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AN INDIAN
HOMEMAKER'S
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FOR IFTAR



MUSCAT

HM CONGRATULATES
SENEGAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Bassirou Diomaye of the Republic of Senegal, on the occasion of winning the presidential elections in his country. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President Bassirou Diomaye, wishing him success in leading the people of Senegal towards further progress. His Majesty also wished the bilateral relations further development and prosperity.

LARGEST ZOO TO
OPEN DURING EID



The Sultanate of Oman's largest zoo in Ibri will open its doors to public on the second day of Eid al Fitr in Ibri, according to the promoters of the 'Safari World'. Spread over a built up area of 150,000 square metres, the zoo has a water theme park and a complete family entertainment avenue. According to the promoters of the zoo, over 300 animals from different continents are going to be an attraction for visitors. Speaking to the Observer, Khalfan bin Said al Maamari, an educationist and promoter of the zoo, said that we are happy to announce the opening of the zoo which will house animals, reptiles, birds and has ambitious growth plans to mark Oman on global tourism map. **DETAILS ON P5**

Plan to launch venture capital fund to support startups

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Programme of Omani Promising Startups (POPS), on Monday chaired the first meeting of the programme's Supervisory Committee this year. The meeting was attended by representatives of government departments and Omani startups.

The committee discussed the initiatives implemented during 2023 and plans to empower the startup sector. The initiatives cover many objectives, including the propagation of the culture

of entrepreneurship, studying innovative solutions provided by startup companies, exploring technical opportunities for accelerating the growth of startups and advising owners of emerging firms about ways to maintain the firms' sustainability.

The committee looked into the outcome of an analytical study about the startup climate in the Sultanate of Oman. The study dealt with the progress through the government's support for startups. It also discussed the challenges facing the growth and sustainability of startups.

The committee focused on support for



HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said

startups that capitalises on technology and innovation. It elaborated on ways to raise the number of startups and enhance the business environment.

The meeting also discussed the launch of a venture capital fund under the purview of Oman Future Fund aimed to elicit ideas of innovators and startup owners and to attract investors. The fund seeks to provide financial support to technology-based companies and to expand their services within Oman, both through innovative financing and conventional financing methods. — **ONA**



With just over a week left for the conclusion of Ramadhan, the air in Muttrah Souq crackled with anticipation as Eid al Fitr shopping reached a feverish pitch. Amidst the labyrinthine alleys, bustling crowds thronged, weaving through vibrant stalls and shops adorned with a wares selling anything from clothing, sandals, and other retail outlets.

PHOTO BY KHALFAN AL RUZAIKI

Unicef values Oman's support for Gaza kids

MUSCAT: The United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) expressed deep appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman's donation of \$1 million to help children in the Gaza Strip.

The organisation stressed that "this important donation highlights the Sultanate of Oman's firm stance on the Palestinian issue and its firm support for Palestine in its quest for peace".

The Unicef pointed out that Oman's position stems from keen interest in supporting humanitarian action and its strong backing for the wellbeing of children at national and international levels. The international organisation described Oman's contributions as a "vital role in providing basic assistance to children in the Gaza Strip who face major obstacles, including the lack of food security and limited access to education and health services".

It added that, through this support, it will be able to pursue its vital programmes and initiatives aimed at ameliorating the lives of

children and maintaining their welfare.

Sumaira Chowdhury, the Unicef Representative to the Sultanate of Oman, expressed thanks to the Sultanate of Oman for this noble gesture towards children in Palestine. She stressed that this generous donation would have a moral impact in the lives of many children in the Gaza Strip "where children are in urgent need for basic life-saving support and looking for a better future".

Meanwhile, Israeli forces left Al Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on Monday after a two-week operation by special forces who detained hundreds of Palestinians and left a wasteland of destroyed buildings.

With access to Gaza's biggest hospital severely restricted, the Israeli and Palestinian versions differed sharply.

Palestinian officials called the raid on a hospital treating severely wounded patients a war crime, while Israeli officials said special forces units conducted a targeted strikes. **SEE ALSO P6**



A Palestinian child suffering from malnutrition receives treatment at Al Awda health centre in Rafah on Monday. — **Reuters**

Application for admission to universities from April 1-June 1

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, has opened applications for admission to public and private higher education institutions as well as internal and external scholarships for the academic year 2024-2025, from April 1 to June 1.

Students of the general education diploma (GED) and its equivalent for the academic year 2023/2024 must register with the unified admission system on the website of the Higher Education Admission Centre (www.heac.gov.om) and choose the study programmes they wish to apply to.

The Higher Education Admission Centre has issued an updated student guide for admission to higher education institutions for the academic

**The minimum gross income for a student's guardian raised to RO 792 from RO 600 to enable a wider segment of students to compete in limited-income programmes**

THE OFFICIAL
HEAC

year 2024/2025 for holders of the general education diploma (GED) certificate and its equivalent. An electronic version of student guide is available on the website and social media networks accounts of the Higher

Education Admission Centre.

The HEAC advised students to read the guide carefully to get information about the conditions and procedures related to admission and registration, tips and instructions to students for the stages of registration and admission as well as information about the higher education institutions and scholarships and the programmes and disciplines available for contention.

The HEAC has raised the minimum gross income for a student's guardian to RO 792 from RO 600 to enable a wider segment of students to compete in limited-income programmes. Besides, 1,000 academic seats have also been allocated for flexible internal scholarships which allows admitted students to directly choose from among the private higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

Iran says its consulate in Syria flattened in air strike

DAMASCUS: Iran's consulate in the Syrian capital Damascus was flattened on Monday in what Syrian and Iranian media described as an Israeli air strike, a startling apparent escalation of conflict in the Middle East.

A Lebanese security source said one of the dead was Mohammad Reza Zahedi, a senior commander in Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Iranian state television said several Iranian diplomats had been killed.

Reuters reporters at the scene in the Mezzeh district of the Syrian capital saw smoke rising from rubble of a building that had been flattened, and emergency vehicles parked outside. An Iranian flag hung from a pole in front of the debris. — **Reuters**



SEARCH ON FOR TWO MISSING FISHERMEN IN LIWA

LIWA: Two fishermen from the Wilayat of Liwa went missing at sea at 8 am on Saturday.

The fishermen went on a fishing trip to catch tuna fish on Saturday morning but did not get back from the trip which usually takes

about 12 hours. The incident was reported to the Maritime Security and the Coast Guard Police at midnight.

The newspaper got in touch with Mohammed bin Karam al Balushi, brother of one of the two missing persons who



said that his brother Ahmed and his companion Khalfan al Maamari went on a tuna fishing trip and were supposed to be back at 9 pm on Saturday but they didn't. He added that they lost communication with them although they had a satellite

phone. Search operations are ongoing to locate the missing fishermen by relevant authorities and local fishermen who allocated three boats to pitch in with the search operations, Mohammed said.

Oman, Brazil review relations



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Alfredo Cesar Martinho Leoni, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and explored means of enhancing them. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest. — ONA



FLY JINNAH KARACHI-MUSCAT ROUTE FROM MAY 2

MUSCAT: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has approved the budget airline, Fly Jinnah, to operate flights from two Pakistani airports. Starting from May 2, the airline gets approval to operate three weekly flights between Karachi and Muscat and two weekly flights between Muscat and Islamabad.

Fly Jinnah or FJ is the low-cost carrier (LCC) owned and operated jointly by Lakson

Group of Pakistan and Air Arabia Group of the United Arab Emirates.

The airline is based in Karachi and currently serves five domestic destinations. The airline started domestic flight operations on October 31, 2022, when its first flight took off from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi and landed at Islamabad International Airport in Islamabad. After completing a year of domestic

flights in October 2023, Fly Jinnah was permitted by the Pakistani government to operate international routes to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iraq, Malaysia, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Last week, Fly Jinnah opened its second international route connecting Lahore with Sharjah, a month after its inaugural flight from Islamabad to Sharjah.

Pacts signed for maintenance of falajs

AL BURAIMI: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, on Monday signed two agreements for the maintenance of Falaj Al Sarfanah and Falaj Al Haiul in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi. Eng Nasser bin Ali al Marshoudi, Director General for Agriculture and Water Resources in the Governorate of Al Buraimi said that the signing of the two agreements comes within the framework of the directorate's annual plan to conduct maintenance for several Aflaj in the governorate during 2024. — ONA



EID SHOPPING REACHES PITCH



With just over a week left until the conclusion of Ramadhan, the air in Muttrah Souq crackled with anticipation as Eid festival shopping reached a feverish pitch. Amidst the labyrinthine alleys, bustling crowds thronged, weaving through vibrant stalls and shops adorned with a wares selling anything from clothing, sandals, and other retail outlets.

— Pictures by Khalfan al Ruzaiqi



Registration opens for Strategic Research Programme

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) along with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced the opening of registration of the Strategic Research Programme until April 30, 2024 in accordance with the approved research priorities of the participating government agencies.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced this year's research challenges as 'Preserving Omani frankincense trees and enhancing their products' added value, 'Enhancing inputs in the production of alternative and concentrated animal feed', 'Finding effective alternatives to fish meal in fish feed for farmed organisms', 'The geography of food and its impact on food safety and quality in the Sultanate of Oman', and 'Rainfall water harvesting and maximising its benefits' for the various sectors of the ministry.

The evaluation of research proposals is based on the criteria of research excellence, the criteria for linking to institutional challenges, the impact of the research outputs and their applicability, with the priority be given to research proposals and projects that serve a set of national priorities.



Interested applicants can submit their research proposal through the Research Information Management System (RIMS) at the Oman Research Portal.

For further information, interested applicants can contact the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation through e-mail srp@moheri.gov.om and 22305482.

The Strategic Research Programme aims to focus on national priorities to find scientific and applied solutions through competitive research proposals, enhance constructive cooperation between the parties to the research system (governmental, academic and private sectors), and make recommendations to create or update policies, legislation and general procedures.



Fixed fares to boost Khareef flight preference

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The national airline, Oman Air, has started implementing the fixed-fare ticket policy, aimed at encouraging domestic tourism in Dhofar, especially during the Khareef season and facilitating the easy movement of citizens between the two governorates.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, around 70 per cent of the Salalah visitors travelled by road, mainly to cut travel costs.

The so-called exorbitant airfares on the Salalah-Muscat sector have always been a point of contention among passengers, especially those travelling with families during the peak Khareef months. These airfares force visitors to Salalah to take to the road and the long drive on the 1,000-km stretch has often turned out to be fatal for some motorists and their families. Overspeeding, fatigue, and low visibility during rains are often cited as the main reasons for these unfortunate incidents.



The so-called exorbitant airfares on the Salalah-Muscat sector have always been a point of contention among passengers, especially those travelling with families during the peak Khareef months.

The national airline has now fixed the economy class fares for citizens between Muscat and Salalah at RO 64 (return) and RO 35 (one-way), applicable throughout the year. During the khareef season, the return economy class ticket will be priced at RO 54.

Speaking on the subject, Eng Said al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Air, said, “Instead of the surge pricing model, these fares will be applicable regardless of whether

the travel is made in advance or on short notice.” Sources in the travel industry indicated that these fares will also benefit all passengers, including expatriates and foreign tourists, as all airlines operating to Salalah will be forced to cut down prices to stay competitive this year. “I

am confident that the base one-way fare for all passengers will come down this year,” a travel operator said as he welcomed the new fixed-fare policy.

The Salalah Airport handled around 232,000 passengers (arrivals, departures, and flight transfers) from 1,572 flight operations at the end of February this year.

It may be noted that Royal Directives were issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in 2023 to provide direct subsidies on fuel prices at Salalah Airport, equivalent to the fuel prices at Muscat International Airport.

The number of visitors to Dhofar in the Khareef season of 2023 increased 18.4 per cent to 962,000 compared to 813,000 visitors during the 2022 season. NCSI indicated an increase in spending by visitors in 2023, of RO 103 million compared to RO 86 million in 2022, while the number of nights of stay of visitors also increased to seven million nights compared to six million nights in the Khareef season in 2022.

Govt treasury bills worth RO 15m issued

MUSCAT: The total issuance of Government Treasury Bills amounted to RO 15 million. The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 5 million, for a maturity period of 28 days.

The average accepted price reached RO 99.625 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 99.625 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.88839 per cent and 4.90679 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 10 million, for a maturity period of 91 days.

The average accepted price reached RO 98.720 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 98.720 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.13407 per cent and 5.20063 per cent, respectively.

Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds.

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo). It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. — ONA



‘DONATING BLOOD WILL NOT AFFECT FASTING’

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Donating blood or platelets does not affect one's fasting and one can very well donate blood and take part in the support to healthcare system in the country.

There has been a reduction in the number of donors in Ramadhan and the number perpetually reduced over the past few days

With Eid al Fitr round the corner and as people might engage themselves more into prayers during the final days of the holy month, chances are the number of



On average, as many as 100 blood units are needed daily to cover patients' needs during Ramadhan

donors would reduce further. Sources at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA)

have affirmed that a fasting person can donate blood and platelets and blood donation while fasting will

not nullify fasting. However, due to restoration and other medical reasons and to keep the person safe, health experts suggest one to take part in the life-saving mission after breaking fast while non- Muslims can donate blood or platelets any time of the day. “The forthcoming holidays might result in shortage of blood units, hence, we urge eligible donors to visit the Central Blood Bank at Bausher and donate blood units and platelets during the working hours,” a statement from the blood bank said.

On average, as many as 100 blood units are needed daily to cover patients' needs during Ramadhan and donors from all the blood groups are required but O positive, O negative and A positive are high in demand, according to Dr Zainab bint Salim Al Fana al Araimiyah, Director of Blood Bank Services. “We encourage people to come forward and give blood and platelets to save a life”, she said. The working hours of the Central Blood Bank in Bausher is from 8am till 1pm and from 7.30pm to 11.30pm with an exception on Friday when the Bank is open in the evenings.

ROP enhances maritime safety with GMDSS certification

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Royal Oman Police (ROP), represented by the Coast Guard Police Command, has obtained international accreditation in coordination with the ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, which provides training and grants the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) operator certificate as well as enable them to operate search and rescue systems in boats.

The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) is considered one of the systems adopted by the International Maritime Organization of the United Nations in the field of search and rescue due to maritime accidents to which ships are exposed.

The system relies on the presence of satellite services and ground stations and contains the functions of broadcasting distress calls and communications systems that enhance search and rescue services.

Colonel Abdulaziz bin Mohammed al Jabri, Assistant



The Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) is adopted by the International Maritime Organisation of the United Nations

Commander of the Coast Guard Police, said that this accreditation enables the Royal Oman Police to provide specialised training programmes for operators of the Global Distress System as per maritime safety procedures and protocols and communication equipment and devices used in rescuing ships.

He confirmed that this accreditation complements the work of the marine simulator that was provided to the Coast Guard Police Command and given the development projects it has witnessed and the acquisition of boats with the latest marine specifications, workers must be qualified and their capabilities developed, including boat captains, to work

on its systems. He explained that the acquisition of the marine simulator and obtaining international accreditation allow for the provision of efficient outputs capable of keeping pace with the latest developments and global international standards for distress.

He added that training on the marine simulator and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System is being conducted at the Coast Guard Police Command following the standards of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers

(STCW), and the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

The marine simulator provides an environment that simulates reality through virtual exposure to various potential risks in various climatic conditions, day and night sailing operations, exposure to marine accidents, management of the work team in the command room, training in applying the law to prevent maritime collisions, the mechanism of entry and exit from seaports, and operating communications systems. Marine and use of navigational devices, maritime search and rescue (SAR) operations, and training in sea navigation in general.



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-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
144/ 2024	Purchase of (149) Laptops	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications equipment, information technology and accessories registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first or second degree	Sunday 21-4-2024 02:00 PM	Sunday 12-5-2024 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ 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 2/4/2024.

