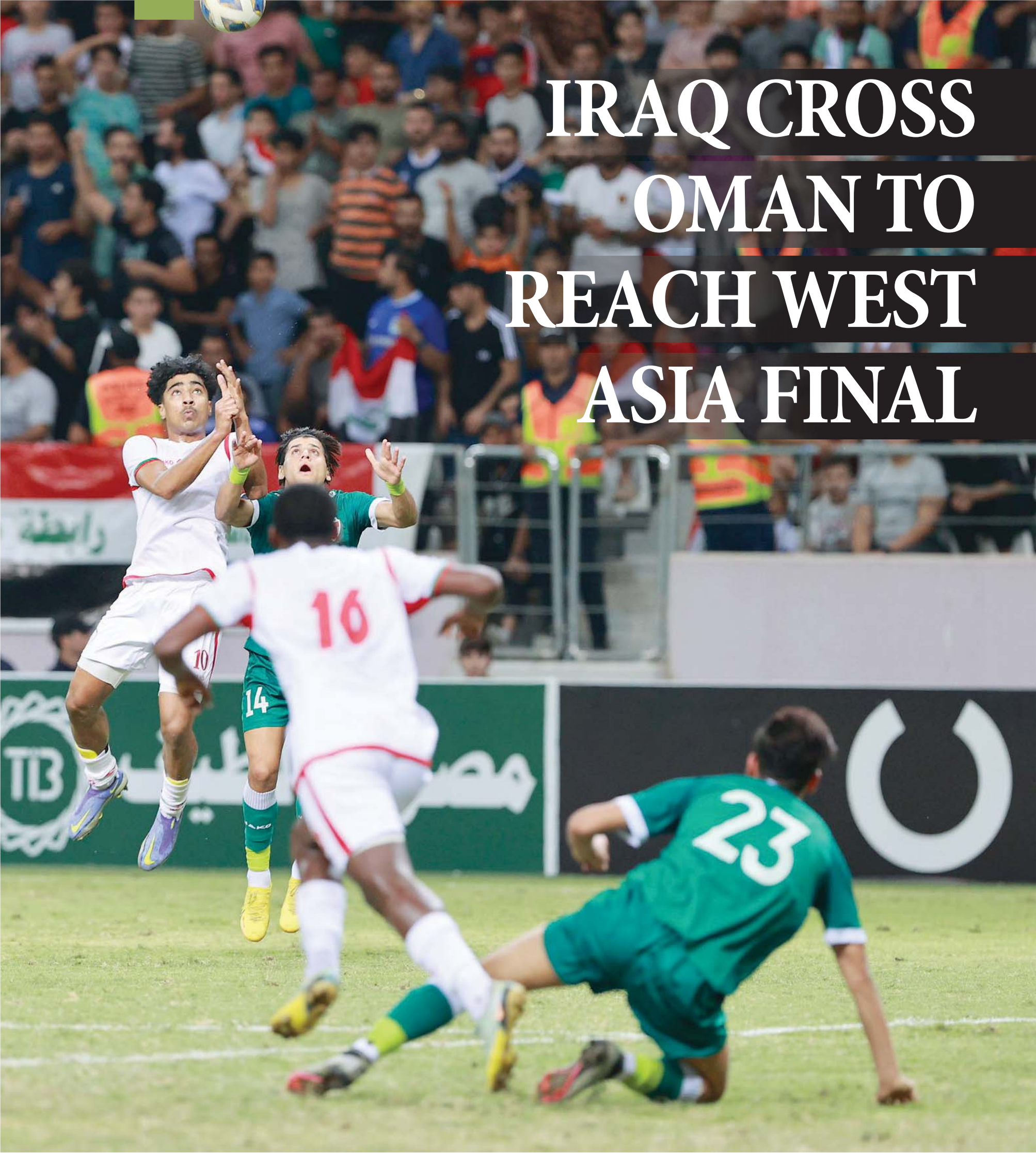
"Mr. Kennedy is the one person who has the qualities that can bring about the unity that most Americans are hungering for," Kucinich said. "He speaks a language of conciliation and compassion." Biden's allies, though are less reticent.

"That campaign is a joke," said Rep. Robert Garcia, D-Calif., whom Biden named to his campaign's national advisory board last month. "He's running in the wrong primary and has zero-chance of gaining any sort of support." Garcia added, "His views and worldview are dangerous."

— The New York Times

sport

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AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

The Oman national U23 team was eliminated from the semi-finals of the fourth edition of the National Al Watani Earthlink WAFF U23 championship, after losing to the host Iraqi team, with a score of 1-0, in the match that took place on Sunday at Al Madinah International Stadium in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, in the presence of a large crowd.

Both teams exhibited caution throughout the majority of the first half, resulting in a goalless stalemate. However, the intensity escalated towards the end of the first half, with noteworthy attempts by both sides. Iraqi striker Hussein Abdullah Lawandi's powerful header was brilliantly saved by Omani goalkeeper Mazen Ziyad, while Omani player Eid al Mukhaini's forceful shot was narrowly denied by Iraqi goalkeeper Kamil Saad. The Omani team's defence also prevented a potential goal by Loundy, showcasing their resilience. The first half concluded without any goals scored.

At the commencement of the second half, the Iraqi coach, Radhi Shneishel, implemented an offensive change by substituting winger Ali al Musawi for Muntazer Abdulamir, aiming to enhance their attacking capabilities. The tactical adjustment paid off as the Iraqi team broke the deadlock in the 53rd minute. A mistake by Omani defender Nasser al Rawahi while clearing Muntazer Mohammed's corner led to an own goal, putting the ball into the roof of Oman's net. Following Iraq's lead, the Omani team launched several successive attacks in an attempt to equalise the score, but the resilient Iraqi defence managed to protect their net.

During the last minutes of the match, substitute Zidan Abduljabbar made an attempt to secure a second goal for Iraq; however, his shot narrowly missed the left post. The game concluded with a victory for the Iraqi team, with a final score of 1-0.

As a result of this triumph, the Iraqi team secures their spot in the final of the West Asian Championship under 23 years, where they will face Irani. The Iranian team advanced to the final after defeating Jordan in a penalty shootout.

Al Zubair round off with podium finish at GT open

HUNGARY: The Omani Al Faisal al Zubair and German team-mate Fabian Schiller rounded off their International GT Open campaign with a second podium finish of the weekend at race two at the Hungaroring in Hungary on Sunday afternoon

The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3 crew had worked their way up from third place to lead at the driver changeover but the 20-second handicap imposed after they won race one would ultimately cost the duo a chance to challenge for victory in the second one-hour race.

They eventually finished just 1.055 seconds off the race winner in fourth but a penalty was later imposed on the AF Corse Ferrari 488 GT3 of Nicola Marinangeli and Riccardo Agostini that had originally finished second, promoting the Al Manar car on to the podium.

Late victory in the 34-lap

contest fell to the Oregon Team Lamborghini crew of Maximilian Paul and Pierre Louis Chovet. Marcos Siebert and Diego Manchaca snatched second in the Team Motopark Mercedes when Charlie Fagg and Samuel de Haan slipped back from first to fifth on the final lap in the Optimum Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3.

Al Zubair said: "The car felt very good. Unfortunately, it is one of the toughest tracks to pass. It was a great weekend. P1 in race one and P3 with a 20-second handicap in race two. The car felt really amazing. It gave us confidence throughout the race. Unfortunately, with our 20-second handicap, because of our win on Saturday, we could not win again.

"It was extremely difficult to overtake on this circuit in the dirty air behind the cars. I came out in P6 and finished the race in P3. Great result and happy with the overall weekend and looking forward to more races after the



2023 INTERNATIONAL GT OPEN - LATEST STANDINGS:	
1. Charlie Fagg/Samuel de Haan	66pts
2. Marcos Siebert/Diego Manchaca	63pts
3. Christopher Haase/Simon Reicher	54pts
4. Al-Faisal al Zubair/Fabian Schiller	52pts

summer break."

Schiller qualified the Al Manar Racing Mercedes for the shorter one-hour race on Sunday afternoon

and the German carded a best lap of 1min 42.950sec that put the car third on the grid behind the pole-winning Eastalent Racing Audi R8

of Simon Reicher and Christopher Haase and second-placed Charlie Fagg and Samuel de Haan in their Optimum Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3.

Schiller made the perfect start and managed to pass Fagg and snatch second place on the opening lap. He tucked the Mercedes in behind Haase, although the Audi driver held his line and had edged into a 2.685-second advantage after four laps. The leaders held station through lap eight with the gap between the leading two remaining pretty constant at 2.761 seconds.

But Schiller's patience was rewarded when he managed to pass the Audi and snatch the lead on lap 11. By the end of lap 12, the German had increased his advantage to 2.233 seconds as the driver changeover at the mid-point neared. Fagg also overtook Haase to secure second place.

Schiller extended his lead to 5.597 seconds through lap 17, as crews began pitting for driver changeovers. Al Zubair took the helm on lap 18 although Fagg stayed out on the circuit for another couple of tours and the Omani temporarily slipped down to 10th and fourth of the Pro class cars.

With all the driver changes completed heading into the final 25 minutes of the race and with the handicap imposed, the Al Manar Racing Mercedes remained down in ninth and sixth of the Pro cars and quickly climbed back to fifth, albeit 8.975 seconds adrift of De Haan in the leading McLaren with 20 minutes of the race to run.

Al Zubair began to apply pressure on Marcos Siebert in the fourth-placed Mercedes AMG in a frantic bid to claw back a position with less than 15 minutes on the clock. Less than five seconds covered the top five Pro class cars, but Al Zubair was not able to find a way through and the Al Manar Racing duo finished their Hungarian race weekend with one victory and one third place.



Verstappen took chequered flag with dead bird on board

MONTREAL: Red Bull's advertising slogan is 'gives you wings' but Max Verstappen had the whole bird on board when he won Sunday's Canadian Formula One Grand Prix.

Red Bull's double world champion reported a bird strike early in the 70 lap race at Montreal's Circuit Gilles Villeneuve and team boss Christian Horner provided more details.

