

HM RECEIVES RULER OF RAS AL KHAIMAH



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at Al Baraka Palace on Tuesday to Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, along with his accompanying delegation.

During the audience, His Majesty the Sultan and Shaikh Saud al Qasimi discussed relations binding the two countries. They explored various aspects of cooperation aimed at serving the mutual interests of Omani and

UAE peoples. They also touched on a number of issues of concern to both sides.

On the Omani side, the meeting was attended by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; and Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office.

On the UAE side, the meeting

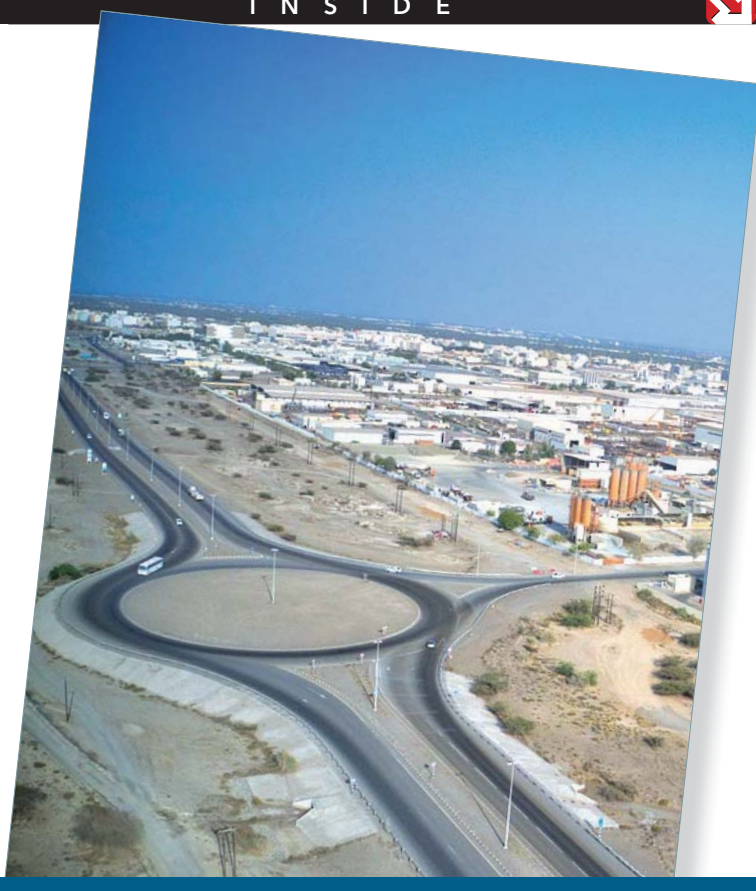
HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN AND SHAIKH SAUD AL QASIMI DISCUSSED RELATIONS BINDING THE TWO COUNTRIES. THEY EXPLORED VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COOPERATION AIMED AT SERVING THE MUTUAL INTERESTS OF OMANI AND UAE PEOPLES

was attended by Shaikh Khalid bin Saud al Qasimi, Shaikh Saqr bin Saud al Qasimi, Mohammed bin Hassan al Shamsi, Adviser to the Ruler; Mohammed bin Sultan al Qadhi, Adviser to the Ruler; Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Za'abi, Chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Real Estate; Ahmed bin Mohammed al Khatiri, Chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Courts Department; and Mohammed bin Ali al Nu'aimi, Chairman of Ras Al Khaimah Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Later, His Majesty the Sultan and the Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah

held a private meeting in the presence of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Shaikh Khalid bin Saud al Qasimi and Shaikh Saqr bin Saud al Qasimi. It is worth noting that Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, arrived in Oman on an official visit. Shaikh Saud and his accompanying delegation were received upon their arrival by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, and Mohammed bin Nakhira al Dhaheri, UAE Ambassador to Oman. — **ONA**

INSIDE



SUHAR INDUSTRIAL CITY ATTRACTS INVESTMENTS WORTH RO 44 MILLION

P14

Salalah ready to slip into scintillating Khareef

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
[@patkaushal](#)

Hovering clouds, heightened humidity and cool sea breeze during evenings are quite a signal for the season that Salalah awaits and offers to its visitors.