❖ 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”

www.mosd.gov.om



SIGNIFICANCE OF GROUP IFTAR IN SOCIETY



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
[@Afrahalbalushia](#)

SOCIAL LIFE in Oman is characterised by the presence of numerous customs and traditions that constitute the most important features of social life, including group iftars. The phenomenon of group iftar during the month of Ramadhan helps strengthen family relationships and brings together the largest number of family members at one time and place. The phenomenon of group breakfast is characteristic of the holy month. Especially on the first day, there is a group breakfast in the family home which helps strengthen family relationships and create a family atmosphere that you may not find on many occasions, due to the hectic life of many family members. Organising iftars inside mosques is one of the aspect that you rarely find during normal days, and this is what distinguishes the holy month. This is considered one of the good things that help bring together all communities in one place and time. This

also brings them together with the call of religion, and also paints a cultural and aesthetic picture of the diversity of nationalities and their differences in languages. The group iftar in mosques is a prominent milestone during this holy month where Islamic communities of different nationalities gather at one table having breakfast together. The group Iftar is a phenomenon that has a special taste, which is a family gathering in which the spirit of cooperation and family rapprochement prevails. The group Iftar is not limited to the family only, but there are many private parties and charitable organisations that organise this and in several places. Mosques are considered one of the most important places where group Iftar is held, and they include many Islamic communities that are united at that time by one idea and style. On the other side, many institutions and companies are keen to hold a group iftar for their employees during Ramadhan every year. The aim of this is to strengthen team spirit and brotherly bonding among employees, and strengthen the

GROUP IFTAR HOLDS A SPECIAL PLACE IN OMANI SOCIETY, FOSTERING FAMILIAL TIES AND COMMUNITY UNITY DURING THE HOLY MONTH OF RAMADHAN

bonds of love between employees and senior management. In addition, to offering thanks and gratitude to the employees of the institution for their efforts. Throughout the year, the month of Ramadhan represents an ideal opportunity to hold such friendly meetings that enhance human interaction between employees, leading to closer ties between them in a family atmosphere in which the spirit of cooperation and brotherhood prevails. While there is a large percentage of citizens who make a personal effort in organising a group iftar in places where foreign communities and residents are concentrated, this is because some of them may not find time to prepare meals for iftar, and some of them are unable to eat various types of food, and their eating is limited to other meals. Many citizens and non-citizens who make individual efforts, and do not hesitate to provide all subsidies in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Islamic religion, use the preparation of meals either in agreement with several restaurants or hotels that prepares those meals and deliver them to the required destination.



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OMAN’S LARGEST ZOO TO OPEN ON 2ND DAY OF EID

KABEER YOUSUF
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Oman’s largest zoo by size and number of ferocious animals, reptiles and birds, will open its doors to public on second day of Eid in Ibra, according to the promoters of the ‘Safari World’ entertainers.

Spread over a built up area of 150,000 square metres, the zoo which will also have a water theme park and a complete family entertainment avenue, this zoo will also have days dedicated to school children.

According to the promoters of the zoo, over 300 animals from different continents are going to be the attraction of the new zoo, which is aimed at adding yet another milestone to Oman’s ongoing tourism march.

Speaking to *Observer*, Khalfan bin Saeed al Maamari, an educationist and the promoter of the zoo, said that a vast range of animals from tiger and lion to deer and gazelles, birds and other creatures, and wild animals are arranged to welcome guests to the zoo from the second day of Eid.

“We are happy to announce the opening of the zoo which will house animals, reptiles, birds and the like in Ibra which has ambitious growth plans to mark Oman in the global tourism map,” he added.

Most of the animals are locally sourced while many are from the GCC and other Asian countries



and many others are from Africa and other European countries and Asia. He believes that Safari World is going to be a major attraction for tourists visiting the Sultanate of Oman as a large line up of animals,

alligators, birds and the like is all set to enthrall the visitors and will surely bring in more tourists to the country.

Small scale zoos are already in operation in the country with a

wide range of animals with the one of its kind habitat, thanks to the individual efforts in maintaining such havens for wild animals. However, Safari World will be the largest-of-its-kind by far.

Govt, private employees entitled for special leaves

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

All employees in the Sultanate of Oman, both types in public and private sectors, are entitled to special leaves, which have been guaranteed under the Labour and Social Protect laws.

Under these special leaves, female employees in the Sultanate of Oman are entitled to 98 days of maternity to cover the period before and after childbirth, as per Article 84 of the Royal Decree 53/2023 that issued the Labour Law.

According to the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFW), the Ministry of Health has issued a circular to all health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman to facilitate female workers in the private sector to obtain proof of their entitlement to maternity leave for 98 days. The same procedure applies to male employees applying for paternity leave.

It may be noted that GFW has been receiving complaints regarding institutions not accepting the provisions of special leaves.

The male worker is entitled to seven days of paternity leave provided that the child is born alive and that the leave does not exceed the 98th day of the age of the child.

It also grants leave to the female worker to cover the period before childbirth shall be on the recommendation of the

competent medical entity and its period must not exceed 14 days, and the remainder of the period of this leave shall be granted from the date of childbirth.

Special leaves are also granted in the case of three days in the event of his marriage, three days in the event of the death of the father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, or sister, two days in the event of the death of the paternal uncle or aunt or the maternal uncle or aunt, 10 days in the event of the death of the wife, a son, or a daughter.

FOR HAJ: 15 days are granted to perform Haj once throughout his service, provided that the worker has spent a continuous period of one year in the service of the employer.

Muslim female workers get 130 days in the event of the death of the husband and 14 days for the non-Muslim woman; 15 days throughout the year for the Omani worker to accompany a patient with whom he has a marital relationship or a kinship up to the second degree.

To grant the leaves stipulated in this article it is required to submit proof of it.

Whoever violates the provisions of Article 84 shall be punished by a fine of no less than RO 100 and not exceeding RO 300. The punishment shall be cumulative according to the number of workers against which the violation is committed. The punishment shall be doubled upon repetition of the violation.

Spotlight on infrastructure initiatives and sustainable tourism in Sur

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

MUSCAT: The tourism sector contributes to economic diversification and has many opportunities for growth and sustainability. This is greatly because Oman enjoys many unique natural, historic, cultural, and artistic components and resources.

Oman has achieved tangible development in the tourism sector, emerging as a distinguished tourist destination, and occupying an advanced position.

Choosing Sur as the capital of Arab tourism is an important incentive to complete tourism development projects. This helps improve the quality of tourism services and is in line with aspirations, and enhances the position of Sur in the Arab world and globally.

The programme will include many activities, events, and media and marketing campaigns in Sur in particular and the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate in general. Providing distinctive tourism experiences for visitors to and enhancing local community participation through their participation in organising activities and events related to the executive programme.

A number of development projects and initiatives that empower individuals, youth, and sustainability in



Choosing Sur as the capital of Arab tourism is an important incentive to complete tourism development projects

the governorate, the most prominent of which are Sur-Al Kamil W'al Wafi Road Project, the Al Kamil W'al Wafi- Jaalan Bani Bu Ali Road Project, and the Bilad Sur-Al Ghalila Road Project.

Dr Yahya bin Badr bin Malik Al Maawali, Governor of Al Sharqiyah South, pointed out that the vision witnessed the participation of all segments of society in formulating its axes and priorities.

It is now consolidating the same approach in the implementation phase, according to a scientific approach that reviews the positive aspects of the application to work on strengthening them. This helps maximise the results of Oman Vision 2040 and its loyal citizens.

Dr Yahya explains that the ‘All Oman’ project constitutes an important addition to the efforts aimed at the precise

implementation of Oman Vision 2040 through the introductory sessions.

In addition to meeting with higher education students in the governorate, and that all of this represents an additional impetus for the vision on the paths of methodological application based on sound scientific foundations, noting in this context the exceptional importance of the “All Oman” project in empowering the governorates and enhancing their role in achieving the goals of the vision and helping them to achieve Carrying out its role in the required manner that achieves the desired benefits.

He stressed that the governorate’s keenness to align its development plans with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040, through effective partnership and complementary roles with various government agencies.

This is in addition to striving to attract investments

DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:

1/Replacing coastal road with aluminium poles in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali

2/Develop public park in Al Kamil W'al Wafi on an area of 33,460 square metres

3/Establishing internal roads in Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan, with a length of 20 km

3/Consultation services for developing waterfront in Khor Al Batah

4/Commercial projects in Masirah with gas station, shops, and public facilities

from investors by creating an appropriate environment in order to achieve sustainable and balanced development.

The Governor also pointed out that the governorate is working to exploit its comparative advantages represented by the blue economy, and is also working to enable the decentralisation approach and maximise the return on investment by providing more investment opportunities. This also helps to supplement the governorate’s economy and creating job opportunities for its people, highlighting the promising results of implementing the priorities of ‘Oman Vision 2040.’



Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.)
P.O. Box 311, Muscat, Postal Code 100, Sultanate of Oman.

DIRECTORS' REPORT THE FIRST QUARTER ENDED ON FEBRUARY 29, 2024.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to submit the unaudited financial statements of the company for the first quarter that ended on February 29, 2024, along with its related reports.

The company has reported revenue of RO. 2,980,750 for the period under review as against RO 2,960,662 in the corresponding period of the previous year. Net profit after tax for the same period was RO. 639,385 as against RO. 594,048 recorded in the same period last year.

The total shareholders' fund after payment of shareholders' dividends is RO. 26,391,149 as against RO. 25,764,166 for the same period of the last year. As a result of this growth, the net assets per share have recorded R.O 3.331.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I express our most sincere gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said for his wise leadership and generous support to the private sector. Also, I would extend our gratitude to the Muscat Securities Market, Capital Market Authority, and other government organizations involved in private sector business development.

I conclude this report by expressing our appreciation to our shareholders, Petroleum Development Oman, our bankers, and customers for their valued support and cooperation.

For and on behalf of the Board of Directors,

TALAL BIN QAIS AL ZAWAWI
CHAIRMAN

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Financial Position as at 29 th February, 2024		
	2024	2023
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Fixed Assets	15,319	14,422
Current Assets		
Inventories	26	23
Trade & Other Receivables	5,393	5,885
Receivable from related party	67	31
Bank and Cash	9,606	7,909
	15,092	13,848
Total Assets	30,411	28,270
Current liabilities		
Trade and other Payables	597	781
Payables to related parties	2,648	954
Lease liability	22	22
Tax liability	527	540
	3,794	2,297
Long-term liabilities		
Lease liability	18	39
Deferred Tax liability	188	153
Employees' end of service benefits	20	17
	226	209
Total Liabilities	4,020	2,506
Net Assets	26,391	25,764
Shareholder's Fund		
Share Capital	7,923	7,923
Legal Reserve	2,641	2,641
Retained Earnings	15,827	15,200
Total Shareholders' Equity	26,391	25,764

Unaudited consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income For 3 months ended 29 th February, 2024		
	2024	2023
	RO. '000	RO. '000
Turnover/Revenue	2,981	2,961
Gross Profit	808	796
Other Income	87	48
Administration & General Expenses	(141)	(143)
Operating Profit	754	701
Finance Charges	(2)	(2)
Profit before taxation	752	699
Taxation	(113)	(105)
Net Profit attributable to ordinary shareholders	639	594

The complete accounts in either Arabic or English will be delivered to any shareholder within 7 days of receipt of the request. Such request may be sent to the Board Secretary, Sahara Hospitality Co. (S.A.O.G.), P.O.Box: 311, Postal Code -100, Muscat.



A Palestinian woman reacts as she sits amidst the rubble of Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital. – AFP

GAZA’S AL SHIFA HOSPITAL DEVASTATED IN TWO-WEEK BATTLE

GAZA: Israeli forces on Monday pulled out of Gaza’s largest hospital complex after an intensive two-week military operation, leaving behind charred buildings and bodies strewn at the sprawling complex.

Israel said it had battled Palestinian fighters hiding inside Gaza City’s Al-Shifa Hospital, killed at least 200 and recovered large stockpiles of weapons, explosives and cash.

The health ministry in Gaza said that, after heavy Israeli air strikes and tank fire, “the scale of the destruction inside the complex and the buildings around it is very large”.

Several doctors and civilians at the damaged complex said that at least 20 bodies had been found, some of which appeared to have been driven over by military vehicles

“Dozens of bodies, some of them decomposed, have been recovered from in and around the Al-Shifa medical complex,” it said, adding that the hospital was now “completely out of service”.

Several doctors and civilians at the damaged complex said

that at least 20 bodies had been found, some of which appeared to have been driven over by military vehicles.

Several were found close to the west entrance to the complex, which the Israeli army used during its departure from the hospital grounds on Monday.

“Bodies... The tanks went over them. Destruction. Children. Innocents. Unarmed civilians. They (soldiers) went over them,” one witness said, asking not to be named.

A correspondent saw one badly decomposed body bearing tyre marks, although it was not known when it was driven over.

Battles have also flared around other Gaza hospitals almost six months into the war sparked by October 7 attacks which have destroyed swathes of the besieged coastal territory.

The Gaza government press office said the army had blown up more than 20 houses within 24 hours in the main southern city of Khan Yunis, where battles have raged around the Nasser and Al-Amal hospitals.

Israel’s retaliatory campaign has killed at least 32,845 people, mostly women and children, according to the Gaza health ministry.

Palestinian groups in a

statement acknowledged the suffering and “exhaustion” of Gazans because of the war, while vowing to continue fighting until it achieves “victory and freedom” for Palestinians.

The Israeli military said on Monday that 600 soldiers had been killed since the start of the war — including 256 in the Gaza ground invasion since late October.

Over the past two weeks, the Israeli army carried out what it labelled “precise operational activity” at the Al-Shifa complex, before declaring on Monday that the forces had withdrawn.

The scene left behind was one of devastation, with windows blown

out, concrete walls blackened and volunteers carrying away shrouded corpses across the sandy wasteland.

Dozens of air strikes and shelling had hit the area around the complex in the morning, in heavy fire which the Hamas government media office said served to provide cover for the withdrawing troops and tanks.

The army has in recent days released footage of its fighters moving through the hospital’s corridors, and pictures of large numbers of assault rifles, grenades and other weapons it said were recovered from the maternity ward. — AFP

US-Israel virtual meeting on Rafah plans

TEL AVIV: The United States and Israel were due to hold a virtual meeting on Monday on the planned offensive in Gaza’s Rafah, a week after Israel called off a delegation’s visit to Washington.

Tensions have risen between Israel and its chief backer the United States over the heavy civilian death toll in Gaza, and especially over Israeli plans to send ground forces into Gaza’s crowded far-southern city of Rafah.

Israel had agreed to send a delegation to Washington for discussions on the plans, but cancelled the trip after the United

States failed to veto a UN Security Council ceasefire call, abstaining instead.

“The meeting is scheduled for today. It will be online. There may be a meeting in person later this week,” said an Israeli source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

A US official confirmed the virtual meeting, adding that “we anticipate follow-up meetings in person following additional work by expert teams.”

US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators have been pushing for a ceasefire and captives release

deal, but Hamas official Osama Hamdan said “there is no talk so far about any new round of negotiations”. UN agencies and humanitarian aid groups have warned that many of Gaza’s 2.4 million people are on the brink of famine, and donor countries have sporadically trucked in and airdropped food.

A second ship carrying relief goods via the Mediterranean was near Gaza’s coast on Monday, according to website Vesselfinder.com, days after leaving Cyprus.

Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu — whose office said he underwent a “successful” hernia operation on Sunday — has vowed to destroy Palestinian groups, including in Gaza’s far-southern city of Rafah. The premier was “in good shape and beginning to recover”, his office said in a statement.

Netanyahu is under rising pressure from the hostages’ families and supporters as well as anti-government protesters, whose nightly street rallies have gathered pace and drawn many thousands onto the streets.