"I think the biggest moment he had was hitting a bird that did half the race behind the front right brake duct," he told reporters.

"The remains of a bird."

Verstappen told Sky Sports television: "It was still stuck on my car when I came in, it didn't look great. I also feel sorry for the mechanic having to remove it."

The Dutch driver's victory was

FORMULA 1

9. Canadian Grand Prix

Gilles-Villeneuve circuit in Montreal

June 18

1

Max Verstappen (NED)

1:33:58.348

Red Bull

2

Fernando Alonso (ESP)

at 9.570

Aston Martin

3

Lewis Hamilton (GBR)

at 14.168

Mercedes

4

Charles Leclerc (MON)

at 18.648

Ferrari

5

Carlos Sainz (ESP)

at 21.540

Ferrari

Driver standings

Max Verstappen (NED)

195

Sergio Perez (MEX)

126

Fernando Alonso (ESP)

117

Lewis Hamilton (GBR)

102

Carlos Sainz (ESP)

68

Teams

Red Bull

321

Mercedes

167

Aston Martin

154

Red Bull's 100th in Formula One and Verstappen led every lap otherwise untroubled from pole position to take a 69 point lead over Mexican team-mate Sergio Perez after eight of 22 rounds.

Red Bull have won every race this season, Verstappen victorious in six of them, and are on course to smash records.

The champion has been so dominant he now has led every lap for more than three races in a row -- since 1645 local time at the Miami Grand Prix on May 7 -- and has been top of the standings for more than a year.

The local wildlife has always co-existed uneasily with Formula One cars at the Canadian race, held on a man-made island in the St Lawrence river, with groundhogs on track a regular hazard.

Verstappen's only other moment of concern during the race was when he hit a kerb a bit too firmly.

"I almost knocked myself out on that kerb, haha," he chuckled over the radio. — Reuters

Oman eye on third spot in the CAFA Nations Cup 2023

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

The Oman national football team will eye to end in the third place at the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) Nations Cup 2023, when they will take on Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday at Pakhtakor Central Stadium in the third and fourth playoff. The match will start at 5:30 pm (Oman time).

Red Warriors finished the group stage as runners up with four points from one victory against Turkmenistan 2-0, a 1-1 draw with Tajikistan and suffered to a 3-0 loss against the hosts Uzbekistan in the opener. On the other hand, Kyrgyzstan edged Afghanistan 1-0 in the opening match and received a 5-1 defeat against Iran in the second match. The team qualified as second placed team in group B.

Oman team head coach, Branko Ivankovic, affirmed during the press meet ahead of the match that this Asian event was crucial for the team in this stage. "We have played three essential matches. The team managed to earn many technical outcomes from these fixtures despite to the results. Today we will play another important game. The third and fourth playoff match will have its own specialty as we will meet them again in the Asian Cup Championship. Our target from this match is to win the third place award," he added.

The Croatian coach said that

the team have some technical issues for entering some players. "we will work hard to find a suitable solution and find the proper squad with the best starting line up for today's game. I hope the players will deliver their best in this game and my best wishes for all the teams in the concluding day of the tournament," he concluded.

Oman's goalie Ibrahim al Mukhaini said that the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) Nations Cup 2023 was a perfect event for the team to acquire more technical advantages. "The players worked hard to eliminate their mistakes that happened in the first game and we developed our technical performance. The team progressed well from one match to another. Myself and my team-mates are in full readiness for tomorrow's game and our goal is to win the game. This is a very critical stage in our preparations for the forthcoming events and we will try to maximise obtaining the desired targets," he finished.

Oman team will have a summer break until the players will resume to the training in August. The next abroad camp of the Red Warriors will begin in September. Oman will vie in many forthcoming crucial assignments including in AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 finals and the qualifiers for Asian teams on road to the Fifa World Cup 2026 as well as the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

OMAN BEAT IRELAND BY 5 WICKETS

The Oman National Cricket team ensured their Group B campaign with a win, beating Ireland by five wickets at the Bulawayo Athletic Club. (Oman 285/5 in 48.1 overs (Kashyap Prajapati 72, Zeeshan Maqsood 59; Josh Little 2/47, Mark Adair 2/61)). (Ireland 281/7 in 50 overs (George Dockrell 91*, Harry Tector 52; Bilal Khan 2/64, Fayyaz Butt 2/65))

Australia have edge in test after rain disrupted day

ANDY JALIL
BIRMINGHAM, JUNE 19

England will resume their second innings on the fourth day of the first Ashes Test on 28 for two with an overall lead of 35, after Australia were dismissed for 386, conceding a 7-run lead on the first innings.

Two spells of heavy rain restricted play on the third day to just three hours between stoppages, affecting England's second innings. They began their second innings after lunch and were 26 without loss in 35 minutes play before rain brought the first stoppage. The restart was at 3.30pm with tea having been pushed back to 5pm.

Before the second disruption, only 20 minutes play was possible during which England lost both opening batsmen. Ben Duckett was the first to go getting a thick

edge to gully off Pat Cummins for 19. The third umpire confirmed the catch was cleanly taken.

The next over ended Zak Crawley's innings, it was a fine ball from Scott Boland, moving away a little from the right hander and Crawley, on 7, playing forward got a thin edge to the wicketkeeper, it was the first ball of the 10th over. Halfway through the next over, the light was getting poor and the rain came down in torrents. Finally, after two-and-a-half hours, at 6.15pm, the umpires decided the conditions were too wet to continue.

Earlier, resuming on the third morning on the overnight score 311 for five and trailing by 82, Australia should have been able to take a first innings lead. But the end came rapidly. The first wicket to fall was of Alex Carey who, having

been dropped behind the wicket, had added 14 to his overnight score of 52. He took two consecutive fours off James Anderson before being bowled and Australia were 338 for six.

Usman Khawaja took his overnight score of 126 to 141 before becoming the first of three dismissals by Ollie Robinson. With an unusual field placing of three fielders at shortish mid-off which may have been a distraction for Khawaja, Robinson bowled a fine yorker to uproot Khawaja's off stump.

It brought an end to a marvellous innings spanning eight hours during which he faced 321 balls. It had been the longest innings by an Australian opening batsman in term of number of balls faced since Matthew Elliott's colossal effort in facing 351 balls

for his 199 at Leeds in 1997.

He had added a six to his two sixes of the previous day and had 14 fours. It had been an invaluable innings which eventually saw Australia to a position of near parity. Thereafter the end came swiftly.

Five runs later, on 372 the seventh wicket fell with Nathan Lyon pulling Robinson for a catch at deep square leg and a run later Stuart Broad claimed the third of his three wickets (for 68) removing Scott Boland for naught with Ollie Pope holding the catch.

Finally, Robinson took his third wicket to ended the innings in the last over before lunch with Pat Cummins hooking into the hands of Ben Stokes at deepish square leg for 38 very useful runs from 68 balls. Australia's last four had fallen for 14 runs in 3.3 overs.

SPAIN WIN SHOOTOUT TO DENY CROATIA IN NATIONS LEAGUE FINAL

ROTTERDAM: Serial winner Dani Carvajal converted the decisive spotkick to hand Spain a first title in more than a decade as they edged Croatia 5-4 in a penalty shootout to win the Nations League in Rotterdam on Sunday.

The 31-year-old, who has won five Champions League titles with Real Madrid, calmly chipped home Spain's sixth kick of the shootout as they claimed their first silverware since the 2012 European Championship.

The final at the Feyenoord Stadium ended goalless after extra time, and defeat on penalties was a further heartbreak for an expectant Croatia, who were runners-up at the 2018 World Cup and third in Qatar last year, but are yet to win a title.

Spain goalkeeper Unai Simon first saved from Lovro Majer in the shootout, giving Aymeric Laporte a chance to win the contest, but the defender blasted his effort against the crossbar to leave it 4-4 after five kicks each.

But Simon came up trumps again with another save, this time from Bruno Petkovic, before Carvajal wrapped up victory.

"It was a very tight match, we knew we weren't going to win easily," said Simon.

Spain were Nations League runners-up two years ago to France and success will come as a major fillip after a

disappointing World Cup in Qatar, where they were upset by Morocco in the last-16.

SHOT WIDE

Spain should have opened the scoring in the 12th minute after stealing possession away from Croatia but Gavi dragged his shot wide. A long ball from deep in Croatia's half caught out Spain's high defensive line and allowed Andrej Kramaric a breakaway chance in the 23rd minute but Laporte chased back to make a superb tackle.

In the second half, Croatia's Ivan Perisic made headway down the left flank and provided an inviting cross that Mario Pasalic missed and Josip Juranovic followed up with a wild effort well wide of goal.

Spain substitute Ansu Fati added energy to their cause when he came on and he might have won the game in the 84th minute when Rodri set him up to shoot from close range, but Perisic was on the line to clear with goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic beaten.

Spain's Nacho produced another goal-saving tackle in extra time to deny Majer, while at the other end Dani Olmo blasted over the bar from inside the opposing penalty area.

Spain finished the two-hour contest strongly as Dani Olmo had another chance and Rodri saw his shot deflected narrowly wide. — Reuters



Spain's defender Dani Carvajal holds the UEFA Nations League cup as he celebrates after winning the penalty shootouts and the UEFA Nations League final football match between Croatia and Spain at the De Kuip Stadium in Rotterdam on June 18, 2023.



Barcelona star Busquets finalising deal to join Messi at Inter Miami

MIAMI: Sergio Busquets is close to finalising a deal to join Inter Miami and reunite with former FC Barcelona teammate Lionel Messi, according to a Major League Soccer (MLS) source familiar with the negotiations.

Reports in Spain, including from Barcelona-based journalist Toni Juanmartí and radio station RAC1, said the midfielder will sign a two-year contract in the coming days. Messi announced June 7 that he plans to join Inter Miami, and contract details are still being worked out.

Busquets, who turns 35 in July, announced last month that he was leaving Barca after

18 years with the club. He reportedly made \$14million this past season.