The difference in temperatures between Salalah and other parts of the country is another indicator and a point of validation for the people of Salalah who fall back on the season for their lifestyle and business, preparations for which are already in place.

“The difference in temperatures between Salalah and most other cities in the country is 10 degrees Celsius. That means Salalah is cooler by 10 degrees. It makes sense for us to believe that the season is knocking. Businesses are ready with their products, including hospitality, accommodation, restaurants and even hospitals and



other necessary service providers,” said Francis, who deals in real estate and other related services.

Asked a medical practitioner about his holiday plans as his children's schools are closed for summer vacation. He quipped, “No holiday for us during the season because we are

busier due to heavy footfall in the city during the Khareef season. It requires our presence to attend to all kinds of patients, including some emergencies,” said Dr Sachin Singh, who, besides being a medical practitioner, is a nature lover and a keen photographer.

“The season allows me to enjoy the serenity of Salalah as well as the beauty of nature and some best clicks that I get while going out with my family and friends. Moreover, being in Salalah is quite a relief from the heat in my own country this time around,” said Dr Sachin, who hails from India.

The city remained cloudy the whole day on Tuesday, giving people a topic to discuss whether the clouds are indications of the ensuing Khareef or the impact of Cyclone Biparjoy's movement, which is making news for its direction and location of actual landfall.



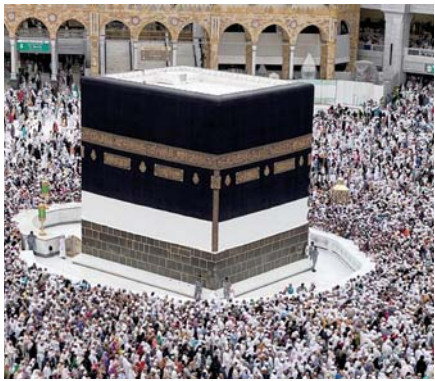
First Haj flight today

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The first flight carrying pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman will leave Muscat on Tuesday (today) followed by regular flights carrying other pilgrims in the following days, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA). The first flight will be carrying officials from the ministries, Royal Oman Police, and other official delegates who are performing haj this year.

The ministry received as many as 33,536 applications including 29,930 requests from Omanis, and 3,606 requests from residents for this year's Hajj after the registration was closed on Mar 5.

Oman will only be able to send 14,000 people to perform hajj this year through MERA based on the agreement with the General Authority for Awqaf (GAA) of Saudi Arabia.



Those who are eligible for performing Hajj this year, were selected electronically through the e-sorting and e-selection process.

The Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah recorded the highest number of applications, followed by the Governorate of Al Batinah North , and then the Governorate of Muscat.

Out of the 14,000 pilgrims that the Sultanate of Oman will be sending this year, 13,098 are Omanis and 500 will be residents, and 402 are official missions.

One in five adults dies of NCDs before the age of 70 in Oman

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

The prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) poses an increasing threat on a global scale and in the Sultanate of Oman, these diseases contribute significantly to the mortality rate of approximately 80 per cent of all deaths.

Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, said in the report published by the Ministry of Health that One in five adults is dying from NCDs before the age of 70 years.

The report, 'Monitoring Sultanate of Oman's National Response to tackle non-communicable diseases', also indicated that NCDs impose a substantial economic burden with an estimated RO 1.1 billion annually or approximately 3.6 per cent of the country's GDP as per 2019 figures. The four primary NCDs namely cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases accounted for 76 per cent of the total healthcare expenditures in 2019.

Through the concerted efforts, the Sultanate of Oman aims to reduce the impact of NCDs on the population. The target is to reduce premature mortality rate by one third by the year 2030 by implementing comprehensive strategies and interventions.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a healthier society by promoting preventive measures, raising awareness, and facilitating access to quality healthcare services. To address the issue, the Sultanate of Oman is actively engaged in nationwide efforts by embracing a multi-sectoral approach.