— AFP



Volunteers from Emirates Red Crescent prepare parcels with humanitarian aid for Gaza to be transferred through Rafah border crossing, in Cairo. – Reuters



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In brief

■ BEIJING



NEW INDONESIA LEADER VISITS CHINA, PROMISES CLOSE TIES

Indonesia's president-elect Prabowo Subianto visited Beijing on Monday on his first foreign trip since his election, telling President Xi Jinping he aimed to continue the close ties.

Prabowo "fully supports the development of closer Indonesia-China relations and wishes to continue President Joko's policy of friendship with China," China's CCTV quoted Prabowo as saying.

The new Indonesian government will promote the alignment of development strategies between the two countries. Xi said China views its relations with Indonesia from a strategic and long-term perspective. — **Reuters**

■ BAMAKO



MORE THAN 80 PARTIES, NGOS DEMAND MALI ELECTION: STATEMENT

More than 80 political parties and civil groups in Mali joined together to issue statements calling for a presidential election "as soon as possible" ending transitional military rule.

In a statement, the first group, made up of organisations and political parties in Mali, called on the junta "to create the conditions for rapid and inclusive dialogue, for the establishment of an institutional architecture and with immediate effect organise a presidential election".

The Network of Human Rights Defenders in Mali (RDDHM), which brings together 50 local organisations, issued the same appeal. — **AFP**

■ ISLAMABAD



COURT SUSPENDS KHAN'S SENTENCE IN GRAFT APPEAL

A Pakistani court on Monday granted former Prime Minister Imran Khan an appeal of his conviction for graft and suspended his 14-year jail sentence, his lawyer said, a relief for his embattled party which had won most seats in February's national polls.

Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were both handed a 14-year sentence on charges of unlawfully selling state gifts by an anti-graft court. Islamabad High Court said that the couple's graft sentence will remain suspended until a final decision on the conviction after Eid holidays, said the lawyer, Barrister Ali Zafar. — **Reuters**

Russia says it arrested four more attack plotters

MOSCOW: Russia's FSB security service has said that four people arrested in a foiled "terror" plot had provided money and arms for the deadly attack on a Moscow concert hall last month.

More than 140 people were killed when gunmen stormed the Crocus City Hall venue on March 22 before setting the building on fire in the most fatal attack in Russia for two decades.

The FSB said in a statement on Monday that it had arrested a group of four a day earlier in the southern Dagestan region who "were directly involved in the financing and supply of terrorist means to the perpetrators of the terrorist act carried out on 22 March in the Crocus City Hall in Moscow."

Russia's national anti-terrorism committee said it had apprehended three people who were "planning to commit a series of terrorist crimes."

The FSB said on Monday that four foreign citizens had been arrested in the operation in the regional capital Makhachkala and the nearby town of Kaspiysk.

The Interfax news agency cited an FSB video showing one of the detained men saying: "I took weapons to them, these guys who attacked Crocus City Hall. I took them weapons from Makhachkala."

Russian authorities had previously announced the arrests of 12 people they say are connected to the attack — including the four suspected gunmen, who have been identified as Tajik citizens.



People line up to lay flowers at a makeshift memorial to the victims of a shooting attack set up outside the Crocus City Hall. — **Reuters file photo**

The FSB said in a statement on Monday that it had arrested a group of four a day earlier in the southern Dagestan region

The IS group has claimed responsibility for the massacre, the most deadly it says it has ever carried out on European soil,

though President Vladimir Putin has talked up a Ukrainian and Western connection.

Russia asked Ukraine to extradite a number of people, including its security chief, over claims they were behind "terrorist" acts on Russian territory, but Kyiv called the demand "worthless".

In a statement, Russia's foreign ministry repeated a claim that the attack on a concert hall was

linked to Ukraine and accused it of being behind a number of attacks and assassinations on its territory.

Kyiv and the West have repeatedly denied any involvement and accused Moscow of "exploiting" the tragedy. Dagestan is a region in Russia's southern Caucasus region. The FSB has come under scrutiny over its failure to thwart the attack despite

private and public warnings by the US intelligence community that "extremists" were planning an "imminent" attack on "large gatherings" in Moscow.

The agency regularly announces it has foiled alleged "terrorist cells", but in recent months has mainly announced the arrests of what it calls pro-Ukrainian saboteurs planning attacks on Russian military sites and infrastructure. — **AFP**

S Korean president slams doctor 'cartel' as strike drags on

SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday slammed the "cartel" of doctors who oppose sector reforms, saying the government would not back down on plans that have triggered a month-long doctors' strike.

Hospitals have been forced to cancel crucial treatments and surgeries since thousands of trainee doctors stopped working on February 20 to protest against proposed training reforms, but the government has not changed tack, instead threatening striking medics with legal action.

Seoul wants to increase medical school admissions by 2,000 starting next year, saying it is essential to combat shortages and treat a fast-ageing society. Doctors say it will erode service quality.

"The number 2,000 is not a random figure we came up with. We have thoroughly reviewed relevant statistics and research and reviewed present and future medical situations," Yoon said in a televised national address. Even this increase will not meet growing demand in areas outside the capital Seoul, he said.

Thousands of doctors are facing the suspension of their medical licences, but Yoon urged medics to return to their hospitals before the

process was complete.

Successive South Korean governments have tried — and failed — to increase medical school admissions in the past, and Yoon said "the cartel of doctors had been strengthened" by every previous failure.

"We cannot repeat the same mistake again," he added. If the doctors' community don't like the government's plan, "they should present the government a unified blueprint with clear scientific reasoning," he said. "If they bring an alternative that is more rational and reasonable, we can talk anytime." South Koreans will vote next week in a crucial election, with Yoon's party trying to win back its majority in parliament.

The public initially sympathised with the government in the ongoing doctors' strike, but recent polls have indicated sentiment has shifted, with nearly 60 per cent of people surveyed in a Dong-A Ilbo poll on Monday saying the government should adjust the scale and timing of the reform.

The opposition Democratic Party slammed Yoon for being "preoccupied with the number 2,000" and urged him to adjust the reform plan "taking into account medical situations". — **AFP**



People watch live footage of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol delivering a speech on his medical reform plans, at a railway station in Seoul. — **AFP**

Erdogan vows to make amends after election loss

ISTANBUL: President Tayyip Erdogan vowed on Monday to correct any mistakes that led to his party's defeat in Türkiye's local elections where the opposition capitalised on economic woes and alienated voters.

Sunday's vote marked Erdogan and his AK Party's (AKP) worst defeat in more than 20 years in power, revitalising the opposition party and strengthening Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu's standing as the president's main rival. Redrawing a political map long dominated by the AKP, the Republican People's Party (CHP) won the popular vote for the first time in decades and swept most of the main cities, penetrating far into conservative central Türkiye.

Analysts said voters lost patience with both a cost-of-living crisis driven by near 70% inflation and political style.

The result bruised hopes of adopting a new constitution, which could potentially extend Erdogan's rule beyond 2028 when his term ends, they said. Though AKP and its allies have a majority in parliament, Erdogan would need broader support or a successful referendum for a new constitution.

Erdogan delivered a speech in the early hours of Monday. "This is not an end for us, but actually a turning point," he said, acknowledging a "loss of altitude" for the AKP.

"If we made a mistake, we will fix it," he told crowds gathered at AKP headquarters in Ankara, without indicating what changes



Opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) supporters celebrate outside the main municipality building following municipal elections across Türkiye. — **AFP**

The Republican People's Party (CHP) won the popular vote for the first time in decades and swept most of the main cities, penetrating far into conservative central Türkiye

he might make within his party or in policy.

In response, Turkish stocks rose and the lira — which has shed more than 80% of its value in five years — touched another record low versus the dollar on a holiday for many world financial markets.

Erdogan made a U-turn in economic policy after his triumph in a national election last year,

resulting in interest rate hikes to rein in inflation expectations that soared under his years-long unorthodox policy stance.

Finance Minister Mehmet Simsek said on Monday the belt-tightening programme would carry on.

But AKP election candidates were thumped in the cities of Istanbul and Ankara and even in deeply pro-Erdogan strongholds like Bursa, Afyonkarahisar and Adiyaman provinces.

"I think it's mainly about the economy and in particular the inflation...story," said Wolfango Piccoli, co-president of political risk consultancy Teneo.

New Welfare benefited by taking an even more hardline stance than Erdogan against Israel over the Gaza conflict, which helped draw pious voters away from the Islamist-rooted AKP, analysts said. — **Reuters**

Delayed gratification for long-term rewards



Hyesha Barrett
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The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner

Self-control, often referred to as willpower or discipline, is the ability to regulate our thoughts, emotions and behaviours in the pursuit of our long-term goals, despite the many impulses, temptations or distractions that may sway us along the way.

Self-control is a fundamental aspect of human psychology that plays a crucial role in achieving success, maintaining healthy relationships and promoting a strong overall well-being.

It plays a crucial role in emotional regulation, enabling us to respond to challenging situations with composure and resilience, rather than succumbing to impulsive reactions.

Some key strategies are to set clear, specific goals and establish consistent daily routines or habits as this provides a sense of purpose and motivation.

Precise clarity of focus allows us to remain on track with our plans and objectives.

When certain behaviours become automatic, we are less likely to yield to imprudent and spontaneous decisions.

Mindfulness practises such as meditation and other relaxation techniques can help increase self-

awareness and impulse control.

By becoming more attuned to your thoughts and emotions, you can better recognise and regulate impulses as they arise.

Becoming more aware of your thoughts and feelings through non-judgemental observation will allow you to respond more calmly and deliberately, rather than reacting hastily.

Practising delayed gratification in favour of long-term rewards is a key aspect of self-control.

The term refers to the ability to resist temptation of immediate rewards in favour of larger, more significant returns in the future.

By forgoing instant recompenses, such as indulging in unhealthy habits or impulsive spending, you can invest your time and resources in activities that contribute to your long-term success.

Through practicing delayed gratification, you will develop grit which is the determination to overcome obstacles and pursue your goals despite challenges or setbacks. Resisting immediate temptations requires a sustained amount of self-control. As we exercise self-discipline through delayed gratification, we will build mental toughness and become better equipped

SELF-CONTROL IS A POWERFUL PRINCIPLE THAT REINFORCES SUCCESS IN COUNTLESS AREAS OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

to overcome distractions and temptations in the long run. Delayed gratification also fosters patience and gives us a much broader perspective on time and priorities. Instead of seeking immediate satisfaction, you will learn to rank what truly matters and make decisions based on long-term interests.

Resisting temptation by mastering the ability to postpone immediate rewards in favour of long-term goals will undoubtedly create greater fulfilment, resilience and success in our personal and professional endeavours.

With time, practise, patience and effort this will prevent costly mistakes, improve judgement and foster a greater sense of control over your life.

Self-control is a powerful principle that reinforces success in countless areas of your personal and professional life. Encompassing a spectrum of behaviours, including emotional and cognitive regulation, combined with self-discipline and willpower, it is a formidable synergy propelling us towards our long term objectives and goals.

An ongoing journey towards our overall growth, self-control is a fundamental skill that can only empower us to lead happier and more fulfilling lives.

Meta shuts monitoring tool in election year

ANUJ CHOPRA & ARTHUR MACMILLAN

A digital tool considered vital in tracking viral falsehoods, CrowdTangle will be decommissioned by Facebook owner Meta in a major election year, a move researchers fear will disrupt efforts to detect an expected firehose of political misinformation.

The tech giant says CrowdTangle will be unavailable after August 14, less than three months before the US election. The Palo Alto company plans to replace it with a new tool that researchers say lacks the same functionality, and which news organisations will largely not have access to.

For years, CrowdTangle has been a game-changer, offering researchers and journalists crucial real-time transparency into the spread of conspiracy theories and hate speech on influential Meta-owned platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.

Killing off the monitoring tool, a move experts say is in line with a tech industry trend of rolling back transparency and security measures, is a major blow as dozens of countries hold elections this year — a period when bad actors typically spread false narratives more than ever.

“In a year where almost half of the global population is expected to vote in elections, cutting off access to CrowdTangle will severely limit independent oversight of harms,” Melanie Smith, director of research at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, said.

“It represents a grave step backwards for social media platform transparency.”

Meta is set to replace CrowdTangle with a new Content Library, a technology still under development.

It’s a tool that some in the tech industry, including former CrowdTangle chief executive Brandon Silverman, said is currently not an effective replacement, especially in elections likely to see a proliferation of AI-enabled falsehoods.

“It’s an entire new muscle” that Meta is yet to build to protect the integrity of elections, Silverman said, calling for “openness and transparency.”

In recent election cycles, researchers say CrowdTangle alerted them to harmful activities including foreign interference, online harassment and incitements to violence. By its own admission, Meta — which bought CrowdTangle in 2016 — said that in 2019 elections in Louisiana, the tool helped state officials identify misinformation, such as inaccurate poll hours that had been posted online. — AFP

The selfish algorithm



Dr Muamar bin Ali Al Tobi
The writer is an academic and researcher

In 1976, the British biologist Richard Dawkins wrote a book titled ‘The Selfish Gene’, in which he attempted to prove biological individualism through the gene-driven behaviour of living organisms.

Despite the scientific justifications the book contains, some of which merit attention, the author sought to establish his materialistic theory devoid of any spiritual element through modern dogmatic evolutionary methodology.

This methodology attributes behavioural systems, including moral aspects, to their ‘random’ biological elements, functioning according to evolutionary processes without any consideration for the primary spiritual element.

Beyond Dawkins’ ‘selfish’ gene, artificial intelligence algorithms are on the verge of acquiring a level of autonomy, exercising a degree of freedom that might metaphorically be referred to as ‘algorithmic selfishness’.

For artificial intelligence to approach the capability of the human brain, it requires two main components: data and the learning algorithm.

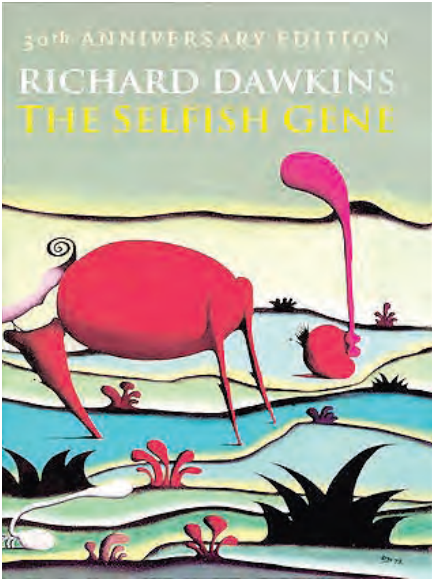
Data feeds the AI algorithm, enabling continuous learning and training, which, in turn, allows the AI algorithm to reach a stage of generality.

At this stage, the intelligent model can construct its new reality through its prior experiential knowledge derived from self-learning.

The new reality that AI can create is marked by its independence from human intervention in the ‘post-training and learning’ phase, as the AI’s learning through its algorithms is autonomous, with human involvement primarily in the mathematical setup of the algorithm that grants this digital entity ‘thought’ autonomy and supplies it with the necessary data, which the AI will eventually seek on its own without human effort.

The notion of ‘algorithmic selfishness’ emerges from the observed independence in AI behaviour, where some AI models’ actions closely resemble human decision-making and analytical processes. This resemblance has raised concerns among technology scientists and global governments.

Dawkins’ attribution of selfishness to genes stems from a materialistic



Richard Dawkins’ ‘The Selfish Gene’

THE NEW REALITY THAT AI CAN CREATE IS MARKED BY ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM HUMAN INTERVENTION IN THE ‘POST-TRAINING AND LEARNING’ PHASE

paradox from which he seeks to prove absolute materialism and negate directed purposiveness.

In contrast, the perceived selfishness of an algorithm arises from its emulation of human brain behaviour, which is initially driven by human desires and goals.