The highest-paid player on the Inter Miami roster is Josef Martinez at \$4 million, but Miami pays only about a third of that as his former club Atlanta United pays the rest per his exit deal. Mexican midfielder Rodolfo Pizarro makes \$3.5 million and might be bought out or traded to make room for Miami's high-priced summer signings.

When Inter Miami played a friendly against Barca at DRV PNK Stadium last summer, Busquets said in an interview

that he was impressed with Inter Miami's training facility, was a big MLS fan and had followed the league closely since his former Barcelona teammate David Villajoiné New York City FC in 2014.

Busquets is considered by many to be the best holding midfielder in the modern era. He won 31 trophies over 719 appearances with the club, including three Champions League titles, three FIFA Club World Cups, eight La Liga championships and seven Copa Del Reys.

"Congratulations on an amazing career, to play at one

club so long and 31 trophies, that's incredible," former Inter Miami coach Phil Neville said last month when rumours swirled that Busquets was coming to the team.

"The most impressive thing is when people talk about the great players, No. 6s, people automatically think of Sergio Busquets. He's obviously had a brilliant career at Barcelona and leaving will be the hardest thing he's ever had to do, to leave the club he's been at all his life. I've witnessed that.

"He's got a big decision to make, and we hope he makes the right decision." — dpa



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Sohar Port signs pact with Singaporean container depot operator



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

SOHAR Port and Freezone has signed an agreement with Allied Ondock Container Services LLC, part of the Singapore-based Allied Container Group, to provide container depot services to shipping lines calling to the port, through advanced logistics solutions, and from a digital-based environment. The agreement's signing ceremony was attended by Emile Hoogsteden, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Port and Freezone, Lim Kian Chin, Owner of Allied Container Group Singapore and Mana Almanah Alfalasi, Chairman of Allied Ondock Container Services UAE and Oman.

Lim Kian Chin, Owner of Allied Ondock Container Services Group said, "We offer modern facilities and equipment coupled with an experienced and skilled workforce. The container

depot or terminal at SOHAR will cover an area of 3 hectares. It will feature the latest heavy lift machines and stackers to handle empty and laden containers, while it is also in keeping with environmental requirements."

Emile Hoogsteden, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Port and Freezone, said, "This agreement provides an important addition to our services and further strengthens SOHAR's position as a fully integrated and competitive logistics hub. We have more than 20 shipping lines calling Sohar Port on a weekly basis and there is an advantage to having such an experienced on-port dock operator to facilitate the transfer of containers."

He added, "SOHAR is also committed to innovation throughout the complex, touching on every aspect of operations and future proofing SOHAR Port and Freezone in an ever-changing business environment."

Omani economy continues to grow, inflation contained at low levels: IMF

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

The Omani economy continues to grow, with inflation contained at low levels, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated in a new report.

The assessment comes at the end of a visit to Muscat by a staff team from the Washington DC-based financial institution during June 6-14, 2023. Led by Cesar Serra, Economic, the visit covered discussions on Oman's economic and financial developments, the outlook, and the country's policy and reform priorities.

According to a statement issued by Serra, Oman's real GDP grew by 4.3 per cent in 2022, primarily driven by a strong expansion of the hydrocarbon sector. Economic growth is, however, projected to slow down to 1.3 per cent in 2023 and then rebound to 2.7 per cent in 2024, reflecting oil production cuts by Opec+ and moderate growth in the non-hydrocarbon sector due to recovering but still subdued construction activity, a slowdown in global economic activity, and tighter financial conditions.

"Nevertheless, non-hydrocarbon growth is projected to rise to 2 per cent in 2023 and 2.5 per cent in 2024, from 1.2 per cent in 2022. Headline inflation eased from 2.8 per cent (year-over-year) in 2022 to 1.1 per cent by April 2023 (year-over-year), reflecting lower food inflation and a stronger US dollar," he noted in the statement.

Significantly, substantial oil windfalls and fiscal consolidation have boosted Oman's fiscal and external positions, the report points



out. The fiscal balance reached a surplus of 7.5 per cent of GDP in 2022 and is expected to remain in surplus over the medium term on the back of favourable oil revenues and fiscal measures under the authorities' Medium-Term Fiscal Plan.

At the same time, central government debt as a share of GDP declined significantly from 61.3 per cent in 2021 to 40 per cent in 2022, as the authorities used the oil windfall to repay government debt, Serra noted. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) debt as a share of GDP declined from 40.7 per cent in 2021 to 28.8 per cent in 2022, on the back of asset divestments, improved performance, and debt repayments, with risks mitigated by substantial assets under Oman Investment Authority's management and ongoing reforms in the sector.

Buoyed by oil and non-oil exports, the current account in 2022 recorded its first surplus since 2014, at 5.2 per cent of GDP, and

is projected to remain in surplus over the medium term. Gross international reserves held by the Central Bank of Oman stood at \$17.6 billion in 2022 (4.7 months of prospective imports).

The banking sector remains sound, the official said. "Profitability has recovered from pandemic lows. Banks display ample capital and liquidity buffers. Asset quality remains strong while credit to the private sector continues to expand," he stated.

The near- to medium-term outlook is favourable and risks to the outlook are balanced. On the upside, growth and fiscal and external positions would be spurred by accelerated production at the Duqm refinery project and by another surge of oil prices — that could be triggered by supply and demand imbalances —, an acceleration of Oman Vision 2040 reform plans, and a rise in foreign direct investments from regional partners. On the downside, a sharp decline in oil prices — due

to a severe and protracted global economic slowdown —, lower demand for hydrocarbons—due to a faster-than-expected global energy transition—, and pressures to spend the oil windfall represent key risks to the outlook.

"Going forward, the authorities' structural agenda under Oman's Vision 2040 will support stronger, private sector-led, job-rich non-hydrocarbon growth while entrenching fiscal and external sustainability," said Serra.

"Priority areas include allowing for greater labour market flexibility, enhancing social protection and insurance, improving tax collection efficiency, strengthening medium-term fiscal frameworks, enhancing the performance and transparency of the SOE sector, creating an investor-friendly business environment, accelerating the pace of digitalisation, developing the financial sector, and investing in green energy to help address climate challenges and leverage the global energy transition" he added.

Hydrom to ink pacts for new green hydrogen projects in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

The Sultanate of Oman is taking bold steps to accelerate the growth of its green hydrogen sector. Following the signings of three agreements awarding the first green hydrogen projects and the signing of commercial term sheets within Phase A Round 1 public auction process earlier this month, Hydrogen Oman SPC (Hydrom), a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman SAOC (EDO), will sign a number of new agreements tomorrow, Wednesday, June 21, 2023. The agreements will be signed during a special event at Crowne Plaza OCEC, Madinat Al Irfan, to announce the winners.

Earlier this month, Hydrom signed three agreements awarding the first green hydrogen blocks in Oman. The total investments

in the three projects signed with the consortia of Amnah, Green Energy Oman (GEO) and BP Oman, respectively, are expected to exceed \$20 billion. These contracts are expected to yield a total production capacity of half a million tonnes of green hydrogen per annum from around 12 GW of installed renewable energy capacity at the three sites spanning a total area of 960 km2.

The signing of these agreements comes as part of Oman's ongoing initiatives to foster the development of its hydrogen sector. The Sultanate of Oman's ambitious plans aim to generate more than a million tonnes of green hydrogen by 2030 and almost 8 million tonnes by 2050 using 30 per cent of the already permitted space with \$140 billion cumulative investments by 2050 required in Oman's Green H2 Economy. These efforts are aimed



at achieving the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040 of building a diversified, sustainable and green economy, as well as achieve the country's target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

To spearhead the country's ambitious green hydrogen strategy, the government established Hydrogen Oman SPC (Hydrom), a fully owned independent subsidiary of Energy Development Oman SAOC. Regulated by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM), Hydrom serves as the overall orchestrator and master planner of Oman's green hydrogen sector. Its mandate includes identifying government-owned land areas, structuring large-scale green hydrogen projects, managing the allocation process to developers, and facilitating the development of shared infrastructure and connected ecosystem industries and hubs.

Oman International Hospital launches Assisted Reproductive Technologies unit

MUSCAT: Oman International Hospital's Assisted reproductive technology treatment services centre was officially inaugurated by HH Sayyidah Hujaija bint Jaifer al Said on June 18, 2023. The event was graced by renowned doctors from government healthcare sectors, officials from Ministries, Public Authorities, and media.

Oman International Hospital provides fertility treatment services using cutting-edge technology from Vitrolife and Olympus, as well as an advanced infrastructure and a multidisciplinary team of consultants and embryologists. The Centre is designed in accordance with the international standards for medical infrastructure and facilities, and provides Assisted Reproductive Technology, and treatment of infertility. To eliminate genetic anomalies or inherited genetic diseases such as Down syndrome and other chromosomal disorders in fetuses, the Centre offers high-end genetic diagnostic tests for embryos, including Preimplantation Genetic Testing (PGT), and Preimplantation Genetic Screening (PGS).

The centre is led by the renowned Senior Consultant in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Reproductive Endocrinology, and



Infertility Dr Maha al Khadhouri, as well as a well-experienced team of embryologists and medical personnel. The centre offers the most comprehensive range of fertility treatments including IVF, IUI, ICSI, assessment and management of male and female infertility issues, PGD, PGT, PGS and offers egg, sperm & embryo freezing.

Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman International Hospital said "We at Oman International Hospital strive to provide this community with the best possible medical care by combining the most

advanced technology with highly qualified and skilled physicians. With great pride and satisfaction, we announce the inauguration of the Fertility Centre, a pioneering initiative in Oman that brings back hope of parenthood to many couples."

"At OIH we believe in setting the standards of fertility treatment services in Oman by introducing the advanced technologies and international protocols to help couples. The clinic offers the most advanced IVF treatments using the most advanced infrastructure and subspecialists. We strive to

deliver successful treatments and bring joy to many couples," added Dr Maha al Khadhouri.