One of the key recommendations is to restrict the usage of tobacco within the country. Recent data reveals that the current tobacco usage among adolescents (aged 13-



Recent data reveals that the current tobacco usage among adolescents (aged 13-15) stands at 6 per cent, and the objective is to reduce it to 2 per cent by 2030. Similarly, among adults, the current prevalence is 8.5 per cent, with a target of lowering it to 5 per cent

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Various measures have been implemented to achieve these targets. One such measure involves increasing taxes on tobacco products to discourage consumption. Additionally, anti-tobacco mass media campaigns have been launched to raise awareness about

the detrimental effects of tobacco use. Furthermore, a comprehensive plan has been enacted to regulate tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.

The aim of these efforts is to curb the prevalence of tobacco use in the Sultanate of Oman and promote a healthier society.

By implementing strategies such as taxation, awareness campaigns, and strict regulations, the government hopes to reduce tobacco consumption among both adolescents and adults. Ultimately, the goal is to create an environment that discourages tobacco use, improves public health outcomes, and contributes to the overall well-being of the population.

According to the report, it is evident that there are several health challenges that need to be addressed in the Sultanate of Oman. The prevalence of obesity among adults currently stands at 30.7 per cent, but there is a target to reduce it to 24.1 per cent by 2030.

Similarly, the salt intake, which is currently at 8.5 per cent, is planned to be decreased to 6 per cent. the report highlights that raised blood pressure affects 33.6 per cent of adults, with a goal to bring it down to 26.9 per cent and raised blood glucose levels are observed in 15.7 per cent of the population, and efforts are underway to reduce it to 12.3 per cent.

Household air pollution, primarily caused by inefficient and polluting cooking and heating methods, has a significant impact on NCDs. Respiratory diseases like acute lower respiratory infections and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are linked to exposure to household air pollution. The daily mean concentration of PM2.5 in Oman (Muscat Governorate only) was about 18 µ/m3 in 2022, while the WHO guidelines is to lower it to 15 µ/m3.



WANTED URGENT

Jobs vacancies for Shanfari Marble Company - Muscat, Ghala

1. Operations In-Charge for the Marble Factory

2. Electrical Engineer

3. Marketing Officer

4. HSE Specialist

Requirements:

A) At least five years of experience in the field of the marble industry.

B) Preference will be given to those with a valid residence visa.

Send your CV to: hr@shanfarimarble.com

Tender Announcement

العمانية للمنتجات الحيوية ش.م.ع
Bio Products Oman SAOC



Tender No. BPO/ MCC /01

Tender Name: Animal & Fish Feed Mill Plant At Khazean Economic City.

Bio Products Oman SAOC (BPO) is a closed joint stock company founded by Nakheel Oman Development Company (NODC) S.A.O.C (www.nakheel.om) and Oman Flour Mills Company (www.omanflourmills.com), subsidiaries of the Omani Food Investment Holding Company. The company represents an example of joint work between companies owned by the Omani Investment Authority. The company intends to establish Multipurpose Feed Mill Plant which can produce animal feed, fish feed and shrimp feed through adopting state of the art technology which utilizes the locally available raw material (generally Green Waste and date palm by-products).

Specialized companies (Excellent / First Grade only) wishing to participate may obtain the bidding documents from the main building of Nakheel Oman Development Company (NODC) located in the Ghala, Qatar Airways building, fourth floor, and deposited the Tender fee directly to the Bio Products Oman Company S.A.O.C bank account as mentioned below.

Account name: Bio Products Oman SAOC

Bank name: Ahli Bank

Account No: 5101-102583-001

Swift code: AUBOOMRUALH

Tender fee	500/- OR (non-refundable)
Start date for tender collection	14 June 2023
Last date for tender collection	21 June 2023
Site visit	22 June 2023
Last date for receiving the technical queries	04 July 2023
Closing date of the tender	20 July 2023
Bidding Company Grade	Excellent / First Grade

All bidders are required to submit their proposals addressed to Bio Products Oman Company S.A.O.C and deposited in the tender box located in Nakheel Oman Development Company Office Gala, Qatar Airways Building 4 floor.

Vendor selection will be based on "best and final offer". BPO is not bound to select the lowest bidder.

All tender communication must be addressed to: tender@bioproducts.om. Or (72733302).

Bids submittal shall consist of 2 separate sealed envelopes (Technical) & (Financial) , and tender name and number (BPO/ MCC /01: Animal & Fish Feed Mill Plant At Khazean Economic City).