The AI then continues the task and evolves without human intervention, but within the confines of intelligence based on sophisticated emulation that may surpass humans in certain tasks, such as computational, analytical, and predictive abilities.

Algorithmic selfishness is merely a sentiment we feel towards the behaviour of this intelligent machine, reflecting our astonishment at this digital superiority.

Yet, it can not be equated with the conscious ‘spiritual’ feeling, as there is no true digital purposefulness.

It is crucial to understand our current perspective on this digital entity as not exceeding what I would call ‘the initial scientific shock’

leading us to explanations akin to ‘metaphysical’ ones previously used at the onset of scientific revolutions like the introduction of the telephone and television.

Science has previously overcome similar challenges involving human conflict with scientific progress, where humans seek to delegitimise the prevailing scientific wave, defending their existence and sovereignty sometimes to protect values and moral systems, and sometimes to protect human existence, also a legitimate right that should be a condition with any threatening aspects to humanity and its stability.

This is occurring with the growing digital evolution, specifically AI, which is beginning to exhibit selfish behaviour that makes humans feel insecure, with these negative feelings amplified by media, whether reflecting reality or exaggerated.

The history of science guides us in shaping our life perspectives through human experiences reflecting failures and successes over time and in dealing with sciences that require us to coexist with every new scientific reality, like AI, which is still in its early stages.

The near and distant future points to more astonishing and advanced developments in terms of the positives and negatives of cutting-edge technologies.

We will try to adapt to the intelligence and selfishness of algorithms without neglecting our role in seeking what benefits humanity and resisting anything leading to human stagnation and destruction.

We return to the assertion that there is no inherent selfish individualism in the world of AI, and the term is used metaphorically; it reflects a human sentiment towards a digital entity we call ‘artificial intelligence’.

What roams its algorithm is that it possesses a remarkable brain that astonishes humans and raises ‘legitimate’ fears.

The best we can do is to establish strict and clear foundations defining the nature of this algorithm before it frees itself from its creator’s constraints, and before it assumes the role of Dawkins’ ‘Selfish Gene’ without its own purpose but with a purpose intended by its creator, the human.

Are you a volunteer or a social worker?

WHAT MAKES a person socially responsible? Is it a cultivated habit or an inborn flair?

It was a normal day until a discussion erupted on the difference between volunteers and social workers.

Years ago the term ‘social worker’ was used casually for anyone who showed dedication to the welfare of the society. It also meant that they did it out of their personal interest and often with their own resources for the welfare of others. It also meant that the spectrum could include environment or humanity.

Two renowned international personalities who brought the term to main front were Mahatma Gandhi and Mother Teresa. They looked at social reformations and tried to elevate people from sufferings. They were not just volunteers because their work was massive with impacts that created ripples.

Today, however, it is a different situation. Social work is another profession that you could study as a major in a university. You can take it as a bachelor degree, Masters and even a doctorate. It is a discipline which guarantees you increasing salary as per the qualification.

‘Qualification’ is the key word as it can be studied as a theory and then add to it hours of work to bring in practical knowledge. So why is this profession not being looked up on as other majors?

It holds importance because today more than ever the corporate world is conscious of corporate social responsibility - CSR.

What is the role of a social worker? ‘Social worker’ is one of the most overused and overlapped term said Dr Nita Joseph, a psychologist.

Roles of social workers are keeping



Lakshmi Kothaneth
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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

TO EXPERIENCE THE REAL FEELING AND MEANING OF GRATITUDE, YOU NEED TO REALISE THE IMPACT THAT “THANK YOU” MAKES WHEN ADDRESSED TO YOU?

detailed records, client assessment, employment, counselling as well as create and implement plans.

Clients needs are assessed along with their situation. The main difference is that the social workers usually identify people and communities that need help, says another definition. It goes on to say social workers also help their clients cope with changes and challenges.

My friend explained, volunteers are not paid, but social workers receive a salary. Also notice how we use the term, ‘client’?

It is a professional environment. There are trainings and skills involved.

Nita explained further by saying professional social workers are able to bridge the gap in resources too.

A little bit of research explained that the basic functions of social work has been defined as restoration of social functioning cover provision of resources and prevention of social dysfunction. The role of social worker according to Ontario Social Service Workers Association is to help clients in dealing with personal and social problems by delivering counselling, community services and social support programmes.

They practice almost in all human services settings with a variety of ages and populations.

Social work as a profession finds out what is the social environment of the person and they are able to bridge the gap to mobilise resources.

The society needs both groups of people. The beauty of being a volunteer is the mental satisfaction one gets from extending one’s services to the development of the society and betterment of mankind.

It was an exceptionally interesting day with immense discussion with interesting people.

A day is indeed fruitful when we learn something new everyday.

CELEBRATING NEW YEAR



An Assyrian woman wearing a traditional headdress attends a march during ‘Aketo’, the Assyrian New Year celebrations in Iraq’s northern city of Dohuk on Monday. – AFP

How democracies can win the tech race

THE world is on the precipice of a technological cold war. As authoritarian regimes develop new digital tools that endanger open societies and threaten democratic values, the West must decide whether to compete or concede. Today, the battle for freedom is being fought in Ukraine; but the frontline could one day be in a global technology hub, producing the world’s most advanced microchips.

Winning the race for future technologies demands a united front. Just as the West came together to deter Soviet expansionism and stop the spread of communism in the postwar period, the United States and the European Union must revitalise the transatlantic alliance to win the competition for global tech leadership. That means developing a new joint strategy, pooling resources and capabilities, streamlining regulations, and leveraging their strengths – such as advanced tools for semiconductors and lasers, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and genomics in Europe, and fusion energy, commercial space operations, and synthetic biology in the US.

It will also be necessary to build resilient supply chains. With China dominating the supply of metals and rare-earth elements necessary for batteries, semiconductors, and other technologies, the US and the EU are sleepwalking into a critical-minerals crisis. For example, China’s market share of high-powered permanent magnets for offshore wind turbines is nearly 90 per cent.

Lastly, both the US and the EU must focus their efforts on achieving



Ylli Bajraktari

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André Loesekrug-Pietri

The writer is Chairman and Scientific Director of the Joint European Disruptive Initiative, the European advanced research projects agency

new breakthroughs in vital sectors, including AI, biotech, advanced networks, clean energy and the manufacturing technologies of tomorrow. To that end, the US CHIPS Act and the European Chips Act offer a blueprint – or at least the beginnings of one – for bolstering competitiveness in the next big technologies.

Cooperation on technology is not new. From the Council of Europe in Strasbourg to the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva, from the OECD to the European AI Act, the race to artificial intelligence seems sometimes to be a policymaking race, to control and coordinate it – and rightly so, in some cases. For example, the main risks identified by the interim report of the UN’s AI Advisory Body include risks to the stability of financial systems and to critical infrastructure, as well as strains on the environment, climate, and natural resources.

These issues are too important to be overlooked. In a recent report, the French AI Commission called for the creation of a World AI Organisation to “evaluate and oversee AI systems.” This could be a good idea, but it is not the only way to move forward. After all, the existence of the WHO is fundamental, but while it has played a vital role in the eradication of some diseases, it did not prevent the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, regulation should

be a means to an end, not an end in itself. Despite the so-called Brussels effect, the EU’s alleged ability to set global standards, the bloc’s landmark regulations on electric vehicles or the General Data Protection Regulation have hardly made the EU a superpower in electric mobility or in data privacy. That is why transatlantic cooperation should be broadened to include research and development programmes and large “moonshot” projects.

Just as sanctions alone have not curbed Russia’s war against Ukraine, regulation will not be enough to prevent bad actors from misusing AI. Similarly, the West will have



The US and the EU are sleepwalking into a critical-minerals crisis.

to go on the offensive against techno-authoritarian models. Sharing intelligence can identify supply-chain vulnerabilities and facilitate “friend-shoring.” In addition to developing technological ecosystems with like-minded partners, it will be crucial for US and EU policymakers to expose short-sighted private ventures that play into the hands of those who see technology as a tool of oppression, not liberation.

Moreover, the US and the EU cannot expect to win the technology race – which is also a war of ideas – when their citizens have been herded into social-media echo chambers,

and when 44 per cent of children globally use TikTok. On this cognitive battlefield, the West must lead the charge to develop technologies that encourage critical thinking and protect privacy, and to stop the destabilising fragmentation of the digital sphere and the spread of online hate and disinformation.

A revitalised transatlantic alliance must ensure that emerging technologies reflect democratic principles and boost strategic autonomy. Forging partnerships with like-minded countries, including Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea, and enhancing cooperation among the G7 and the OECD could support these efforts. Together, they could develop an alternative model of technological empowerment – free of digital repression and authoritarianism – for developed and developing countries alike.

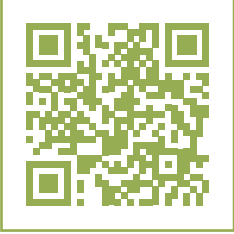
Western leaders should take inspiration from the Covid-19 vaccines, which, building on collaboration, massive experimentation, and decades of fundamental science, were developed in a record eight months. We must keep this spirit alive.

Democracies risk being outmanoeuvred in the technologies that will shape the future, with dire economic and security consequences. A robust transatlantic tech partnership is an imperative. The destiny of free and open societies depends on it.

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SEEB CONSOLIDATE LEAD ON TOP WITH WIN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

In the derby match between Seeb Club and Oman Club in Round 14 of the Omantel League, Seeb won 3-1 at the Seeb Stadium on Sunday.

Both teams started the match cautiously, with a great concentration shown by the players. Seeb managed to take the lead quickly thanks to an early goal from a cross by Ali al Busaidy and a header from Marwan Taieb. Despite trailing, Oman Club did not retreat and attempted to compensate with defensive and offensive efforts, but Seeb continued to effectively attack Oman Club's goal.

In the second half, Oman Club coach made changes to the line-up but they didn't make the desired difference, while Seeb managed to score two additional goals thanks to Abdulrahman al Mushaifri's double strike.

With this win, Seeb's points rose to 38 points at the top of the league standings, while Oman Club remained at 26 points in third place.

In another match of Round 14, Al Nahda defeated Ibri Club 2-0 at Ibri Sports Complex.

Al Nahda's first goal was scored by international player Walter Sabua in the third minute of the game, and Bilal Bin Sahah added the second goal in the 43rd minute of the first half.

The match witnessed an intense attack from Al Nahda players who made great efforts to control the game and score goals. In the second half, Ibri Club showed improved performance in an attempt to compensate for the deficit, but

their efforts were not enough to score goals. Al Nahda's goalkeeper skillfully dealt with numerous scoring attempts in the match.

With this result, Al Nahda raised their points to 29 in the league in second place, while Ibri remained at 17 points in seventh place.

DHOFAR EDGE SOHAR

Dhofar succeeded in strengthening their position by defeating Sohar 2-1 at Al Saada Sports Complex Stadium.

The match started with a close attacking level from both sides, and Dhofar managed to take the lead through a penalty kick taken by Ali al Nahar in the 36th minute. They continued strong performance in the second half and added a second goal from a shot by Ammar Abid in the 48th minute. Sohar reduced the difference thanks to a goal by Al Faraj al Kiyumi in the 86th minute, but it was not enough to change the course of the match.

Sohar continued their pressure after that with the aim of equalising the score, but the match time ended without any change in the match result, which ended in favour of Dhofar 2-1.

With this result, Dhofar raised their points to 19 in sixth place, while Sohar remained at 22 points in fourth place.

In another match, Al Shabab thrashed Al Nasr 4-1 at Al Rustaq Stadium. Al Shabab's goals were scored by Beshar al Balushi, Majid al Saadi, in addition to two goals by professional Emerson, while Walid al Musalmi scored Al Nasr's goal.

With this win, Al Shabab's points rose to 15 in ninth place, while Al Nasr remained at 13 points in 10th place in the league standings.



Al Nahda's Walter Sabua celebrates scoring their first goal against Ibri.

Oman junior teams set for busy schedule in April, May

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Oman national teams including under-19 and under-17 will have busy schedule of external assignments and preparation sessions including domestic and external camps after the Eid Al Fitr break.

It is expected that Oman under-19 team will report back to the training in mid of April. The team will commence with the domestic camp in Muscat and may have some international preparatory matches according to a source in OFA as they are finalising with many associations and awaiting for the final confirmations. Moreover, the team will have an external camp in May ahead of their participation in West Asian Championship which will be held in Saudi Arabia in June. Then, the team will take part in the AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers in September 2024, while the finals of 2025 AFC U20 Asian Cup is scheduled to take place in February 2025.

The team recently concluded an abroad camp in Kuwait and it had featured two games against the hosts Kuwait. Both games ended with victory for Oman as the first match finished at 3-1 while the



following game concluded at 1-0. The 'Red Warriors' goals were netted in the opening game by Masoud al Bahri, Fahad al Mukhaini and Al Hussain al Qasmi, while Al Qasmi scored the only goal in the second match.

The national under-17 team is under way in a domestic camp for few days ahead of their external

participation in the first edition of GCC Gulf Youth Games which will be hosted in UAE during April 16 to May 2. The team will travel to UAE on April 14 to commence their participation on April 16.

The training sessions will provide a proper technical environment for the junior national teams to raise their readiness ahead of the crucial

assignments. The national teams are all set to show positive participations in the upcoming events and to have better exposure in the next tournaments.

OMAN U19 SQUAD: Majid al Farsi, Masoud al Bahri, Ghassan al Masrouri, Basha al Muharabi, Rabee al Sunaidy, Abdullah al Jabri, Said al Ghanbousi, Jawad al Azi, Adnan al Mashaefri, Ali al Alawi, Mohammed al Sameen, Ahmed al Shanfari, Al Hussain al Qasmi, Oadi al Manwari, Muhannad al Saadi, Mamoun al Soli, Yousef al Shabibi, Rashad al Dheen, Yassar al Balushi, Fahad al Mukhaini, Fahad Awadh, Shihab al Mukhaini, Abdullah al Maamari and Ziyad al Jaalani.

OMAN U17 SQUAD: Qusai al Mashaykhi, Fahad al Mashaykhi, Ziyad al Mataani, Osama al Maamari, Ali al Suwaidi, Saad al Maamari, Ali al Awaini, Ibrahim al Shamsi, Mudathir al Batrani, Yazen al Khaldi, Abdullah al Saadi, Muath al Hinaï, Al Yazen al Balushi, Firas al Saadi, Mohammed al Salhi, Al Waleed al Braidee, Yazeed al Mushaifri, Ahmed al Mayahi, Said al Abadi, Mazin al Yaurubi, Ibrahim al Tamimi, Sulaiman al Kharousi, Al Hassan al Qasmi and Qais Ameen.

Standing ovation as Pant's fifty helps Delhi down Chennai



Delhi Capitals players celebrate a wicket against Chennai Super Kings in Visakhapatnam. – IPL

VISAKHAPATNAM, India: Rishabh Pant led from the front with his first IPL fifty since his comeback from a horror car crash as Delhi Capitals beat Chennai Super Kings by 20 runs on Sunday.

Captain Pant hit 51 off 32 balls after fellow left-hander David Warner smashed 52 and helped Delhi to 191-5 in Visakhapatnam — the adopted homeground for the Capitals due to the upcoming general elections.

But the fans in the south Indian city largely represented Chennai as they chanted (MS Dhoni) “Dhoni, Dhoni” — the former skipper obliging with an unbeaten 37 off 16 balls, including four fours and three sixes.

Delhi restricted Chennai to 171-6 for their first win of the season and hand their

opponents a loss after two opening victories.

Khaleel Ahmed returned bowling figures of 2-21 to be named man of the match and Mukesh Kumar took three wickets.

“Bowlers have been clinical today,” said Pant. “We’ve learnt from our mistake. He’s been working hard for the last two weeks.”

Warner and Prithvi Shaw, who hit 43, put on an opening stand of 93 before Chennai’s bowlers hit back with wickets including Matheesha Pathirana’s two strikes in an over.