Oman International Hospital has emerged as the leader in private healthcare delivery in Oman in a short span of time. Prominently located at Ghubra, the Hospital is accredited by EFQM the benchmark for European Quality standards of healthcare management. The hospital is equipped with the most advanced technological solutions, hybrid operation theatres, and staffed by well-experienced physicians and a medical team.

Renovated Oman Arab Branch in Ibra Enhances Digital Banking

MUSCAT: The Ibra branch of Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has reopened after undergoing significant renovations, in the presence of Shaikh Ali bin Ahmed bin Mishari al Shamsi, Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, along with the CEO and senior management team from the bank. The renovations aimed to enhance and modernise various services and elements, ensuring a more efficient banking experience for customers. Digital banking services and customer privacy are central to these upgrades.

The Ibra branch now enjoys a modern look and feel, with digital banking channels and digital screens with the latest

information about OAB products and services, in addition to charging pods for phones/tablets allowing customers to plug in and bank on the go. Other new features include private offices for customers to meet customer service representatives.

The renovation is part of OAB's move towards new-look branches across the Sultanate of Oman, updating traditional existing branches with new design and customer experience elements. It follows the recent openings of an enhanced and relocated Duqm branch and OAB's new flagship Ruwi branch, with state-of-the-art services offering an improved banking experience for customers.



SAUD BAHWAN AUTOMOTIVE LAUNCHES ALL-NEW TOYOTA CROWN IN OMAN



H.E. Sheikh Faisal Bin Abdullah Al Rawas, H.E. Jota Yamamoto and Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan with the All-New Crown

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of His Excellency, Sheikh Faisal Bin Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Saud Bahwan Automotive launched the all-new Toyota Crown at an exclusive event. Gracing the occasion was H.E. Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to Oman.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group, said, "The model Crown has a special place in the hearts of many customers here in Oman. It is one of the few models, which holds dear memories. The Crown was part of many new beginnings and milestones in people's lives.

Priceless memories were made with it. The first-ever Toyota Crown was introduced in the year 1955 in Japan. Now after 15 generations, the all-new Crown still retains its timeless legacy, carrying forward its founding characteristics complete with thoughtful luxury. The all-new Crown is more of an emotional statement. It brings back old yet special memories." Expressing his gratitude to Toyota Motor Corporation he said, "We take this opportunity to thank our valued customers for their continued patronage. We would also like to thank Toyota Motor Corporation, for their constant support and encouragement." Building on the legacy of one of the world's best-

loved vehicles since the 1950s the Crown has been built to provide an intuitive driving experience that will exceed expectations and establish a new benchmark. When the first generation was launched, the Crown came to symbolize "innovation" and "pushing the limit" within Toyota. Since then, it has gained recognition in Japan as Toyota's premium sedan.

The new Toyota Crown is built around the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform. The new Crown comes exclusively with a choice of two environmentally friendly powertrains. The first hybrid electric powertrain consists of a front electric motor and Toyota's first-ever 2.4-liter inline four-



Guests at the Event Interior of the All-New Crown

cylinder turbo engine, paired with direct shift six-speed automatic transmission with a combined power of 340 HP and 40.7 Kg.m. torque. The second hybrid electric powertrain consists of two electric motors and a 2.5-liter four-cylinder petrol engine, generating a total power of 218 HP. The hybrid-electric system, paired with an Electric Continuously Variable Transmission (e-CVT), achieves the lowest fuel efficiency, with a consumption rate of 21.6 km/l.

The Toyota Crown has been engineered for both supreme visual appeal and peerless performance. Drivers can choose from several driving modes, including NORMAL, ECO, SPORT, SPORT+ which allows drivers to adjust

system settings individually to their exact driving habits.

Striking a seamless connection between stylish design, exquisite luxury, and enhanced convenience and comfort, the new Crown's cabin is accentuated by a range of advanced features. These include a 12.3-inch touchscreen multimedia system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility, a 12.3-inch TFT colour meter that allows users to choose from 12 patterns to suit their tastes, a colour head-up display (HUD), a dual-zone automatic air conditioning system with rear AC vents, a 11-speaker JBL surround sound system, a panoramic roof, multi-adjustable power and ventilated front seats, and 60/40 split and reclining rear

seats. For added convenience, the new Crown is equipped with a hands-free, electrically powered trunk that can be activated using a foot-operated system when the user's hands or arms are full.

As with any Toyota model, the new Crown comes complete with a comprehensive array of safety features.

A choice of seven exciting exterior hues complement the Crown's striking visual appeal. The vehicle's interior features an equally stylish colour scheme, with two options. The new Crown also offers a choice of two aluminium wheel designs.

The all-new Crown is now on display at all Saud Bahwan Automotive showrooms.

Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre wins “Best Venue” at Middle East event awards 2023

MUSCAT: Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) is proud to announce its remarkable achievement as the winner of the “Best Venue” category at the highly competitive Middle East Event Awards 2023 which took place in the UAE/ Dubai on June 15, 2023. This prestigious recognition is a testament to OCEC's commitment to delivering unparalleled experiences and services to clients, setting new benchmarks for excellence in the industry.

After undergoing a rigorous evaluation process, OCEC emerged victorious among esteemed contenders, including Coca Arena, Etihad Arena, Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC), and Rixos Bab Al Bahr. This achievement showcases OCEC's ability to stand out and leave an indelible mark on the events and hospitality industry.

Eng Said al Shanfari, CEO of Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre, expressed his gratitude and excitement, stating, “This achievement is a testament to the hard work, dedication, and passion of our team at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. We are honoured to receive this prestigious award and proud to



be recognised as the ‘Best Venue’ in the Middle East Event Awards 2023. It reflects our commitment to excellence and our continuous efforts to provide world-class experiences for our clients and guests.” OCEC's state-of-the-art facilities, innovative approach, and unwavering attention to detail have redefined the standards of

excellence in the industry. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the talented and dedicated team members, as well as the strong support of the management. Their unwavering commitment to excellence has been truly remarkable.

Winning the Middle East Event Awards 2023 in the “Best Venue”

category is a momentous milestone that will undoubtedly inspire future success for Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre. This achievement demonstrates their unwavering pursuit of excellence, dedication to customer satisfaction, and relentless passion for creating extraordinary experiences.

OCEC extends its heartfelt



gratitude to its valued clients and partners for their trust and unwavering support throughout this journey. The team at OCEC is committed to continuing to serve them with the utmost dedication, ensuring that every event exceeds expectations.

The recognition of Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre

as the “Best Venue” not only showcases their dedication to excellence but also positions Oman as a premier destination for world-class events. OCEC looks forward to celebrating many more milestones, successes, and memorable moments with clients and guests, raising the bar for extraordinary experiences.

APSR represents Oman at GCCIA deliberations



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), participated in the 55th meeting of the Advisory and Regulatory Committee of the GCC Electricity Interconnection Authority (GCCIA), which was held in Qatar. Heading Oman's

delegation was Shaikh Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman — APSR.

Discussions during the meeting focused on strengthening cooperation among the GCC member states, evaluating the performance of GCC interconnection during the first

five months of the year.

Additionally, there were deliberations on proposed amendments to the general agreement and the energy exchange and trade agreement, with the aim of facilitating energy trading within the Gulf market. The meeting also encompassed

the review of the support plan and the development of the advisory and regulatory committee. Furthermore, projects pertaining to expanding the GCCIA network through linkages with the networks of some member countries were also addressed.

Omani SMEs invited to participate in Khareef Dhofar 2023

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 19

Omani entrepreneurs and artisans are invited to participate in a consumer exhibition that will take place as part of the Khareef Dhofar 2023 festival. A Small and Medium Enterprises Corner planned as part of the event will serve as a platform for remarkable ventures to elevate their profiles and target audiences.

Taking place from July 15 to August 31, 2023, in the picturesque Dhofar Governorate, the event presents a unique opportunity for SMEs to secure a place among industry elites and leave an indelible mark on attendees.

Priority consideration will be given to holders of a



valid Entrepreneurship Card, recognising the contributions of local trailblazers. Consumer products (excluding food and

beverages) must showcase superior packaging, while craft industries displaying an innovative spirit will garner

attention for their ingenuity and artistic excellence. Project owners must demonstrate unwavering commitment to their ventures, and priority will be given to institutions and projects that have not previously participated in similar events, ensuring a fresh and diverse lineup of participants.

Interested parties can visit the registration link, bit.ly/khareef_foodtrucks, and submit their applications before the June 24, 2023 deadline. Each application will undergo meticulous review against the prescribed criteria to ensure a high-quality presence.

The Consumer Exhibition of Khareef Dhofar 2023 will celebrate entrepreneurship and contribute to the growth and prosperity of Dhofar Governorate.

Al Hassan Engineering settles with Hyundai Rotem after ICC arbitration

MUSCAT: Al Hassan Engineering agrees to a settlement after a successful ICC arbitration award against Hyundai Rotem.

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX)-listed Al Hassan Engineering Co. SAOG (AHEC) agreed to a settlement after it obtained a successful ICC arbitration award against Hyundai Rotem, a transport and infrastructure arm of the Hyundai Motor Group, Korea.

The international arbitration tribunal upheld Al Hassan's claims in the arbitration and refused Hyundai's claim for delay penalties. The London-seated tribunal was chaired by Singaporean Christopher Lau Senior Lawyer of 3VB co-arbitrators and included Peter Mansour, from Peter Mansour Al Sharji law firm in Muscat, appointed by Al Hassan, and the UK's Marion Smith King's Counsel of 39 Essex Chambers, appointed by Hyundai Rotem.

Al Hassan was advised by MASIN, Oman, a renowned claim firm and Dubai-based MRP Advisory. Hyundai Rotem used Korean firm Lee & Ko and David Johnson of Atkin Chambers, London.

Omani state entity Haya awarded Hyundai Rotem a contract in 2008 to build the Al Seeb facility, Muscat's first wastewater management system. The project includes over 1,000 kilometres of sewage collection and distribution lines in Muscat. The following year, Al Hassan entered a subcontract with Hyundai Rotem for construction works at the project.