World Blood Donation Day

Give blood, save lives

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman needs at least 100 units of blood to meet the demand in all the hospitals but the supply is way down, according to the Department of Blood Bank Services under the Ministry of Health.

People who meet the requirements of blood donation, organisations and other groups of people have been urged to take part in the blood donation drive that the department initiated.

"We need a minimum of 100 blood units of blood a day for usage in all the hospitals in the country but the supply is drastically less. We need more people to come forward to support the drive and any healthy person between the age of 18 and 65 can donate blood," said Dr Zainab al Araiimi, Director at the Bausher Blood Bank. The department, from time to time, organises blood donation campaigns in association with embassies and other organisations and there are many mobile blood donation services in use which travels from wilayat to wilayat for collecting the blood units.

Several organisations have been conducting blood donation camps in support of the drive. The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Blood Bank Services is conducting a blood donation campaign under the slogan 'Your act of kindness brings colour to people's lives! Give Blood, Give Life' on Wednesday June 14 to coincide with World Blood Donation Day. "Blood donation drive is an important initiative that help address the shortage of blood at Oman's blood banks, and more individuals, organisations and other people bodies should come forward to help and support the national blood donation drive," said Dr Zainab.

Salalah ready for Khareef

FROM PAGE1

"Whatever may be the case, this is for sure that the Khareef season is going to start on June 21 and continue till the end of August. There may be a plus-minus of days, but preparations are on. We are getting ready for it," said a vegetable shop owner, who also keeps green coconuts, a signature product of Salalah and very popular among Khareef visitors.

An Italian who owns a house in Hawana Salalah admitted that he has bookings for the whole of July, and enquiries and bookings are there for June 15 onwards.

People are expecting an impressive Khareef this year. The hovering clouds, along with high humidity, are making their hope stronger.

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RULER OF RAS AL KHAIMAH LEAVES OMAN

HM hosts luncheon in honour of Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN AND SHEIKH SAUD
AL QASIMI DISCUSSED RELATIONS
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EXPLORED VARIOUS ASPECTS OF COOPERATION
AIMED AT SERVING THE MUTUAL INTERESTS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik hosted a luncheon in honour of Shaikh Saud bin Saqr al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, and the delegation accompanying him. Later, His Majesty the Sultan bid farewell to Shaikh Saud al Qasimi and his accompanying delegation, wishing them a safe return back home. His Majesty the Sultan also wished the UAE further progress and prosperity.

For his part, Shaikh Saud expressed his deep thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him.

He wished His Majesty the Sultan good health, happiness and a long life. He also wished the Omani people more progress under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

Shaikh Saud al Qasimi and his accompanying delegation were seen off by Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, and Mohammed bin Nakhira al Dhaheri, UAE Ambassador to Oman.

During the visit, the Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah was accompanied by Shaikh Khalid bin Saud al Qasimi, Shaikh Saqr bin Saud al Qasimi and a number of officials at the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah. — **ONA**





Artificial Intelligence The Way Forward



SAJANA MUHAMMAD IQBAL
IT Lead



KAMLA AL HATTALI
Vocational Education Specialist



DR AHMED AL AWADHI
Big Data Analyst from the Ministry of Health (MoH)

OBSERVER ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION SHEDS LIGHT ON AI

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will rule all the spheres of life in future but it's the human intelligence that controls and complements the norm of life. This was the summary of the monthly 'Oman Observer Round Table Discussion' held on Tuesday at the Observer premises.

Titled 'AI – The Way Forward', experts in health, education and digital transformation brainstormed for an hour on the topic. Held under the auspices of Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili, Editor-in-Chief of Oman Daily Observer, the panelists included Dr Ahmed al Awadhi, Big Data Analyst from the Ministry of Health (MoH), Kamla al Hattali, Vocational Education Specialist, Al Injaz School, Sajana Muhammad Iqbal, IT lead at Al Injaz Private School, and Dr Meher Rizvi, Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, SQU, who joined online.