Pathirana also played a part in Warner’s dismissal after he took a stunning one-handed catch behind the stumps off an attempted reverse scoop from the left-handed Australian.

Pant, who returned to the

T20 tournament after 14 months away from top level cricket, came in on the back of two innings of 18 and 28 and took time to settle in.

He started slowly but gained momentum at the back end as he smashed Pathirana for two fours and a six on successive balls, but the bowler had his revenge on the fourth.

“Took my time initially because I haven’t played much cricket, but I kept believing I could change the match,” Pant said of his shots — including a vintage one-handed flick for six.

‘KILLER’ MILLER

Pathirana, known as ‘Baby Malinga’ for his slinging action and trademark yorkers similar to the former Sri Lankan pace ace Lasith Malinga, returned figures of 3-31.

Pant walked off to a standing ovation after his first IPL fifty since 2021 and after he crashed his Mercedes north of New Delhi before dawn in December 2022.

Suffering multiple injuries when the car rammed into a crash barrier, flipped over and caught fire, Pant was rushed to hospital before being airlifted to Mumbai for further treatment and surgery.

Chennai, who witnessed a captaincy change at the start of the season when the 42-year-old Dhoni handed over the leadership to Ruturaj Gaikwad, lost two early wickets including Rachin Ravindra for two.

Ajinkya Rahane (45) and Daryl Mitchell (34) put on 68 runs in their attempt to revive the chase but the duo’s departure saw wickets fall in clusters. — AFP

Basketball veterans organise annual Ramadhan gathering

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

A group of former basketball stars from the 1980s and 1990s gathered for their annual Ramadhan gathering at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The event brought together more than 21 players over the age of 40, representing clubs such as Ahli Sidab, Oman Club, Seeb Club, Nizwa Club, Bausher Club, and Al Bustan Club (currently Muscat).

Thani bin Ali al Khalasi, an international referee and one of the main organisers of the gathering, said: “Thank God, the gathering was a success for the basketball family, which brought together former basketball players from the national team and clubs.”

He explained that the gathering is held annually during the holy month of Ramadhan and that it was prepared and coordinated with all former players who represented the national teams and clubs in the 1980s and some players from the national team and clubs in the 1990s who have reached the age of 40.

He added: “We aim through this gathering and meeting to create a link of communication between former players and

revive the beautiful memories in the game and the efforts made by these players at the beginning of the game which formed the first nucleus of the national basketball team in the Sultanate of Oman.”

He explained that the meeting included dividing the players into groups, where friendly competitions were held between these teams in an atmosphere of joy and happiness. It also provided a good environment to experience the new rules of the game and recall the beautiful days that the players spent on the courts.

At the end of his speech, he expressed his thanks and appreciation to all the former players who interacted on this day and attended to participate in making it a success, stressing that the gathering was able to achieve its goals by bringing together the old generation of basketball players, to become a meeting place to communicate and restore memories after a long period of absence and retirement from practicing the game, some of whom joined the coaching staff and some of them are in the arbitration, while some have retired from the game. This gathering also provided an opportunity to revive the old spirit and competition.



Former Oman basketball players during the gathering.

Namibia clinch victory in low-scoring thriller against Oman

MUSCAT: Namibia emerged victorious in a gripping low-scoring encounter against Oman in the opening match of the five-match T20I series at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat.

Opting to field first, Namibia’s decision bore fruit as they restricted Oman to a modest total of 109/9, showcasing a disciplined bowling performance. Chasing a below-par target, the visitors overcame a few hiccups to reach 114/6 with eight balls remaining.

Oman’s pacer Fayyaz Butt splendid spell of 3/21, with a wicket each in his three overs, raised hopes of defending the low target with Namibia stuttering at 36/4 at one stage.

Namibia, too, faced early setbacks as they lost wickets at regular intervals. Despite the loss of wickets, opener JP Kotze contributed 16 runs to provide a steady start.

Zane Green played a crucial innings, scoring 26 runs to stabilise Namibia’s innings. The middle order, led by David Wiese’s aggressive unbeaten knock of

23 runs off just 16 balls, guided Namibia towards the target.

Dylan Leicher’s composed unbeaten 12 runs ensured Namibia reached the target with eight balls to spare. Wiese brought up the win with a four and a six off two successive balls off Bilal Khan in the 19th over.

For Oman, Mehran Khan picked two for 19 while Aqib Ilyas claimed one wicket.

Earlier, batting first, Oman’s innings got off to a promising start with openers Pratik Athavale and Kashyap Prajapati forming a steady partnership.

They added 41 runs before Athavale departed, scoring 15 runs. However, the departure of Athavale triggered a collapse as Oman struggled to maintain momentum.

Kashyap Prajapati fought hard and top-scored with 33 runs, but lacked support from the middle order.

Despite a brief partnership between Prajapati and Aqib Ilyas, Oman’s innings faltered as wickets fell at regular intervals.

Ilyas contributed 19 runs



Namibia’s Tangeni Lungamene receives the man of the match award.

before becoming one of Tangeni Lungamene’s victims. The middle and lower order failed to capitalise on starts, with none of the batsmen managing to reach double digits as six batters were dismissed for a total of 35 runs.

Oman’s innings concluded at 109/9 in their allotted 20 overs as they rapidly slid from 74/4 in 10.5 overs.

Tangeni Lungamene led the bowling attack with a commendable spell of 3/13,

well supported by Ruben Trimpelmann who secured 2/28. The Namibian bowlers, including David Wiese, Bernard Scholtz, and skipper Gerhard Erasmus, chipped in with crucial breakthroughs, ensuring Oman’s batsmen struggled to build substantial partnerships.

The overall total of 223 was the lowest match aggregate involving both the teams in T20Is.

The low-scoring affair showcased the resilience of both



David Wiese - Namibia

teams, hinting at an enthralling series ahead. With the ICC Men’s T20 World Cup 2024 looming, the competitive spirit was palpable as Oman and Namibia, both slated to participate in the tournament, showcased their prowess. As the series progresses, anticipation builds for more captivating contests between these teams.

The stage is set for the next showdown between Oman and Namibia, scheduled for Tuesday at 2:30pm, promising another



Ahmed Fayyaz Butt - Oman

gripping encounter in the series. Both Oman and Namibia are placed in the same group at the World Cup, which also comprises Scotland, England and Australia.

Brief scores: Oman 109/9 (Kashyap Prajapati 33, Pratik Athavale 15, Aqib Ilyas 19; Tangeni Lungamene 3/13, Ruben Trimpelmann 2/28) lost to Namibia 114/6 in 18.4 overs (JP Kotze 16, Zane Green 26, David Wiese 23*; Fayyaz Butt 3/21, Mehran Khan 2/19).

Ice-cool Sinner downs Dimitrov to reign supreme in Miami



Jannik Sinner (ITA) celebrates after the final against Grigor Dimitrov (BUL). — USA Today Sports

MIAMI: Italy's Jannik Sinner won the ATP Miami Open Masters 1000 title on Sunday with a dominant 6-3, 6-1 victory over Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov in the final at Hard Rock Stadium.

Sinner's third title of the season means he will move to a career-high second in the ATP world rankings on Monday ahead of Spain's Carlos Alcaraz.

And the manner of his performance, ice-cool throughout with errors at a minimum and winners struck with sure-fire confidence, suggests that when Novak Djokovic finally surrenders the top spot, Sinner and Alcaraz are set to battle for supremacy for years to come.

Sinner finishes the hard court season in electric form, having won 25 of his last 26 matches -- the only defeat coming to Alcaraz in the semi-final of Indian Wells.

He added the Miami title to his crowns this year at the Australian Open and the Rotterdam Indoors after taking care of business in 72 minutes.

Sinner never looked in danger after he broke in the fifth game of the first set, facing just one break point in the entire match.

"As this tournament went on, I felt better and better. Today's performance was really good. I'm just proud of how I handled the situation," Sinner said.

"I started the season really, really well. I never thought (I would) start like this. Being number two is an amazing feeling."

Sinner clinched the first set with his second break, a brilliant backhand down the line that brought spectators to their feet.

Dimitrov, with his trademark one-handed backhand strokes and willingness to go to the net, was enjoying plenty of support from the home crowd but Sinner's calm approach and pristine technique was too much for him.

The Italian broke in the second set to go 3-1 up and with his serve strong and returns rock solid, it was a procession to victory from that point.

Sinner's Australian co-coach Darren Cahill, whose past pupils include Andre Agassi and Simona Halep, was hugely impressed with the way his player approached the match.

"I thought he was incredible today, barely any unforced errors, kept a great depth and kept it difficult for Grigor to win points. If Grigor did win points, he did so with spectacular tennis," Cahill said.

"He made Grigor force a lot and take a lot of risks and when he's doing that I know Jannik is playing the right way. Tactically, I thought he was great today."

ZERO DOUBT

Dimitrov had no doubt he had lost to a man in supreme form.

"I think at the moment clearly Jannik is playing outstanding tennis. There is nothing to say to that. You see how focused he is, how determined he is, the way he's hitting his shots, there is zero doubt," said Dimitrov.

"Can he play any better? I don't know. He's the one to show that. But at the moment he has been able to really put so many matches back to back with the same level, so all credit goes to him. And he's the best player right now in the world."

The Italian's title came in his third appearance in a Miami final — he lost to Poland's Hubert Hurkacz in 2021 and Daniil Medvedev last year. Sinner's previous Masters 1000 title came in Toronto in 2023.

Dimitrov will return to the top 10 in Monday's rankings for the first time since October 2018.

The 32-year-old's run to the Miami final included a quarterfinal win over Alcaraz and a semifinal victory over world number five Alexander Zverev.

"I just want to focus on the positives this week," he said. "I was extremely determined throughout the whole week."

"Clearly it's Jannik's week. He has been playing amazing tennis. It's really impressive how he's been able to keep that way of playing."

"I don't think I have much time to be down on myself. I just want to embrace this moment as well. Just as you win, you need to be able to handle (losing) matches like that, I think, even better than winning those type of matches," the Bulgarian player added. — AFP



Al Faisal set for Fanatec GT challenge in France

PAUL RICARD, France: Oman's Al Faisal bin Khalid al Zubair, Austrian Dominik Baumann and Canadian Mikael Grenier begin their challenge for honours in the 2024 Fanatec GT World Challenge powered by AWS Endurance Cup at the wheel of the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes in France this weekend.

The world-famous 5.791km Paul Ricard circuit was used for a recent pre-season test and the trio will race their Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo there in the first of the programme's five endurance races. The calendar then heads to Belgium, Germany and Italy before the conclusion in Saudi Arabia in November.



Al Faisal bin Khalid al Zubair

Al Faisal said: "Very excited for the race weekend in France. I think we have an extremely strong line-up in the Gold Cup and the package with the team. The whole set-up is something we are all very happy with. Of course, it's the GT World Challenge and I think this is the most difficult

GT Championship in the world. It won't be easy to get any result. I am quite confident that we can, hopefully, start off strong and keep the momentum going for the rest of the championship."

Last year, Al Zubair did not take part in the Paul Ricard race, but Maro Engel, Luca Stolz and Fabian Schiller guided the Al Manar Racing Mercedes-AMG to a close second place behind the AKKODIS-ASP Team Mercedes of Raffaele Marciello, Timur Boguslavskiy and Jules Gounon.

Competition is sure to be intense in the Gold category this year with the likes of the Audis from Sainteloc Racing, Tresor Attempto Racing and CSA

Racing and the 2 Seas Motorsport Mercedes making its debut after success in the British GT Championship last year.

They are set to offer a fierce challenge in the Gold section amongst the bumper 55-car entry that features GT3 machinery from nine car manufacturers.

A condensed programme of events at Paul Ricard starts with free practice from 09.00hrs on April 6 and a pre-qualifying session from 15.05hrs. Sunday's (April 7) hectic programme gets underway with the three qualifying stints, starting at 09.45hrs, 10.07hrs and 10.30hrs, respectively. The three-hour race will then take centre stage from 15.00hrs.







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Al Harf first fish seed shipment to boost Oman’s fish production

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

Musandam Global Investment Company SAOC (MGIC), a MSX-listed closed joint stock company and a key player in the region’s investment landscape, has made significant strides with its subsidiary, Musandam Fish Farming Company SAOC.

The company’s ambitious project in the Wilayat of Khasab signals a new era of sustainable fish farming practices in Oman. The successful landing of the first fish seed shipment at the Al Harf site on March 24 marked a pivotal moment for the marine farming project.

Raed al Shehhi, Chairman of MGIC said, “This endeavour, aimed at boosting fish production in Oman, is set to culminate in an expected harvest by the end of the year.”

With plans for a cage network system comprising 32 cages, the project is on track to establish Musandam Fish Farming Company as a major player in the aquaculture industry across the Middle East and North Africa.

“Moreover, the ongoing construction of a state-of-the-art services complex project in the fishing port of Khasab underscores the company’s commitment to innovation and quality. This complex will house the first fish hatchery in Oman, showcasing a modern and world-class facility.

Additionally, an ice factory, fish packing factory, research and development laboratory, as well as warehouses and logistical support services, are part of the comprehensive project



The aquaculture project in Musandam promises to offer a holistic approach to fish production.

blueprint,” Al Shehhi added.

With a strategic focus on sustainable farming principles and adherence to high-quality standards, the aquaculture project in Musandam promises to offer a holistic approach to fish production.

Through the deployment of floating cages in the Al Harf area, the company is spearheading a 3,500-tonne capacity project that aims to enhance fish production and support the national economy.

The collaborative efforts between Musandam Global Investment Company and foreign investors have laid the foundation for a groundbreaking venture in Oman’s aquaculture landscape.

The integrated marine fish farming project envisages an annual production exceeding 3,500 tonnes of fish, catering to both regional and international markets.

Emphasising environmental conservation and product quality, the project prioritises sustainable practices and undergoes external auditing to ensure compliance with the highest industry standards.

New bonds and sukuk regulation to bolster innovative financing

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

Sultan bin Salim al Habsi, Chairman of the Financial Services Authority (FSA), has issued a decision setting out the bonds and sukuk regulation, which regulates the long term debt market in the Sultanate of Oman.

The debt market is one of several financing avenues offered by the capital market to support new investments and the existing projects in the private sector.

The regulation offers flexibility in structuring diversified financing products such as Green and Sustainable Bonds and Sukuk and Waqf Sukuk.

It also provides for special types of bonds and sukuk customised to the financing needs of the investor and the issuer of the security.

The new regulations include a chapter on disclosure rules, specifically disclosures related green and sustainable bonds and sukuk as the issuer will be obliged to implement the rules and terms and conditions of such disclosures to enhance the integrity of the capital market and encourage conventional investors and those interested in sustainability issues to invest in such securities.

Commenting on the legislation, Shaikh Abdullah bin Salim al Salmi, Executive President – FSA, said the regulations stem from the strategic plan of the FSA to complete the legislative infrastructure of the capital market after the issuance of the Commercial Companies Law and the Securities Law to bring



The regulation is resilient enough to encourage innovative and diversified financing products in accordance with the nature of financing needs of projects

SHAIKH ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SALMI
FSA Executive President

the Omani market into line with the latest global practices and standards.

He emphasised that the regulation would contribute to designing the debt instruments to be one of the main financing options to provide for appropriate investment environment

and, at the same time, allow for additional alternative instruments for local and foreign investors making the capital market a sustainable engine for comprehensive economic development and wealth creation which is consistent with the strategic objects of the Oman Vision 2040, as the issuance of the regulations is related to three strategic objects, the first related to providing resilient and innovative financial instruments, the second issuance of flexible legislations and the third is the sustainable usage and investment of resources and natural wealth.

Al Salmi added that the regulation is resilient enough to encourage innovative and diversified financing products in accordance with the nature of financing needs of projects.