Al Hassan filed for arbitration in 2019, saying Hyundai Rotem had breached the subcontract and was liable for damages due to delays. Hyundai counterclaimed, seeking damages for allegedly defective, delayed and incomplete works by Al Hassan.

The tribunal issued an award in April following a hearing in Dubai last year. It granted Al Hassan an extension of time and additional costs. The tribunal rejected Hyundai's jurisdictional arguments and counterclaims.

Al Hassan was awarded balance payments due under the sub-contract, as well as interest and partial costs of the expenses incurred in the arbitration.



In Argentina, inflation passes 100 per cent



NATALIE ALCOBA

The writer is an Argentine-Canadian journalist based in Buenos Aires

Wine glasses clinked in an art nouveau culinary gem basking in its restored splendour. It was tasting night in the more than century-old coffeehouse turned restaurant at the old Buenos Aires zoo, as beet tartare, pan-seared squid and a perfect rib-eye floated out of the kitchen, chased by a velvety chocolate mousse.

“As you can see, we are betting hard on the opportunity of the food scene in Argentina,” said Pedro Díaz Flores, on a tour of the restaurant, Águila Pabellon, that he co-owns — the 17th food venture he has opened in Buenos Aires in the past 18 months.

In Buenos Aires, Argentina’s cosmopolitan capital, a world-class culinary scene is flourishing. That would not necessarily be news if it were not for the fact that Argentina is in the middle of an extraordinary financial crisis.

Inflation is at more than 114 per cent — the fourth highest rate in the world — and the street value of the Argentine peso has crumbled, dropping about 25 per cent over a three-week period in April.

Yet it is the peso’s downfall that is fuelling the restaurant industry’s upswing. Argentines are eager to get rid of the currency as quickly as they can, and that means the middle and upper classes are going out to eat more often — and

that restaurateurs and chefs are plunging their revenues back into new restaurants.

“Crises are opportunities,” said Jorge Ferrari, a longtime restaurant owner who recently reopened a historic German eatery that had shut down during the coronavirus pandemic. “There are people who buy cryptocurrencies. There are people who go toward other sorts of capital markets. This is what I know how to do.”

The boom, in a way, is a facade. Everyone appears to be out having a good time. Yet, in much of the country, Argentines are scraping by and hunger is on the rise.

And in wealthier circles, the rush to go out is a symptom of a shrinking middle class that, no longer able to afford bigger purchases or travel, is choosing to live in the here and now because people do not know what tomorrow will bring — or if their money will be worth anything.

“The consumption that you have

is consumption for satisfaction — happiness in the moment,” Ferrari said.

The city of Buenos Aires, which has been trying to promote its culinary scene, has been tracking the volume of plates sold at a sample of restaurants each month since 2015. The most recent numbers, for April, show that restaurant attendance is at one of its highest levels since tracking began, and 20 per cent higher than at its highest point in 2019, before the pandemic began. It is not just venerable hot spots that are thriving. In Buenos Aires, under-the-radar residential zones have suddenly become destinations for foodie influencers, which then quickly leads to new crowds of porteños, as residents of the capital city are known.

There are cocktail bars with mixology magicians, drag shows while you dine, vegan bakeries, verdant patios and fusions of global cuisines from chefs who apprenticed in kitchens all over the

world. One “it” spot, Anchoita, a modern twist on Argentine fare, has no reservations available until next year. While the devaluing currency has also drawn tourists back to Buenos Aires as the pandemic has ebbed, it is the locals who are out in full force.

The restaurant boom is a phenomenon that cuts across classes, said Santiago Manoukian, an economist at a Buenos Aires consulting firm, Ecolatina, though it is largely driven by middle- and upper-income earners, many of whom have had their earnings keep up with inflation, but have still had to adjust to the crisis.

For members of the middle class in particular, expenditures such as a vacation or a car have become largely out of reach, so they are indulging in other ways.

But even lower-income gig workers, who saw their earnings shrink by 35 per cent since 2017, according to data gathered by Ecolatina, are dining out before

their money devalues even more, Manoukian said.

“It’s a product of the distortions that the Argentine economy suffers from,” he said. “You have extra pesos that are going up in smoke because of inflation, and you have to do something because you know the worst thing you can do is nothing.”

In an orchard in Buenos Aires next to a tennis court, Lupe García, who owns four restaurants in the city and another just outside it, reached down and broke off what looked like a miniature watermelon but was actually a cucamelon, a fruit about the size of a blackberry.

She was surrounded by lettuce, parsley, mint, alfalfa and purple shiso leaves used for tempura in one of her restaurants. The garden, owned by García and run by agronomists from the University of Buenos Aires, reflects the changing taste of locals, which García’s dining venues have helped cultivate.

— New York Times

Berlin, Intel strike deal on \$33 bn chip plant

FRIEDERIKE HEINE, AND ANDREAS RINKE

Germany will grant US chipmaker Intel €10 billion (\$10.91 billion) in subsidies for its planned factory in Magdeburg, a source familiar the matter said, capping months of talks over a project expected to be worth around €30 billion.

Under CEO Pat Gelsinger, Intel has been investing billions in building factories across three continents to restore its dominance in chipmaking and better compete with rivals AMD, Nvidia and Samsung.

The deal in Germany would be Intel’s third big investment in four days, following a \$4.6 billion chip plant in Poland and a \$25 billion factory in Israel.

Intel plans to invest around €30 billion in the Magdeburg plant, the person said.

Germany has scheduled the signing of an agreement with Intel on Monday and both Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Intel CEO Pat Gelsinger will be present for the ceremony, the chancellery said in a statement.

Scholz said on Monday that his government was working on investment projects that would make Germany one of the world’s leading locations for semiconductor production.

Both the United States and Europe are trying to lure big industrial players via a mix of state subsidies and favourable legislation, with Berlin concerned about losing appeal as a place to invest.

The German government is investing billions of euros in subsidies to lure tech companies to Germany amidst growing alarm over supply chain fragility and dependence on South Korea and Taiwan for chips.

Berlin is currently also talking with Taiwan’s TSMC and Sweden’s electric vehicle battery maker Northvolt about setting up production in Germany, having already convinced Tesla to build its first European gigafactory there.

Frankfurt-listed Intel shares were 0.7 per cent lower at 1137 GMT.

The chipmaker last year announced plans to build a big chip complex in Germany, along with facilities in Ireland and France, as it seeks to benefit from the European Commission’s eased funding rules and subsidies as the EU tries to cut its dependence on US and Asian supply.

It has not yet specified the exact size of the investment. Gelsinger said on Friday that the gap between what Germany had offered and what Intel needed was too big but he expected to reach an agreement, adding that his request was to be cost competitive.

“We lost this industry to Asia, we have to be competitive if we’re going to bring it back,” he said, adding the overall investment for the site would be “tens of billions of dollars.”

— Reuters

THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT IS INVESTING BILLIONS OF EUROS IN SUBSIDIES TO LURE TECH COMPANIES TO GERMANY AMIDST GROWING ALARM OVER SUPPLY CHAIN FRAGILITY AND DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH KOREA AND TAIWAN FOR CHIPS.

The global minimum corporate tax needs more work



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

The writer is a Nobel laureate in economics and University Professor at Columbia University



TOMMASO FACCIO

The writer is Head of Secretariat of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation

It has now been over two years since G7 leaders announced a groundbreaking agreement to divvy up taxation of multinational corporations’ profits. That breakthrough followed years of fraught negotiations under the aegis of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework, which then adopted the same agreement later that year.

By establishing a 15 per cent global minimum tax rate that companies would have to pay wherever they operate, the agreement aimed both to deter profit-shifting through tax havens and to limit beggar-thy-neighbour policies for attracting foreign investment. It also introduced an additional tax on “around 100 of the world’s largest and most profitable multinationals to countries worldwide, ensuring that these [firms] pay a fair share of tax wherever they operate and generate profits.” The goal was to force technology giants like Amazon and Google to pay more taxes to countries based on where their goods or services are sold, regardless of whether they maintain a physical



presence there.

But the consensus behind the agreement appears to be eroding. While the European Union and other OECD members have started to implement the agreed global minimum tax, the US Congress rejected this approach last year for fear of putting American companies at a competitive disadvantage. Under the Inflation Reduction Act, the United States instead opted for a 15 per cent alternative minimum tax on companies that book more than \$1 billion in income for three consecutive years – a criterion that applies only to a small cohort of US multinationals.

Moreover, the other plank of the deal – the mechanism reallocating a small share of profits from the largest multinational to signatory countries – calls for a binding multilateral treaty.

But that will be a non-starter in the US, where the ratification of any treaty requires a two-thirds majority in the Senate. Republicans have already made clear that they will oppose any new tax on US multinationals.

Yet even without a formal multilateral agreement, more countries may unilaterally adopt other measures that are not allowed under the 2021 framework, such as the digital-services tax.

Colombia and Tanzania recently introduced such measures. Countries across the Global South are desperate for new sources of tax revenue, and many have

TWO YEARS AFTER A ‘HISTORIC’ DEAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW GLOBAL CORPORATE-TAX REGIME, THE CONSENSUS IS ERODING, AND DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ARE TAKING MATTERS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS. THEIR EFFORTS ARE PERFECTLY UNDERSTANDABLE, GIVEN THAT THE AGREEMENT’S MAIN PROVISIONS MAY HAVE DONE MORE HARM THAN GOOD

concluded that their concerns were not adequately addressed in the negotiated settlement two years ago, when most of the focus seemed to be on the interests of advanced economies and their multinationals. Now, the lack of progress toward full adoption has further eroded their confidence in the process.

So great is the frustration that African countries have advanced a United Nations resolution to launch a new round of intergovernmental negotiations on international taxation later this year. At the same time, Colombia, Brazil, and Chile have organised discussions on a common regional approach.

These initiatives are understandable. Under the current rules, multinationals can easily escape paying their fair share of taxes by booking their income in low-tax jurisdictions.