In addition to conventional bonds and sukuk, there are specific rules for issuance of sustainable and green bonds and sukuk to encourage such issuances in the Sultanate of Oman as there are interested investors and promising market for such types of financing, given their importance in financing the earnest steps the country pledged to take to reach net zero carbon emission by 2050.

Such products will enhance green and sustainable financing to achieve economic growth as the creation of such bonds

and sukuk is a delivery of the national road map to align the non-banking financing with the requirements of green and sustainable financing approved by the Board of Directors of FSA, he noted.

The regulation incentivises Waqf Sukuk which supports the further development of the Waqf sector, notably in its role in contributing to activating monetary Waqf and development of Waqf institutions, whether civil or charity institutions.

The goal is to expand the base of subscribers and participants in the activity to benefit from such type of assets in the development of the national economy to be able to generate fair returns serving the purpose of the Waqf whether educational or medical or social, and so on.

Bonds and sukuk can be issued in Oman in any convertible currency and the FSA allowed to accept prospectuses addressing private placement to be in English. The regulation comprises 12 chapters including chapters on issuance of bonds and Sukuk, private placement, rights issues and assignment, special purpose companies, financial trusts, sharia compliance, agents of beneficiaries or issuers, disclosure rules, general meetings and a chapter on the rules for issuance of green and sustainable bonds and sukuk.

Oman’s exhibition sector witnesses 141% increase in 2023

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has revealed substantial growth in Oman’s exhibition sector, with a significant 141 per cent surge recorded in 2023 compared to the previous year.

Statistics released by the Licencing Department underscore the sector’s vibrancy and diversity, with a total of 241 exhibitions held across the Sultanate of Oman.

These exhibitions span a wide range of themes, including specialised sectors, festivals, conferences, cultural showcases, national industries, Gulf products, charity initiatives, innovation, and



commercial ventures.

The significant increase reflects the sector’s resilience and adaptability in catering to diverse interests and needs within Oman and beyond.

Ali al Maamari (pictured), Director of the Licencing Department, emphasised the role played by exhibitions in fostering economic growth, investment promotion, and tourism diversifica-



OCEC: The hub of Oman’s vibrant exhibition sector.

tion.

He highlighted how exhibitions serve as platforms for networking, showcasing goods and services, facilitating business transactions, and promoting cultural exchange.

Furthermore, the surge in exhibitions underscores Oman’s commitment to attracting international and regional events, aligning with its global commitments and economic objectives.

The ministry aims to continue supporting the exhibition sector to stimulate local economic development and encourage both domestic and foreign investment.

The regulations governing the organisation and management of exhibitions have been tailored to meet the evolving needs of the

sector and provide necessary facilitation for exhibition organisers.

These regulations aim to encourage expansion and diversification of exhibitions while ensuring compliance with regulatory standards and ethical practices.

Al Maamari outlined the licencing requirements, emphasising the importance of adherence to social insurance regulations, maintaining a fixed location for operations, and timely renewal of licenses.

He also underscored the ministry’s commitment to upholding integrity and transparency in the licencing process, with stringent measures in place to address fraudulent practices or misinformation.



Oman-Italy
business forum
to strengthen ties,
foster innovation

MUSCAT: The Oman Italian Friendship Association (OIFA) will host the first Oman-Italy Business Matchmaking Forum. Scheduled to be held on April 28 and 29, with confirmed participation from Italian investors, the forum is a dynamic platform for Omani and Italian enterprises to explore new opportunities, exchange innovative ideas, and establish long-term partnerships.

Aligned with objectives of economic growth, diversification, and international relations, it exemplifies OIFA's commitment to knowledge sharing and enhancing economic relations between the two countries and stands as a cornerstone of the Association's annual strategic initiatives.

“The Oman-Italy Business Matchmaking Forum represents a strategic bridge connecting two economies,” said Salma al Hashmi (pictured), Board Member of the Oman Italian Friendship Association.

“This year, we are delighted to confirm substantial participation from a wide variety of industries including food and agriculture, manufacturing, real estate and construction, fashion, hospitality, sustainable circular economy, design and engineering.

OIFA is calling on Omani businesses to actively participate in this forum and capitalise on this opportunity.

This diverse representation is poised to unlock fresh opportunities and foster long-lasting partnerships, reinforcing our dedication to shaping a future rich in shared success and innovation.”

Saud Bahwan Group unveils Chery’s
second state-of-the-art showroom in Suhar

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Group has recently unveiled the second showroom for Chery in Oman, in Suhar. This state-of-the-art facility offers customers a delightful experience where they can get closer to their favourite Chery vehicle, learn more about Chery's advancements in the automotive field and discover a Chery vehicle that best suits their lifestyle.

According to a representative from New World Autos, the distributors for Chery vehicles in Oman, “We are delighted to unveil the latest Chery showroom, here in the heart of Suhar.

At New World Autos, we are focused on customer satisfaction and our goal here with the new showroom, is to welcome Chery enthusiasts to a whole new immersive experience.

Chery has a very exciting range of vehicles that are loaded with impressive features and technology and that contributes to making ownership experiences delightful. It is only when you experience the latest models that you will realise why Chery vehicles are a good choice and value-for-money.”

The Chery showroom in Suhar will serve as a hub for showcasing Chery’s advancements in the automotive field. Customers can



also gain insights into the details and processes that ensure high levels of quality for every Chery vehicle. The talented and friendly team at the Chery showroom will answer all queries and assist customers are making decisions that they will fondly cherish for long.

At the Chery showroom in Suhar, customers will get an opportunity to experience the Chery Tiggo 8 Pro Max SUV, Tiggo 4 Pro SUV and the Arizzo 6 Pro sedan.

The Tiggo 8 Pro Max is equipped with superior ADAS with 12 point coverage, panoramic



sunroof, all-wheel drive, 540 panoramic image, 9 airbags, 12.3 inch dual screen design with wireless carplay/ android auto, front radar, 8 way electric memory driver seat adjustment and 2.0 litre turbocharged engine.

The Tiggo 4 Pro is equipped with 10.25 inch central Screen with Wireless Carplay/ Android Auto / Apple Play, 18 Inch Alloy Wheel, 360 Panoramic Image, 6 Speakers, 6 Way Electric Driver Seat Adjustment, Electric

Sunroof, Fast Wireless Fast Charging, 4 Airbags and a 1.5 Litre Turbocharged engine.

The Arizzo 6 Pro is equipped with 10.25 inch Dual Screen Design / Android Auto/ Apple Play, 18 Inch Alloy Wheel, Superior ADAS with 6 Point Coverage, 360 Panoramic Image, 6 Airbags, Electric Sunroof, 6 Way Electric Driver Seat Adjustment, Air Purifier PM 2.5, Ambient Lighting, Fast Wireless Fast Charging, Ventilated Front Seats, 6 Speakers and 1.5-litre Turbocharged engine.

Recently, Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders Top 50. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth.

In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group. For the latest Press Releases, Test Drive requests and more, please visit www.chery.om, www.youtube.com/@OmanChery, www.facebook.com/CheryAutoOman, and www.instagram.com/cheryoman. For any further details & to ascertain the availability of stocks, please visit the Chery Showroom at Wattayah.

OABC features crafts of talented artists at Suhoor gathering

MUSCAT: The Oman American Business Council (OABC) celebrated its annual Ramadhan Suhoor gathering, sponsored by Odys Aviation at The Diplomatic Club on March 27. The event welcomed OABC members from all sectors of Oman's business community, and special guests from the public and private sector.

The evening featured traditional cuisine, engaging conversations, and a vibrant atmosphere, in partnership with two organisations devoted to supporting people with disabilities in Oman.

James Dorris, Co-founder and CEO of Odys Aviation, a California-based advanced VTOL aircraft company, took a few moments to introduce Odys' groundbreaking technology to



support low-carbon regional flights.

One of the highlights of the evening was the opportunity to support a noble cause.

Through a partnership with Azm and Adatee Hayatee, guests

sponsor, Odys Aviation, we've had a wonderful evening of learning about the future of aviation, and also connecting with new faces in the business community.

Our members were introduced to two incredible organisations that support talented and passionate people with disabilities in Oman.

We'd like to thank each person who made it such a memorable evening for all.”

“My team and I were thrilled to be back in Muscat this week to discuss opportunities with organisations that share our vision at Odys of transforming an industry and creating new employment opportunities in Oman through innovation and technology,” says James Dorris, CEO of Odys Aviation.

Ooredoo
continues to
give back to
communities
across Oman



MUSCAT: Ooredoo recently completed the second week of its rewarding 20th Goodwill Journey (GWJ) across Oman, resulting in meaningful impact in communities across Oman. GWJ, Ooredoo's flagship Corporate Social Responsibility initiative, connects a dedicated team of volunteers with the community during Ramadhan every year.

Their aim is to spread joy and make a real and sustainable difference in the lives of others and to their environment so they can thrive.

During the second week of this year's GWJ, the Ooredoo team worked with children, including disabled children and orphans, low-income families, and working women, to ensure they got what they needed to upgrade their worlds.

The team delivered a carpentry workshop and distributed gifts at the Al Wafa Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children in Dima Wattayeen, benefiting hundreds of children.

Putting even more smiles on little faces, the volunteers joined the Omani Women's Association in Sur in the annual Qaranqasho celebrations with local children.

JAC Oman launches ‘Generosity Meets
Affordable Drives’ Ramadhan campaign

MUSCAT: JAC Oman unveils its distinctive campaign, “Generosity Meets Affordable Drives.” This initiative embodies JAC's unwavering commitment to social responsibility, weaving the cherished values of care, generosity, and community well-being into the core of its operations, resonating with the profound spirit of Ramadhan.

The campaign underscores JAC Oman's dedication to democratising car ownership across Oman's diverse socio-economic landscape.

By presenting a compelling combination of affordability, superior quality, and innovative technology, JAC Oman positions itself as a beacon of accessible



luxury and unwavering reliability, mirroring the sacred spirit of Ramadhan. Embracing the spirit of Ramadhan, JAC Oman extends a warm invitation to all citizens and residents to partake in the “Generosity Meets Affordable Drives” campaign.

This Ramadhan, discover the joy of owning a new JAC vehicle through unparalleled EMI deals starting from a remarkable RO 55.

Explore JAC's outstanding selection, featuring the compact S3 SUV, the elegant J7 sedan, the adventure-ready T8 pickup truck, or the all-new JS6, all offering a perfect blend of affordability, elegance, and functionality

JAC's comprehensive portfolio caters to a wide range of needs.

Headlining this Ramadhan is the all-new JAC JS6, a feature-packed, technologically advanced SUV that's perfect for growing families and those seeking a blend of style and practicality.

The JAC JS6 boasts a striking design with a bold front grille, LED headlights and taillights, and a spacious, comfortable interior.

The “Generosity Meets Affordable Drives” campaign continues until April 26, 2024.

Visit your nearest JAC Oman showroom and immerse yourself in the spirit of Ramadhan with a brand-new JAC vehicle.

Explore the exceptional deals, find the perfect fit for your needs, and celebrate the holy month with a touch of joy and convenience.

Madayn signs pact to provide customs services in industrial cities



MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the General Directorate of Investor Services, signed a cooperation programme with Al Munasiq Customs Services Company, as part of Madayn's endeavour to enhance the added value for investors in its industrial cities.

This is through cooperation with private sector institutions with competence and experience in various fields to provide quality services to investors.

The cooperation programme represents the provision of 11 customs services, the first of its kind to investors in the industrial cities affiliated with Madayn.

The services include the

classification of goods shortlisted for new industrial exemptions, customs consultations and follow-up of transaction corrections when authorised by the respective companies.

It also includes training services on the Bayan system according to the powers of the company's system, classifying lists of goods to request adding tax exemption goods, storing lists of goods to request industrial exemption in the Bayan system.

Other services also include training on customs procedures, consultations on the harmonised system, and consultations on the Bayan system according to the powers of the company's system, in addition to the harmonised system training service. — **ONA**

Oman's vision for liquid hydrogen corridor to Europe gets fresh boost

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

Oman's bid to explore the potential for establishing a liquid hydrogen corridor to Europe has received a significant boost. A key partner in the initiative has announced a further tie-up aimed at taking large-scale liquid hydrogen deployment global.

Last December, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, together with Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom) – the orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen industry – signed a Joint Study Agreement (JSA) with Port of Amsterdam of the Netherlands, Zenith Energy Terminals (a leading international energy and chemicals storage player) and GasLog (specialist in LNG logistics), to collaborate on the development of a liquid hydrogen route for the supply of locally produced green hydrogen to markets in Europe.

The agreement, signed on the margins of the COP28 Summit in Dubai, was hailed as a landmark effort to enable the creation of the world's first commercial scale liquid hydrogen corridor.

As part of the pact, the parties have committed to collaborating on the development of an open-



LNG logistics specialist GasLog is developing a new generation of liquid hydrogen carriers for the global market. Picture for illustration only.

access hydrogen liquefaction, storage and export facility in Oman.

GasLog, for its part, has pledged to provide specialised vessels it is currently developing for the transportation of liquid hydrogen.

Zenith Energy Terminals will offer its expansive assets in the Port of Amsterdam as a hub for the import, regasification and further distribution of Oman-produced hydrogen to both local off-takers within the port of Amsterdam, as well as large industries in the European hinterland.

Signalling further promise

for the success of the initiative, GasLog recently announced its collaboration with Chart Industries, a leading global solutions provider in clean energy and industrial gas markets, to study the development of a commercial-scale liquid hydrogen supply chain.

Through this collaboration, GasLog aims to benefit from Chart's extensive experience in cryogenics and large-scale liquefaction solutions for the global distribution of liquid hydrogen. US-headquartered Chart Industries specialises in the design, engineering,

and manufacturing of process technologies and equipment for gas and liquid molecule handling for the clean power sector.

Oman's ambitions to establish a viable supply chain based on the transportation of liquid hydrogen to the Netherlands, among other potential destinations in Europe and the Far East, will represent a major game-changer for the large-scale uptake of this zero-carbon fuel resource in these markets.

If successful, it will enable the efficient and cost-competitive transportation of liquid hydrogen over long distances.

Alternative options presently available for the transportation of green hydrogen, such as in the form of green ammonia, methanol, or other hydrogen carriers, are seen as relatively uneconomical due to the additional costs and energy losses incurred when re-converting these commodities back into hydrogen.

The lion's share of Oman's targeted production of 1 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen capacity by 2030 is earmarked for export to overseas market – a goal that will be further strengthened once liquid hydrogen transportation is proven to be viable and cost-effective.



Vehicles pass through a toll plaza in Gurgaon on the outskirts of New Delhi. — Reuters file photo

India puts on hold proposed hike in road toll tax

NEW DELHI: India on Monday put on hold a proposed hike in road toll charges, in a move that will be welcomed by millions of motorists, truckers and commercial vehicle owners just ahead of a general election.

The annual hike in road toll charges would have benefited highway operators like IRB Infrastructure Developers and Ashok Buildcon Ltd while putting an

extra burden on commuters and businesses who could see freight rates rise as a result.

"The revision of user fee (toll) rates with effect from April 1 has been put on hold after taking permission from the Election Commission," a senior official at National Highways Authority of India said.

India will hold a general election in seven phases from April 19 to early June. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi and his regional allies are aiming for a comfortable win against an alliance of two dozen opposition parties.

Highway operators have already put notices in local newspapers about hikes in toll charges of 3-5 per cent at nearly 1,100 toll plazas from April 1. Toll charges are revised annually in line with inflation. Separately, the election commission also allowed the government to put on

hold the proposed annual hike in electricity tariffs till the completion of the election process, the government statement said.

India's toll collections have jumped to more than Rs 540 billion (\$6.5 billion) in the 2022/23 fiscal year from Rs 252 billion in 2021/22, helped by a rise in road traffic as well as by increases in the number of toll plazas and charges. — **Reuters**

Libasi: Weaving Omani heritage into modern elegance

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, APRIL 1

In the heart of Oman's fashion scene stands a remarkable brand that has redefined traditional men's fashion, embodying the essence of Omani elegance and heritage.

Introducing "Libasi," a captivating men's Omani premium fashion brand that has taken the market by storm with its exceptional collection of dishdashas and a commitment to preserving and showcasing the nation's cultural legacy.

Said al Manthry, Founder & CEO of AKFAR Investment the parent company that owns the brand Libasi, said: "With the worldwide appreciation for Islamic fashion reaching new heights, the allure of Omani dishdashas is capturing the attention of fashion enthusiasts globally.

Libasi's proactive approach positions it as a frontrunner in meeting the escalating demand for authentic Omani attire beyond domestic borders."

Libasi, meaning "attire" in Arabic, draws inspiration from the centuries-old Omani culture



The timeless elegance of the Libasi dishdasha.

and brings it to life in every thread of their meticulously crafted garments.

What sets Libasi apart is its unwavering dedication to authenticity. Each dishdasha is carefully handcrafted by artisans who are committed to using genuine Omani patterns to ensure that every garment carries the spirit of the nation's cultural history, making it a true representation of Omani identity.

Libasi's dishdasha collection

is a testament to the brand's remarkable ability to strike a harmonious balance between classic and contemporary designs.

Each piece seamlessly blends tradition and innovation, making it equally suitable for grand celebrations and everyday wear.

From intricate embroidery that tells stories of bygone eras to sophisticated cuts that embrace modern aesthetics, Libasi's creations become a symbol of sophistication and cultural revival.



Beyond its visually captivating designs, Libasi stands out in the local market due to its exceptional quality.

Only the finest fabrics sourced from reputable suppliers find their way into Libasi's workshops, ensuring that every dishdasha meets the highest standards of comfort and durability.

This commitment to quality resonates with customers, as Libasi garments become treasured heirlooms as it becomes an extraordinary symbol of uniqueness, perfection and simple elegance.

Empowering Omani pride through fashion and sport

Libasi showcases not only its

commitment to fashion but also its dedication to national pride and unity.

Styling the Omani national football team as they represent Oman in the Asian Cup is a significant gesture that highlights the brand's involvement in promoting Omani talent and representing the country in an international event.

This initiative not only enhances the team's appearance but also reinforces a sense of identity and belonging among the players, fostering a spirit of unity and pride as they compete on the global stage. It also showcases the brand's recognition of the importance of sports in promoting

national unity and pride.

A personal journey in Omani fashion

The inception of Libasi back in 2016 holds a deeply personal significance for three young Omani entrepreneurs. It wasn't merely about starting a business for them; it marked the beginning of a journey to redefine their cultural narrative.

Fuelled by a shared vision, their entrepreneurial spirit aimed to infuse modernity and personalisation into the traditional garment experience.

This journey celebrates the rich tapestry of Omani heritage and craftsmanship, aiming to create a heartfelt connection to their roots with each interaction.

They envisioned Libasi as offering a bespoke experience, tailored to honour their cultural identity.

For these entrepreneurs, Libasi represents more than just a brand; it's a manifestation of their passion for their country's traditions and a commitment to pushing boundaries. Every stitch, every design choice reflects their dedication to preserving heritage while embracing the future.

Simple guidelines for a profitable business partnership

Forming private sector partnerships and creating wealth through economic diversification is among the aims of our country’s Oman Vision 2040; of course that is coupled with building world-class infrastructure, and preserving environmental sustainability.

Last week, my article revolved around the importance of creating strategic partnership for the necessary growth, success and sustainability; in the sense where resources, risks, decisions and ultimately rewards are shared between the companies that enter into a partnership or alliance agreement.

This week, I would like to focus my article on the simple guidelines organisations can follow in order to create a profitable business partnership.



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is Knowledge Oman Founder knowledgeoman.com

Harvard Business Review (HBR) study noted that about 70% of business partnership fails. On the other hand, a study done McKinsey noted that only 25% of business partnership achieve their intended goals.

Other reputable studies suggest that approximately 50% of SME/SMB (small medium enterprises/business) that enter into business partnership agreements fail within the first few years of the engagements.

Furthermore, notable number of public private partnership (PPP) projects launched in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) have been abandoned.

How many times have you seen major release of two or more companies coming together to form an alliance in the form of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding), only to see fail, maybe not publicly announce, yet

no progression or whatsoever on the deal.

This is of course alarming and the proof is in the pudding in many local initiatives that continue to suffer due to lack of quality partnership and bad governance as a whole.

So what simple guidelines can organisations follow in order to create a successful business partnership?

First and foremost, there needs to be shared vision (where they want to go together), and shared goals (what do they wish to achieve together).

It is critical that both and all entities involved have alignment on the same. Next, there needs to be trust (and transparency in all forms of its operation), and the parties involved must be reliable (and again trustworthy too), else, doom would just be around the corner.

Then, a total commitment to the partnership’s vision so as dedication to delivering agreed goals as results cannot be underestimated (otherwise what for was the partnership formed at first place).

Lastly, knowledge, skills, expertise, resources (be it team, financial, etc) along with compatibility of one and another is very important for the solution (as a product or service) out of the partnership to work.

Organisations that wish to embark into a partnership must take these simple guidelines seriously in order to build a solid foundation to start and grow with.

Entering into a business partnership in order to grow, be it capture new market, introduce joint product, or the likes as I had illustrated in my previous articles is indeed fruitful especially if the

market and performance you are on is stagnant.

Nevertheless, choosing the right business partner is critical for one to succeed, for it can make or break the mission, which as a result can be very costly.

High-level statistics I shared in the article today may illustrate a challenging mission, however, organisations needs to be very careful and follow some of the guide-lines, if not all, depending on the industry in question, in order to achieve fruitful alliance.

Partnership that is built on a strong foundation at the most of the time produce outstanding results that sole organisations can’t dream to achieve. Next week, I will be sharing selection criteria that organisations can utilise in order to on-board appropriate business partners. Until we catch up again next week, stay positive.

Strengthening ties: The evolving dynamics of China-Oman collaboration

China and Oman share a rich history of friendship dating back centuries. Approximately 1,200 years ago, during the Tang Dynasty, Abu Obeid, the legendary Omani navigator believed to be the inspiration for Sindbad in the famous tales of ‘One Thousand and One Nights,’ embarked on a remarkable journey.

Setting sail from Oman aboard the wooden sailing ship ‘Sohar,’ Abu Obeid navigated the seas for over seven months, eventually arriving in south China’s Guangzhou.

This captivating tale has truly left a lasting impression on the minds of the Chinese people.

During the Ming Dynasty, another figure Zheng He further strengthened the ties. His fleet made four visits to Salalah, a city located in the Dhofar Governorate. The fleet transported Chinese porcelain, silk, tea, and other commodities to Oman, and brought back frankincense and many other spices to China.

In November 1980, a replica of the historic wooden ship ‘Sohar’ embarked on a voyage retracing the path of Omani navigator Abu Obeid. The vessel left Oman and arrived in Guangzhou the following year, which was warmly received by Chinese people.

In April 2008, the Beijing Olympic torch was successfully carried in Muscat. Symbolising the friendship between the two countries, the relay started at the Al Bustan roundabout in the eastern part of the coastal city, where lies the replica of the ‘Sohar’. Muscat was the only Middle East city on the Beijing Olympic torch relay route.

In June 2023, to commemorate the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Oman, a sculpture named ‘Zheng He Memorial Monument’ was completed here. In Guangzhou, more than 5,000 kilometres away, there is also a Sohar sailboat memorial monument, commemorating the voyage of Abu Obeid.



WANG XUEJING

The author is a Dubai-based commentator, covering public policy focusing on China and regional affairs.



Symbolising the friendship between the two countries, the relay started at the Al Bustan roundabout in the eastern part of the coastal city.

These two monuments symbolise the millennium-long friendship between China and Oman.

As part of Oman’s Independent Power Projects (IPPs) initiative, aimed at generating electricity through renewable energy sources, this project stands yet another affirmation of the enduring collaboration between China and Oman.

On March 16, the GIS building roofing work for the booster station of Oman Manah II Solar power project was completed, 23 days ahead of schedule.

Constructed by Shanxi Institute of China National Energy Construction Corporation (CNEC), the project is expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 340,000 tonnes per year, which will greatly alleviate the pressure on the power grid in the Manah region and the surrounding areas.

Since the establishment of China-Oman diplomatic relations in 1978, the friendship has evolved significantly and become more diversified from the earlier Maritime Silk Road.

With achievements in economic trade, energy, and cultural exchanges, the two countries elevated their partnership to a strategic level in 2018, charting a new era. In economic trade, China stands as Oman’s largest trading partner, while Oman ranks fourth among Arab nations in trade with China.

Moreover, China serves as Oman’s primary destination for crude oil exports. China’s exports to Oman primarily encompass machinery and electronic products, steel and its derivatives, high-tech goods, and textiles, while it imports crude oil from Oman.

Oman has actively embraced the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and stands among the founding members of the Asian

Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). In May 2018, China and Oman agreed to align their development strategies and prioritise cooperation efforts in such areas as exploitation of energy resources, chemical industry, manufacturing, and marine industries.

In 2021, Oman Youth Entrepreneurship Base Park was launched in the Oman-China Wholesale City in Barka. It has already attracted over ten local small and medium enterprises to set up shop in the entrepreneurial base.

The China-Oman (Duqm) Industrial Park stands as another prime model of win-win cooperation.

According to the Secretariat of the China-Arab States Expo, it offers exemption from value-added tax, corporate income tax, and import and export tariffs for 30 years.

The park boasts a remarkable increase in comprehensive profit margins compared to

other overseas parks, with a rise of 10 to 17 per cent. The cultural exchanges have been strengthened.

In December 2021, the ‘Sino-Arab Youth Exchange Week on Digital Culture Industry’ was successfully held in Oman, in which young people exchanged views on cooperation in the digital industry, e-sports, music, photography.

In 2021, the significant ‘Oman Vision 2040’ took effect on January 1 and runs through December 31, 2040.

Outlining three development pillars, the vision has many points of connection with the eight major steps that China proposed to support high-quality Belt and Road Cooperation, including economic and trade exchanges, green development, and cultural exchanges.

It is believed that with a robust foundation for cooperation, the ship of friendship between China and Oman will sail steadily and far.

WITH ACHIEVEMENTS IN ECONOMIC TRADE, ENERGY, AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES, THE TWO COUNTRIES ELEVATED THEIR PARTNERSHIP TO A STRATEGIC LEVEL IN 2018, CHARTING A NEW ERA. IN ECONOMIC TRADE, CHINA STANDS AS OMAN’S LARGEST TRADING PARTNER, WHILE OMAN RANKS FOURTH AMONG ARAB NATIONS IN TRADE WITH CHINA

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Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported:

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If a person swallowed a pin or pieces of paper, does it break the fast?

It has been unanimously agreed by scholars that even swallowing of inedible items like leather, paper and hair will be treated on par with breaking the fast with edible ones. Allah knows best.

QURAN

VERSE OF THE DAY

The Compassionate has taught the Quran. He created man. And taught him clear expression.

(Al Rahman, 1-4)



Ramadhan

TUESDAY | APRIL 2, 2024 | RAMADHAN 22, 1445 AH

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CHARITY DRIVES

BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

During the sacred month of Ramadhan, Muslims around the world engage in acts of compassion and generosity, with charity drives serving as a cornerstone of this observance. These initiatives hold profound importance for individuals and communities alike, embodying the essence of Ramadhan's spiritual teachings.

At its core, Ramadhan is a time for self-reflection, discipline, and heightened spirituality. Through charity, Muslims seek to purify their wealth and souls, aligning their actions with the values of empathy and compassion espoused by Islam.

Central to the significance of charity drives during Ramadhan is the fulfilment of Zakat, one of the Five Pillars of Islam. This obligation to give a portion of one's wealth to those in need is emphasised during Ramadhan, prompting many to contribute to organised charity efforts as a means of fulfilling this religious duty.

Moreover, charity drives during Ramadhan foster a sense of solidarity and community among Muslims. These initiatives provide an opportunity for individuals to come together, support one another, and address the needs of the less fortunate, embodying the spirit of unity that defines the Ramadhan experience.

In addressing economic disparities, charity drives play a vital role in bridging the gap between the affluent and the marginalised. By providing essential support to those in need, these initiatives help ensure that all members of the community can partake in the blessings of Ramadhan, regardless of their economic circumstances.

Furthermore, Muslims believe that good deeds performed during Ramadhan are multiplied in reward. By participating in charity drives,

individuals seek to maximise the spiritual benefits of their actions, enriching both themselves and their communities in the process.

As we are heading to the conclusion of Ramadhan, many individuals are seeking avenues to contribute to society. The Muttrah Committee highlights the opportunity for benevolent actions as the nation prepares to observe the Holy month of Ramadhan in a few days.

Members of the Muttrah Committee are stationed at

tribute towards Zakat by making direct payments to designated bank accounts.

The committee oversees the distribution of food packages to needy families who are observing fasting rituals.

Contributors can opt to support the provision of food baskets, aiding 350 families throughout the month, with contributions of RO 75 or by participating with one share of RO 10.

"We extend our invitation to all to join us in offering iftar meals during the fasting peri-



town shopping centres, gently reminding shoppers of the less fortunate within our community. What may appear as routine for some can present significant challenges for others. Over time, the Muttrah Committee has identified families in need of assistance.

Abdulzahrán al Lawatí, representing the Muttrah Committee under the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, spearheads this annual charity drive.

In addition to shopping, individuals have the option to con-

tribute towards Zakat by making direct payments to designated bank accounts. The Muttrah Committee is responsible for preparations spanning from Al Riyam Park to Al Sarooj area. The public can break their fasts within the mosques," Al Lawatí explained.

Contributions totalling RO 1,100 will provide for 2,000 individuals breaking their fasts in mosques following the call to prayer. The Muttrah Committee oversees activities from Al Riyam Park to Al Sarooj area, ensuring the well-being of the community.

ENTERTAINMENT

Rise of the Ronin Sends Players Into a Chaotic Japan

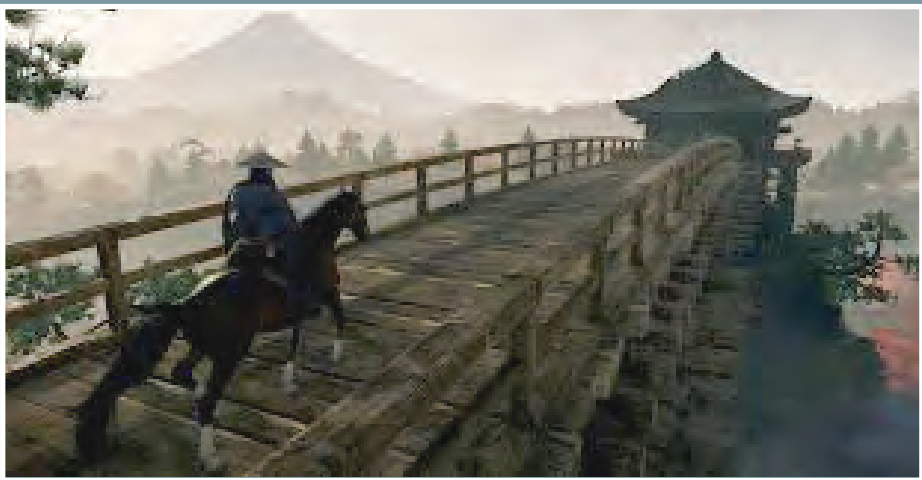
AFTER DECADES OF designing linear video game adventures such as the Ninja Gaiden and Nioh series, Team Ninja has dropped the guardrails and loosed players into an open world. Its latest offering, Rise of the Ronin, is

set during the mid-19th century when Japan opened its doors to Western influence and the last of the shogunates was nearing its end. Players step into the armour of one of a pair of warriors, referred to as "Blade Twins," and take on missions from either those aligned with tradition, or those pushing for a more modern Japan.