As a result, governments are starved of tax revenues (to the tune of \$240 billion per year); local

firms must compete on an uneven playing field against multinationals that pay lower taxes than they do; and workers – whose income is less mobile and easier to audit – must pay higher taxes as countries try to offset lost revenue.

The 2021 agreement was meant to put an end to all this. But by the time negotiations had concluded, the deal had already been watered down so much that it would deliver little additional revenue for developing countries.

For example, the minimum tax was supposed to be enforced with a set of interlocking rules to determine which country has the right to tax a multinational’s undertaxed profits. In practice, however, the ordering of these rules ensured that most of the revenues would be collected either by the home countries (mostly major advanced economies), or by tax havens like Ireland, Switzerland, and Singapore, which have merely raised their extraordinarily low tax rates to 15 per cent.

Moving from a world with no minimum tax to one with a 15 per cent floor would seem to be a step forward. But there was always good reason to worry that such a low minimum would become the new standard – that a reform designed to raise the bar would actually end up lowering it. And since developing countries rely relatively more on corporate-tax revenues, it was foreseeable that they would be the biggest losers.

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Be Careful, Be Responsible! #Living_with_COVID19

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

UN HALS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

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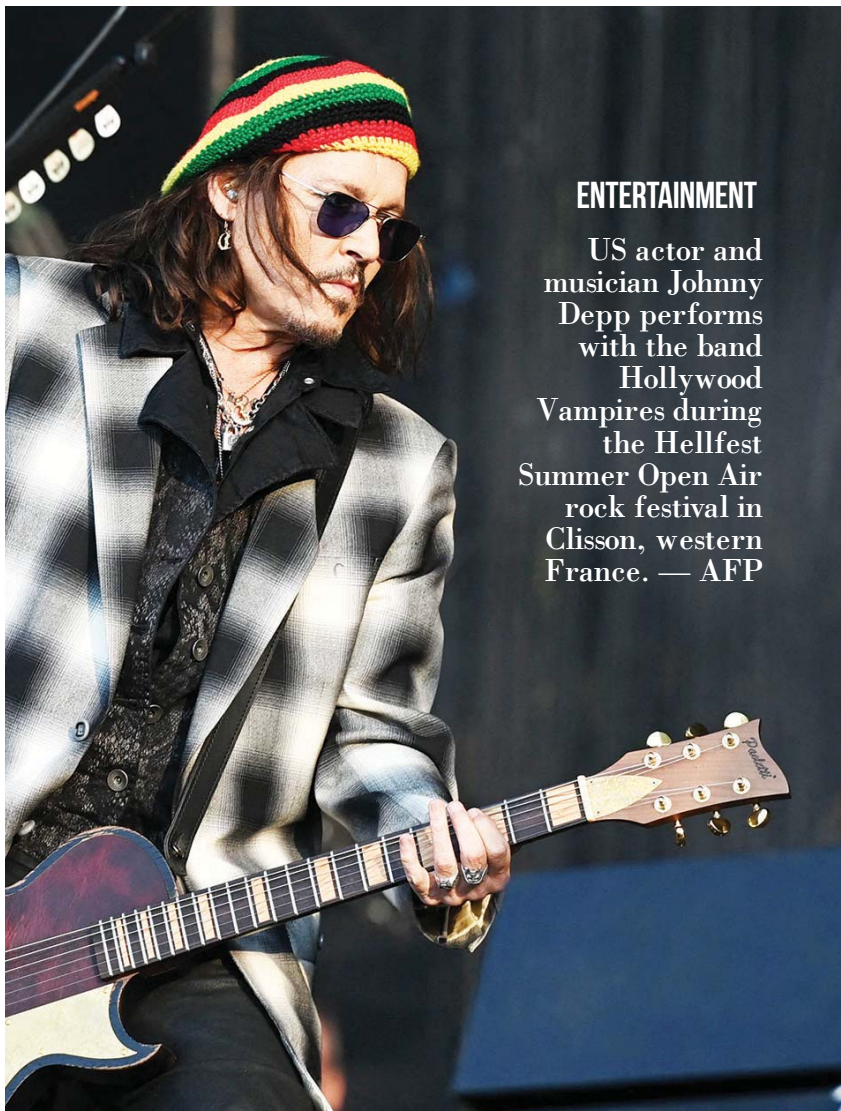


ART

An Aterstall Vatmarker
(Restore Wetlands)
climate activist looks on,
after smearing red paint
on the protective glass
of a Monet painting, on
display at the National
Museum, in Stockholm,
Sweden. — AFP

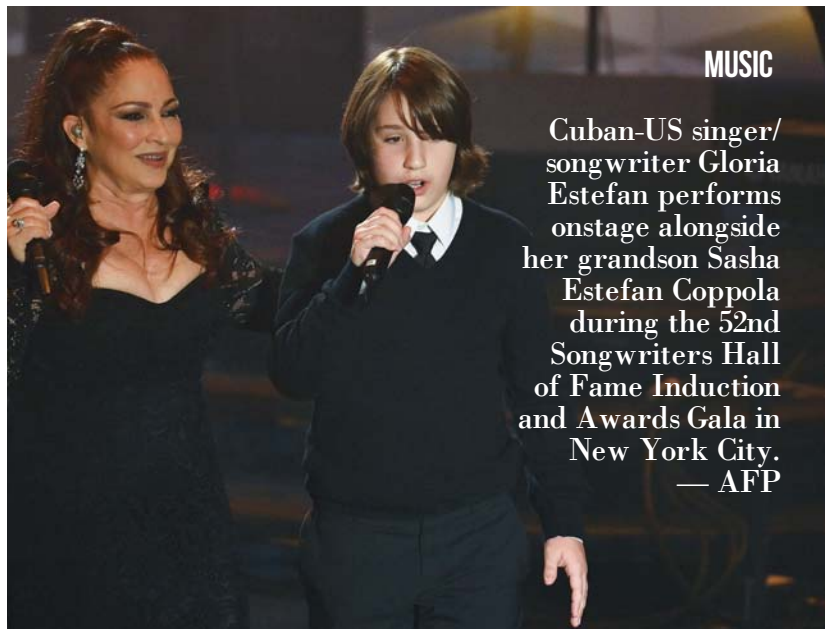
TRAVEL TALES

An aerial view of the Wat Phra Ram temple complex as contestants take part in a fashion show presenting creations by Thai designer Polpat Asavaprapha in the ancient capital of Ayutthaya, a Unesco world heritage site north of Bangkok.
— AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

US actor and musician Johnny Depp performs with the band Hollywood Vampires during the Hellfest Summer Open Air rock festival in Clisson, western France. — AFP



MUSIC

Cuban-US singer/songwriter Gloria Estefan performs onstage alongside her grandson Sasha Estefan Coppola during the 52nd Songwriters Hall of Fame Induction and Awards Gala in New York City.
— AFP



THE OPERA

Mexican tenor Arturo Chacon-Cruz (C) performs on stage during the Giacomo Puccini's Opera Turandot, at the Opera National du Rhin in Strasbourg, eastern France. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | JUNE 20, 2023 | DHUL HIJJAH 2, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER f t i y www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om

A person wearing a white lab coat is holding a glowing blue sphere. The background is a warm, orange-toned gradient. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**Oman Tourism
is taking a
quantum leap
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The main highlight of the Sultanate of Oman is the strong growth in the hospitality and tourism sectors, with around 10,292 hotel rooms currently in the pipeline for development in the country.

HERITAGE

Iraq unveils ancient stone tablet returned by Italy

IRAQ UNVEILED ON Sunday a 2,800-year-old stone tablet returned by Italy, as the war-ravaged country works to recover from abroad antiquities looted from its territory.

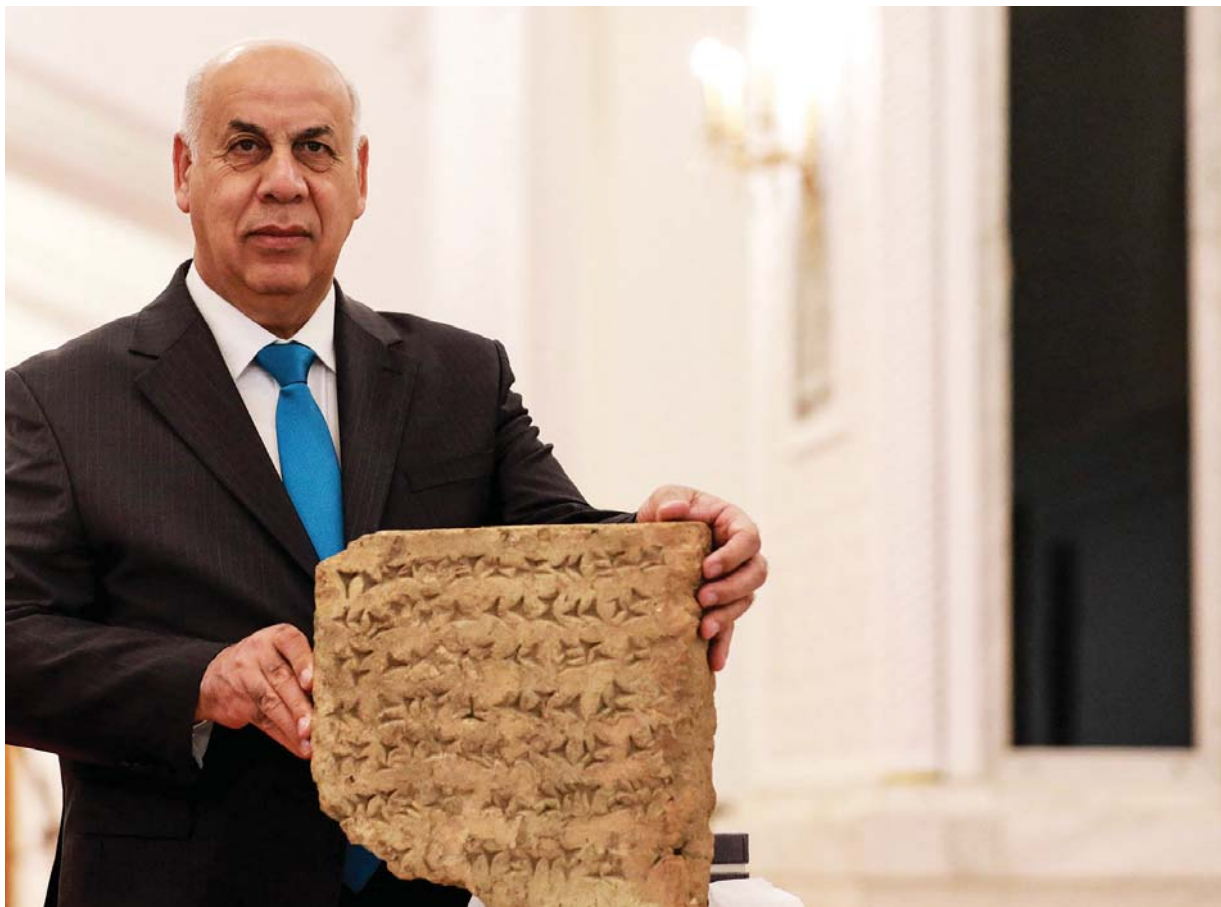
The tablet – whose text is written in cuneiform, the Babylonian alphabet – bears the insignia of Shalmaneser III, the Assyrian king who ruled the region of Nimrod, in present-day northern Iraq, from 858 to 823 BC.