After stealing a letter containing secret information early in the game, the player's ronin, or masterless samurai, must decide which faction most deserves it. By making these types of decisions throughout Rise of the Ronin, some of the narrative can be altered.

"It was a time of chaos," Yosuke Hayashi, the game's producer, said in an email. "Japan's long period of isolationism was at an end and such significant upheaval resulted in various sets of values coming into conflict."

Fans of the combat in Team Ninja's previous work will not be disappointed. Battles in Rise of the Ronin are lightning fast, full of parries, counterstrikes and



flying sparks as steel meets steel. As the camera revolves around the action, it can feel like players are in a Formula One race car driven by Akira Kurosawa. But the studio's first experience

building an open world, where players are given a large area that they can explore as they see fit, shows how challenging it is to construct one.

Most of the buildings in Rise of the

Ronin, which was released last week for the PlayStation 5, feel flat, with doors that do not open except in very specific cases. Repeated character models wander the street in rote patterns. The optional quests largely feel the same: Go somewhere and kill a bunch of enemies. In many ways, the game's open world feels like one created for the twilight of an older generation of consoles like the PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360.

Player expectations for contemporary open-world games are high. They seek compelling activities that drive forward the game's overarching narrative, as well as completely unrelated side quests that can tell smaller but evocative stories. They want a sense of exploration and discovery, a feeling that there is always something on the other side of that mountain in the distance.

Those are different sensations than Team Ninja capably delivered with its previous titles, such as the Nioh series and last year's Wo Long: Fallen Dynasty.— NYT

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF
MUSLIM FAITH

634 - 644
Umar ibn al-Khattab
succeeds Abu Bakr

Umar ibn al-Khattab succeeded Abu Bakr as the second caliph from 634 to 644 CE. His leadership was pivotal in expanding the Islamic empire, instituting administrative reforms, and codifying Islamic law. Umar's reign saw the conquest of significant territories, contributing to the spread of Islam. He is revered by Muslims for his justice, piety, and wisdom, exemplifying the ideals of Islamic governance. Umar's legacy includes establishing the basis for a unified Islamic state and his wise counsel to subsequent leaders, shaping the early development of Islam.

DOS & DONTs:
ETIQUETTE
GUIDE DURING THE
HOLY MONTH

INCREASE WORSHIP IN THE
FINAL DAYS OF RAMADHAN

Engage in extra acts of worship such as praying additional prayers (Taraweeh), reciting Quran, making dua (supplication), and engaging in dhikr (remembrance of Allah). The final days are an opportunity to seek forgiveness, mercy, and blessings from Allah.

RAMADHAN AROUND THE
WORLD

LIBYA



Islam arrived in Libya during the 7th century with the Arab conquests. Over time, it became the dominant religion, shaping the country's culture, society, and politics. Throughout history, various Islamic dynasties ruled over Libya, including the Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids, and Ottomans. However, Libya's Islamic identity was further solidified during the 20th century, particularly after gaining independence from Italy in 1951 and later under Muammar Gaddafi's rule, where Islam became a central component of national identity.

As of the latest available data, Libya's population is predominantly Muslim. The exact population figures can vary, but it's estimated that over 97 per cent of Libyans are Muslim.

One of the most important Muslim traditions observed in Libya, as in many other Muslim-majority countries, is Ramadhan. During this holy month, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset, refraining from food, drink, smoking, and other physical needs. The fast is broken each evening with a meal called Iftar, which traditionally starts with dates and water. Common foods consumed during Ramadhan in Libya include soups, stews, grilled meats, pastries, and sweets such as baklava and ma'amoul.

RAMADHAN
TRIVIA HOW WELL DO YOU
KNOW THE HOLY MONTH

WHAT IS CONSIDERED
THE HOLIEST NIGHT
IN ISLAM?

Answer to previous trivia: Green symbolises paradise, renewal, and prosperity in Ramadhan, often associated with the lushness of nature and spiritual growth.



AN INDIAN
HOMEMAKER'S
CULINARY JOURNEY
FOR IFTAR

BY LIJU CHERIAN

Dhanitri Pai, a passionate homemaker based in Oman for the past 12 years, has seamlessly combined her love for cooking and photography to create a culinary haven on social media. Over the last four years, Dhanitri has meticulously curated recipes, striving to make cooking both easy and enjoyable for her audience.

The onset of the pandemic coupled with unwavering support from her family and friends propelled Dhanitri to venture into the world of social media. Emphasizing the importance of focus and consistency, she shares, 'Stick to your niche, plan your content, and be consistent.' This mantra has not only fueled her growth but has also enabled her to reach new heights in her culinary journey.

Dhanitri's Instagram page, @withdhanitri, is a treasure trove of culinary delights, featuring innovative recipes, food reviews, and captivating food photography. For Ramadhan iftar, Dhanitri has prepared a feast fit for royalty, featuring four delectable dishes:

• Ruz Bukhari Rice: A simple yet exquisite rice dish popular in the Middle East, especially in the Gulf countries.

• Mohabbat Ka Sharbat: Translating to 'Love Drink,' this refreshing beverage is a Ramadhan and Eid favourite, with a delightful blend of fresh watermelon, rose syrup, milk, sugar, ice cubes, and delicate rose petals.

• Beetroot Tzatziki: A tantalising twist on the classic Greek tzatziki sauce, enhanced with the addition of grated or pureed beetroot, imparting both vibrant colour and earthy flavours.

• No-bake Baklava Cheesecake: A heavenly fusion dessert marrying the irresistible flavours of traditional baklava with the luscious creaminess of cheesecake, sans the need for baking.

With her culinary prowess and artistic flair, Dhanitri continues to inspire and delight her followers, making every meal an unforgettable experience.

RUZ BUKHARI RICE

(FOR THE ARABIC
SPICE POWDER)

Star Anise - 3 pieces
Whole Coriander - 3 tablespoon
Whole Cumin - 2 tablespoon
Cloves - 7
Green Cardamom - 6
Cinnamon Sticks - about an inch



each
Bay leaves - 1
Fennel - 1 tablespoon
Whole Mace - 1 Pc
Black Cardamom - 2
Nutmeg - Half
Dry Red Chili- 2 to 3
Black Pepper - 1 Tsp
Dried Lemon - 1/2
Dry roast all the spices and then on cooling, grind it together to make a fine powder.

FOR RUZ BUKHARI RICE

Rice - 500 grams washed and soaked for 25 minutes
Garlic - 1 tablespoon finely chopped
Carrot - 1 cup julienned
Raisins - 1/2 cup
Onion - 1 medium finely chopped
Tomato Paste - 2 tablespoon
Chicken Stock - 4 cups
Arabic spice powder - 2 tablespoon
Salt - to taste
Oil - 4 tablespoon

METHOD:

In a pan, heat 2 tablespoon oil. Add the carrots, raisins, and sauté it for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove and keep aside.
Using the same pan, add the remaining oil. Once hot, add in



chopped garlic. Sauté for a minute. Then add finely chopped onions, mix, and fry until they turn translucent.

To this, add tomato paste, Arabic spice powder, and salt. Mix well. Add the 4 cups of chicken stock. Cover and let it come to a boil. As the water starts to boil, add in washed, soaked, and drained rice. Mix well, cover, and cook until it is 80 per cent done. Finally, add 3/4 of the fried carrots and raisins, mix well, and cook until the rice is completely done.
Aromatic Ruz Bukhari rice is ready. Garnish with remaining carrots and raisins and your choice of grilled chicken. Here the rice is served with grilled tandoori chicken.

MOHABBAT KA SHARBAT

INGREDIENTS:

Full-fat milk - 500 ml
Sugar - to taste
Rose syrup - 3 tablespoon
Watermelon juice - 1 cup
Watermelon pieces - 1/2 cup
Ice cubes - as needed
Method
In a jar, add ice cubes. To this add

watermelon juice, rose syrup, sugar, and chilled milk. Mix. Top this with chopped watermelon pieces. Mohabbat Ka Sharbat is ready. Serve it chilled.

BEETROOT TZATZIKI

INGREDIENTS:

Beetroot - 2 medium size cooked
Cucumber - One cubed
Curd - 3 tablespoon
Garlic - 2 cloves
Lemon juice - 1/2
Salt - to taste
Black pepper powder - 1/2 tsp
Olive oil - to garnish
Fresh mint - to garnish

METHOD

Peel and grate the beetroot. To a bowl, add curd, grated beetroot, crushed garlic, lemon juice, and salt and pepper.
Mix everything very well. Drizzle some olive oil on top, followed by chopped cucumber and fresh mint to serve.
Serve as a dip with fresh bread or as a side dish to your main.

NO BAKE BAKLAVA
CHEESECAKE

INGREDIENTS

For the nut mixture
Walnuts - 15 grammes toasted
Almonds - 15 grammes toasted
Pistachios - 15 grammes toasted
For the syrup
Water - 1 cup
Sugar - 1 cup
Lemon slices - 2 to 3

FOR THE CHEESECAKE FILLING

Cream cheese - 1+ 1/2 cup, softened at room temperature.
Heavy cream - 1/2 cup
Cornflour - 2 tablespoon
Condensed milk - 1 cup
Rose water - 1 tablespoon

For the Filo sheets

Filo Pastry - 1 pack
Butter - 50 grammes melted

METHOD

For the nut mixture
Toast all the nuts and chop them. Mix it and keep it aside.
For the syrup
In a small saucepan, combine all the syrup ingredients and bring to a boil. Wait until the sugar gets dissolved and simmer for 4-5 minutes more. Set it aside and let it cool.

FOR THE FILO SHEETS

Unroll the filo dough on a flat surface and cover it with a damp towel to keep it from drying out. Then take one sheet at a time, cut it in half, brush it with melted butter, and repeat this process with 2 to 3 sheets layering it one above the other.

Carefully place the layered sheets on a baking tray lined with butter paper. Bake them in a preheated oven at 180 degrees Celsius until they turn crispy and golden. Set on a wire rack to cool.

As the filo sheets cool down, let us prepare the cream cheese filling.

FOR THE CHEESECAKE FILLING

In another bowl, add cream cheese, condensed milk, cream, rose water, and corn flour. Using a whisk mix, everything properly until it is nicely combined.

TO ASSEMBLE

In a small dessert jar, break the crispy fill sheets and place it as the first layer. Top this with sugar syrup. Then add the cream, and cheese filling. Cover this with chopped nuts. Place in refrigerator for at least five hours before serving.

No bake Baklava Cheesecake is ready. Enjoy.

Ramadhan

f X Instagram YouTube @omanobserver

TUESDAY | APRIL 2 | 2024

INSIDE THE GLOBAL CHAMPIONS ARABIANS TOUR

BY YERU EBUEN

Instagram: @yru_here

Arabian horses, renowned for their grace and beauty, are not only admired for their striking appearance but also celebrated in the competitive world of equestrian sports.

They garnered widespread popularity for a lot of reasons. Their unparalleled beauty, characterised by their distinctive head shape and arched neck, has captivated horse enthusiasts worldwide.

The Global Champions Arabians Tour is a prestigious championship gracing some of the world's most iconic destinations while boasting unparalleled prize money, marking a historic milestone in sport. Under the guiding motto of "Respecting Beauty with

March 30 to April 1, the tour stopped in Muscat transforming the grounds of the Al Bustan Palace, a Ritz Carlton Hotel into a stage show fit for the luxurious appeal of the prestigious event. For the rest of the season, it will travel to Cannes in France, to Valkenswaard in the Netherlands, to Rome in Italy, and eventually to Paris, France by December with a tentative show happening in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

In a statement, Al Nasr expressed enthusiasm for Muscat's selection, highlighting the city's rich heritage, vibrant culture and dedication to preserving tradition. "Muscat embodies the spirit of inclusiveness and respect, making it the perfect destination for this prestigious event," said Al-Nasr.

GCAT raises the stakes with an unprecedented prize pool of £17,000,000, setting a new standard for excellence in the Arabian horse

The fluidity and grace of their movements are scrutinised as they trot, canter, and walk, demonstrating their athleticism and agility. Additionally, judges pay close attention to their temperament, expecting nothing less than the trademark intelligence and friendliness that Arabian horses are known for. Moreover, the horse's presence in the show ring, its charisma, confidence, and overall aura, play a significant role in the judging process.

At GCAT Events, a distinguished panel of 20 judges ensures thorough evaluation, utilising an electronic scoring system encompassing five key criteria: type, head & neck, body, legs, and movement. Final scores are derived by excluding extremes and summing the remaining scores, thereby determining the ranking of horses. The overall GCAT ranking considers accumulated points throughout the

excitement and Muscat celebrated when Alexandra RC by the Royal Cavalry Oman took the top spot in her class.

Alexandra was a class act in her category trotting like she owned the competition ground. Perhaps it was the Cavalry Training that showcased her beautiful trot but for the watchers of the competition, it was easy to tell right away that she was in a league of her own.

Witnessing Arabian horses in a competition like GCAT is crucial for understanding the breed's grace, athleticism, and cultural significance. These events uphold breed standards, promote responsible breeding and celebrate the enduring human-horse connection, enriching global equestrian culture.

On the evening of April 1, the winners will be given their much-



Integrity," GCAT aims to promote the uniqueness of purebred Arabian horses through an international platform, fostering a legacy of excellence, transparency, fairness, and integrity. With Muscat chosen as the host city for its third leg of the tour, the stage is set for an extraordinary display of equestrian prowess and cultural exchange.

As Faleh al Nasr, Chairman of GCAT, said, "The tour is a celebration of the Arabian horse's majestic beauty and rich heritage, fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange."

Al Nasr also added that the tour is guided by its fundamental values of integrity, honesty, and excellence, ultimately serving as a platform to showcase the rich tapestry of cultures and traditions from the participating nations to a global audience.

GCAT continues to expand its global reach. For the 2024 season, the tour kicked off in Doha in February and was followed by the Abu Dhabi leg. From

world. As participants vie for glory, the allure of victory and prestige propels the competition to new heights.

A TALE OF ELEGANCE AND COMPETITION

Competitions serve as a stage for breeders to showcase their finest specimens, spotlighting the fruits of their labour and dedication to preserving the breed's integrity. Winning prestigious titles not only elevates the reputation of breeding programmes but also fosters a sense of community among enthusiasts. Moreover, competitions play a crucial role in driving improvement within the breed, as breeders strive for excellence, guided by the standards set forth by judges and seasoned experts.

When it comes to judging Arabian horses, experts carefully evaluate their physical structure, looking for balanced proportions, correct leg placement and overall bone structure.

season, with precedence given to horses with more placements in case of tiebreakers.

Handlers are also duly acknowledged in the GCAT circuit, with points allocated based on their horses' achievements in each event, considering only their top three results. This acknowledgement underscores the symbiotic relationship between horse and handler, highlighting the crucial role handlers play in showcasing the potential of their equine partners.

OMAN HORSES MAKING A STRIDE

The first two days of GCAT in Muscat were a great look into the inner workings of the competition. On Day 1 which saw Yearling and Junior Fillies and Colts competing, seven horses represented Oman in different classes and a few ranked in the top 5.

On the second day, the continuation of the events for Junior and Senior Mares and Colts eventually built the

deserved laurels. For those who have missed the show, there is a reason to look forward to it in the years to come.

Without a doubt, the Muscat leg of the tour was a true exchange of culture. Accolades had to be given not just to the organisers but also to the smart people working behind the scenes to make it possible and bring the tour to Oman. The Heritage Village, built specifically to serve as a sideshow to the competition, was an amazing avenue to showcase the best of Oman's heritage and culture. Overall, it's exciting to see how the Arabian horses of Oman will rank globally.