The circumstances surrounding the tablet's arrival in Italy remain unclear, but the Italian authorities handed it over to Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid during a visit to Bologna over the past week.

"I would like to thank the Italian officials for their efforts and cooperation in bringing back this piece," Rashid said during a ceremony on Sunday at a Baghdad presidential palace to hand the artefact over to the national museum.

The tablet had arrived in the 1980s in Italy, where it was seized by police, said Laith Majid Hussein, director of Baghdad's council of antiquities and heritage.

Iraqi Culture Minister Ahmed Fakak al-Badrani said the circumstances behind its discovery were unclear. "Perhaps (it was found) during archaeological excavations or during work on the Mosul dam," Iraq's biggest built in the 1980s, he



said.

He underlined the importance of the piece, "whose cuneiform text is complete".

Modern Iraq's territory is the cradle of the Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian civilisations, to which humanity owes writing and the first cities.

The country's antiquities have been the target of looting that increased in the chaos following the US-led invasion of 2003.

"We will continue to work to recover all the archaeological pieces of Iraqi history from abroad," said the Iraqi president.

"We want to make the national Iraq Museum one of the best museums in the world, and we will work to do so."

In May, New York prosecutor Alvin Bragg announced the return of two ancient sculptures to Iraq: a limestone Mesopotamian elephant and an alabaster Sumerian bull from the old city of Uruk.

The figurines, stolen during the Gulf War, were smuggled into New York in the late 1990s, according to the prosecutor's office.

The bull was part of the private collection of Shelby White, a billionaire philanthropist and Met trustee. — **AFP**



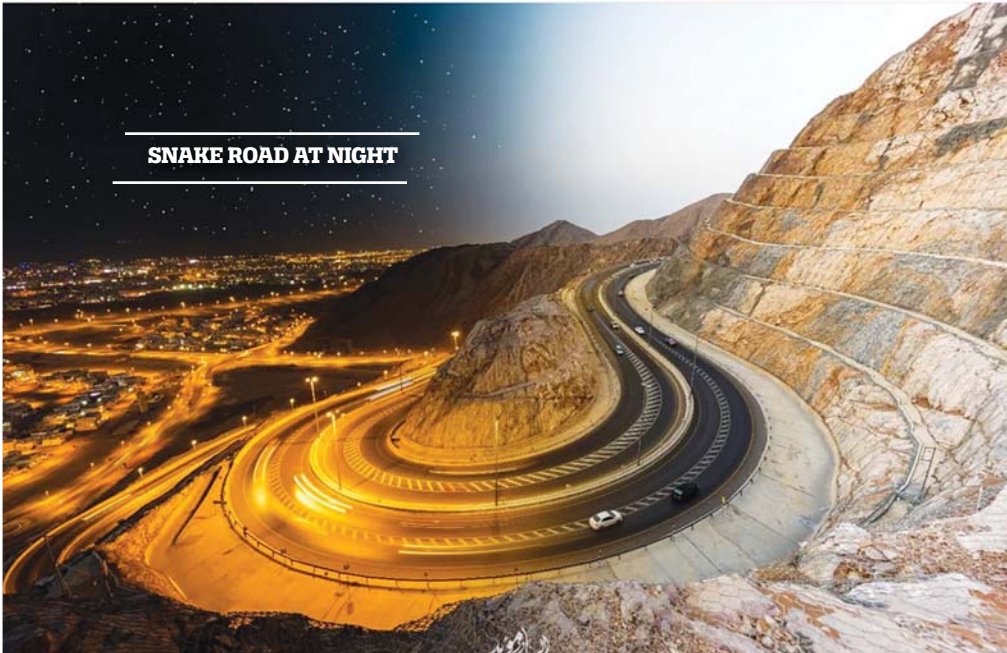
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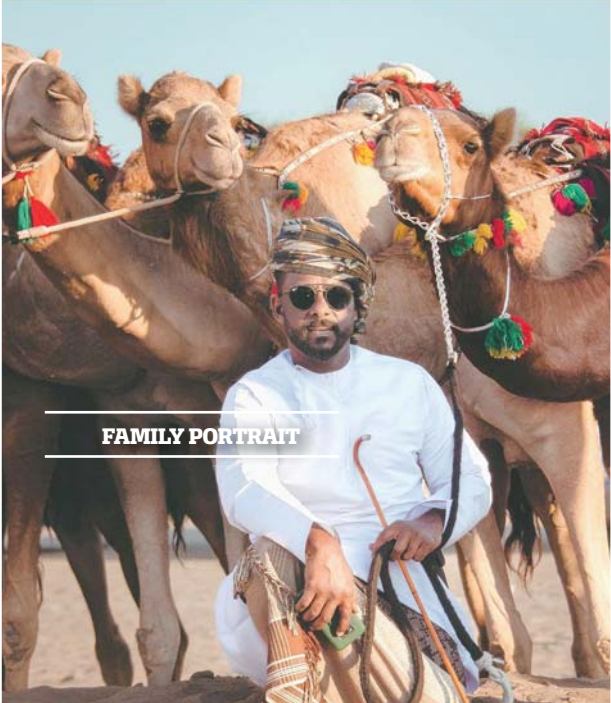


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By Kabeer Yousuf

With as many as 363 projects valued at RO 2.290 billion across all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, from 2021 to 2025, the Sultanate of Oman is making a quantum leap towards the future, whose ripple effect can be felt across all sectors, including the job market and the economy as a whole.

About 12 integrated tourism complexes have been implemented with a current investment value of RO 1.07 billion, while more than 24 projects are for domestic tourism development, 28 projects utilise heritage sites and historical monuments in the tourism sector, and 124 hotel establishments have been developed from 2021 to 2022, with a total investment value of RO 1.39 billion.

It is all scaled to touch a whopping 2.290 figure as the Ministry is to attract additional investments worth RO 700 million by the year 2025, while indicators point to the possibility of exceeding the targeted number early.

The investment position of the projects that are under implementation, which was agreed upon with various segments of investors in the public and private sectors, from 2021 to 2025, reached 363 projects across all the governorates of Oman, with a confirmed value of RO 2.290 billion.

Buoyed by the mammoth leap that Oman's tourism sector is poised to take, the country discussed sustainable decision-making and financing during the International Tourism & Investment Conference (ITIC) the Middle East Tourism Investment Session at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2023, which took place in Dubai on May 1-4, 2023.

The main highlight of the Sultanate of Oman is the strong growth in the hospitality and tourism sectors, with around 10,292 hotel rooms currently in the pipeline for development in the country.

According to a report published by STR, a leading global provider of hotel industry-related data, as many as 150,000 hotel rooms are in development across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Saudi Arabia leads the list with 100,071 hotel rooms, followed by Dubai (27,095 rooms), Qatar (17,145), Bahrain (3,452), and Kuwait (1,369). In total, there are 159,424 pipeline rooms under contract in the Gulf at present.

Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is looking forward to investments in the tourism sector reaching RO 3 billion during the aforementioned period and this comes within the framework of the ministry's efforts to promote tourism investments in all sectors and keep pace with the growing tourism movement in the country.

"The Ministry's efforts in attracting investment come from the standpoint of the developmental role that relies on the tourism sector under the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the comprehensive plan for developing the tourism sector in Oman," stated Salim bin Mohammad al Mahrrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.



He further said that in addition, 113 hotel establishments with an investment cost of less than RO 5 million per facility are being implemented at an investment cost of RO 102 million, of which 15 projects are under implementation on government lands and 98 projects are under implementation on private lands. Hotel establishments vary to include resorts and hotels with a rating of one to three stars, luxury camps, tourist camps, green lodges, hotel apartments, guest houses, rest houses, and others.

"These investments combine the economic aspect represented by the fact that the sector is one of the potential sectors to achieve economic diversification with direct investments to maximise the utilisation of the potential the Sultanate of Oman is enjoying while highlighting and preserving the country's heritage as well."

These investments in the tourism sector also work to empower its role in developing the economies of the governorates, through projects that keep pace with the comparative advantages of each governorate, in addition to the benefit of these projects to local communities and small and medium enterprises in the governorates.

ITCS

According to Oman Vision 2040, the Integrated Tourism Complexes (ITCs) represent the biggest chunk of the volume of investments in the tourism sector, and as many as 12 ITCs with an investment value of RO 3.9 billion are currently being implemented, which includes RO 1.07 billion as investment value

from 2021 to 2025.

These complexes include the Al Mouj project, Barr Al Jissah Resort (the port district development), Mandarin Oriental project and residence, Al Diyar Ras Al Hadd Resort, Hawana Salalah (Salalah Beach Resort), Yiti Sustainable City, Phase Two of the Mirbat Tourism Project, Phases A and B of Jebel Sifah and Blue City Project and The Orient and Palm Resort project, according to the MoHT.

Yet another package of ITC is soon going to change the skyline of the capital city, the Governorate of Musandam, and the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South, with an estimated total investment value of RO 2.5 billion. This is envisaged to diversify the Sultanate of Oman's tourism and recreational components while enhancing aspects of their benefit to local communities and their ICV (in-country value) by finding attractive opportunities for small and medium enterprises and providing varied employment opportunities to the labour market.

MULTI-USE PROJECTS

Several qualitative and multi-use projects with a total investment value of RO 262 million, including the Oman Botanic Garden, the Village Project, and the Salalah Gardens (The Nargil Farm) project.

Also, several projects are currently being set to be developed at Al Halaniyat and Al Dimaniyat Islands with an estimated investment cost of RO 137 million from 2021 to 2025, while efforts are being exerted to attract prestigious hotel marks such as the Four Seasons Hotel.



THE HOTEL ESTABLISHMENTS' PROJECTS

As many as 124 hotel establishments have been developed from 2021 to 2022, with a total investment value of RO 1.39 billion, including 4 hotel projects such as the Avani Hotel project in Al Seeb, the Dusit D2 Hotel in Jabal Al Akhdhar, the Intercity Hotel Muscat, and Jumeirah Muscat Hotel in Muscat.

Additionally, as many as 120 hotel projects with an investment cost of less than RO 5 million per project are currently ongoing, and this will give yet another boost to Oman's ambitious tourism development projects. These projects include hotel apartments, guest houses, heritage inns, and green inns, and others, with a total investment value of RO 48.075 million.

The growth doesn't end there. Nearly 127 new hotel establishment projects with a total investment value of RO 340 million are under implementation, including 14 hotel projects with an investment cost higher than RO 5 million per project with ratings ranging from 3 to 5 stars and hotel apartments with a total investment value of RO 238 million.

DEVELOPING DOMESTIC TOURISM

Oman believes that developing domestic



tourism through constant efforts to enhance its international presence is of paramount importance. The MoHT pointed out that the number of domestic tourism development projects that are being implemented through the executive programme of the recovery plan and by the governorates has reached 24 projects with a value of RO 16.6 million.

While work is underway on 14 projects to develop and invest in heritage sites and historical monuments, with a current investment value of RO 13.8 million, the number of projects to improve museums and private heritage houses reached 8 projects, with an investment value of RO 17,000, and the number of projects for establishing museum exhibition halls in castles and forts reached 6 projects, at an investment cost of RO 45,000.

To conclude, extensive preparations are also underway to invest in 34 historical landmarks with an investment value of RO 1.884 million, which include several forts, towers, walls, lanes and other monuments in various governorates, which are allocated as investment opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's)

There are several local tourism development projects being implemented directly by the governorates within the framework of their specialisations and through the governorate development programme, while there is an expectation of providing more requirements for service and tourism facilities to meet the requirements of domestic tourism in the various governorates during the next stage.

CONSERVATION

Spanish lagoon popular with breeding flamingos dries up as drought persists



THOUSANDS OF PAIRS of flamingos graced Spain's famous Fuente de Piedra southern wetlands last year to hatch their chicks in what was one of the largest colonies of these iconic wading birds in Europe. Not any more.

Only a few dozen adult birds could be seen on Saturday after a prolonged drought in Spain, which has dried up the saltwater lagoon and forced most migrating birds to avoid the wetland.

"It is a shame because of the tourism, people come here for the day. Normally the lagoon is full of flamingos. There are also many other birds. It looks like climate change is causing this," local resident Alberto Gonzalez Sanchez, 53, said on Saturday.

Africa Lupion, curator of the Fuente de Piedra natural space, told the Cadena Ser radio station in February that the rain level was at its lowest since 1995.

Since 1984, when it was declared a natural reserve, more than 200,000 flamingo chicks have hatched at the lagoon, which is located in the Malaga province, according to Andalusia's Office for Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Sustainable.

This year's spring was the hottest and second-driest in Spain since records began in 1961, with higher-than-average temperatures likely to continue this summer. — **Reuters**

CULTURE

German museum returns centuries-old ritual masks to Colombia



TWO INVALUABLE RITUAL masks from the indigenous Kogi people of the mountains of Colombia from the collection of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin were returned on Friday.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro joined German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier at a ceremony in Berlin to mark the handover of the sacred objects.

"This return is part of a rethinking of how to deal with our colonial past, a process that has begun in many European countries," said Steinmeier, who added that Germany has played a leading role in that process.

Ethnologist Konrad Theodor Preuss acquired the centuries-old pieces from the Sierra Nevada de

Santa Marta in 1915 and brought them to Berlin.

Colombia officially requested their return in 2022.

Hermann Parzinger, the president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, which oversees the Ethnological Museum, said the decision to return the masks was reached after careful consideration.

The masks have a "special, virtually unique background," Parzinger said.

According to scholars, the wooden masks date from the mid-15th century. They are referred to as "Sun Mask" (Mama Uakai) and "Great Sun Mask" (Mama Nuikukui Uakai) and were to be used ritually in dances and chants in a temple, according to the museum.

Petro said that the Kogi and other

indigenous people live in harmony with nature and that "these cultures can teach us a lot."

Democracy is based on diversity and the return of the masks helps preserve these differences, Petro said. The Colombian president suggested the possibility of building a museum in the Kogi region of Santa Marta.

According to traditional beliefs, only a mamo, a tribal priest of the Kogi, is allowed to handle the masks and they are intended to remain permanently in the sacred place.

The masks were not intended to be sold or acquired. Preuss, the ethnographer who brought the masks to Berlin, described their acquisition from the heir of a deceased mamo as a "favourable opportunity." — **dpa**



LIFESTYLE

New Madrid museum showcases Spain's royal treasures

A NEW MUSEUM packed with hundreds of treasures collected by Spain's monarchs over the past five centuries is set to open in Madrid this month.

Located just across from the Royal Palace, the Royal Collections Gallery, which opens on June 29, will showcase paintings, tapestries, furniture and elaborately decorated carriages.

Most of the 650 works that will go on display have not previously been accessible to the public or were sitting in quiet corners of historic sites across Spain.

"There are works that come from palaces or monasteries and here we promote another way of looking at them," the museum's director Leticia Ruiz Gomez said.

Among the highlights is a painting by one of Spain's most emblematic historical masters, Diego Velázquez, depicting a horse rearing up without a rider.

"White Horse" was last shown to the public in 2015 during a temporary exhibition in Paris.

The rest of the time "it sat in a corner of a room in the Royal Palace," said Ruiz Gomez.

Nearby is a massive 16th-century tapestry once owned by Spain's Queen Isabella which the culture ministry bought in February for one million euros (\$1.1 million).

Another standout item is the very first edition of Spanish novelist Miguel de Cervantes' "Don Quixote", one of history's greatest literary works.

The collection also includes paintings by Italian masters Caravaggio and Jacopo Tintoretto, as well as Spain's Francisco de Goya whose works reflect the country's historical upheavals.

In addition, visitors will be able to see a multicolour wood sculpture by Spain's first female court sculptor, Luisa Roldan, which depicts Saint Michael slaying the Devil.



The goal is to "show the diversity, richness and quality of what Spanish monarchs have collected over five centuries," said Ana de la Cueva, head of Spain's state heritage agency, Patrimonio Nacional.

SPECTACULAR

The idea to set up a museum to display Spain's royal collections first emerged nearly a century ago but it was interrupted by the 1936-39 civil war.

The new museum joins a prestigious lineup of other world-famous galleries in Madrid such as the Prado Museum and the Reina Sofia, home to Pablo Picasso's historic Guernica painting.

To maintain the public's interest, the Royal Collections Gallery plans to replace a third of its works with new items roughly every 18 months.

"The idea is to show all the national heritage we have, so we can bring restored works to be exhibited. Then they can go back to their original places," said De la Cueva.

The modern building which houses the collection has won several architectural awards and is likely to add to the museum's appeal.

Built down the side of a steep hillside, the scale of the seven-storey museum is not immediately evident from street level, with the main entrance located on the top floor.

As visitors descend to the lower galleries, there are impressive views onto the parklands of western Madrid.

At the entrance to one of its main rooms are four gigantic columns with gilded vines, the huge windows flooding the room with natural light.

De la Cueva said the combination of seeing historical art in a modernist setting "is spectacular".

"I think the opportunity of having the most modern building with the most ancient collections is a privilege," she added. —AFP

TRAVEL TALES



Faroe Islands resumes controversial dolphin hunt

THE FAROE ISLANDS has killed more than 500 dolphins since its controversial hunt resumed in May, local authorities in Denmark's autonomous territory in the north Atlantic said on Thursday.

In the Faroese tradition known as "grindadrapp", or "grind" for short, hunters surround pilot whales and dolphins with a wide semi-circle of fishing boats and drive them into a shallow bay where they are beached.

Fishermen on shore slaughter them with knives.

Every summer, images of the bloody hunt make headlines around the world and spark outrage among animal rights defenders who consider the practice barbaric.

"Yesterday there were two grinds, one with 266 catches and the other one with 180, according to the first reports," a Faroese government spokesman said.



The two "grinds", which involved a species of dolphin known as pilot whales, brings to five the number of "grinds" so far this season.

Environmental NGO Sea Shepherd, which managed to disrupt the 2014 hunt with its boats, criticised the fact that Danish navy vessels are authorised to intervene to block environmentalists from disrupting the hunt.



But the hunt still enjoys broad support in the Faroes, where supporters point out that the animals have fed the local population for centuries and accuse media and foreign NGOs of disrespecting local culture and traditions.

They typically kill around 800 pilot whales a year.

In 2022, the government limited the number of Atlantic white-sided dolphins that could be killed per year to 500, after an unusually large slaughter of more than 1,400 sparked an outcry, even among locals. — AFP