According to Al Awadhi, AI is widely in use in health sector and it has become an inevitable part of the sector in diagnosing and treating diseases like cancer. "Once the disease is diagnosed, they will choose the mode of treatment but with AI, the system will find out from trillions of cases and treatments the best way out," he said.

As Oman is yet to make use of such technology although it is widely in use across the world, AI can propose the best solution to any health issue. However, accountability is a question when it comes to AI because it is a prediction model. AI is a double-edged sword for it can be used for both positive and negative purposes. In healthcare, privacy and confidentiality are biggest questions. Once the data is fed to the system, it can be accessed by anyone from anywhere through legal or illegal gateways.

POWER TO CONTROL

"AI needs some human power to control, manage and make use of it for a better purpose. Just as when computers replaced humans but later needed them to be managed by humans, AI too would need manpower to make use of it. Hence, galore of job opportunities is in the pipeline for the youths," Kamla al Hattali said.

However, if the input is wrong, the output too will be erroneous. For this, there should be a strong data system back up.

"When it comes to education, it will help save time and efforts for both children and teachers but the negative side is that children will not depend on teachers the way they used to in the past or in the traditional mode of imparting knowledge," Kamla said.

"Covid-19 pandemic was a great era for AI to grow and most of the schools

Oman is yet to make use of such technology although it is widely in use across the world, AI can propose the best solution to any health issue. However, accountability is a question when it comes to AI because it is a prediction model. AI is a double-edged sword for it can be used for both positive and negative purposes

and other educational institutions have turned themselves into more AI-dependent institutions. To me, AI should be in education at all levels," said Sajana Muhammad Iqbal.

For her, constant research and development are crucial for AI to be part and parcel of people's lives. She said AI should be in application at all levels, specifically from KG classes and children should be given a chance to get customised. "AI is widely in use in detecting plagiarism and the results are greatly influencing the children," she said.

Every application of AI helps detect any disease well before it happens and this is the whole idea of it. Even a smart watch powered by AI can detect the patient's vitals and advise him what modifications he needs to make in his lifestyle.

AI can even forecast at what age a person can get a cardiac stroke if he or she continues the same lifestyle.

According to Dr Meher who recently conducted a symposium on 'AI and us', AI is a versatile tool and at the same time can be detrimental if not used properly.

"Application of AI in Immunology and Microbiology is just building up and we have lots of automation in Immunology and Microbiology which uses AI. It will vastly be used in research and diagnostics in the days to come," she added.

The discussions were moderated by Hibba al Kindi, Observer reporter.



MoE recruits nearly 5,000 female teachers this year

ZAKIYA AL HUSSAINI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Tuesday announced the candidates shortlisted for the teachers' positions in all disciplines, who have successfully passed the recruitment test held between March 16 and 18, 2023.

MoE stated that 87 per cent of the 5,693 new appointments made this year (4,953) are females and 740 are males. Compared with the number of teachers hired over the past few years, 5,693 teachers have been recruited for 2023/2024 compared to 1,689 in 2020/2021.

A total of 2,021 women were appointed in the job title 'first field teacher' in 2023, 790 'second field teachers,' 515 English teachers, 332 mathematics teachers, and 314 Arabic teachers. Only 12 applicants were appointed as teachers of Arabic learning difficulties, according to MoE.

The governorates-based figures of 2023 show that more ap-



pointments have taken place in the Governorate of Dhofar with (1,481) appointees, followed by Al Dakhiliyah (1,314), Muscat (956), Al Wusta (510), North Al Sharqiyah (451), South Al Batinah (364), North Al Batinah (202), South Al Sharqiyah (188), Musandam (94), Al Dhahirah (92), and Al Buraimi with (41).

Childhood conference to focus on strategy for talented children

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

Oman Childhood Conference and Exhibition, which will be held for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman, will be held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre from September 25 to 27 under the title 'Contemporary Directions in Raising Gifted and Talented Children — Towards a National Strategy for Gifted Care'.

The aim of the conference is to look at raising gifted and talented children, considering the human element as the true wealth of society and to develop public awareness. HH Sayyida Dr Muna bint Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, in her speech said: "The vision of the Children First Association was built on working to educate children, develop them and empower them in the educational, health and cultural fields to meet their needs, develop their capabilities and promote their rights to be active members of society."

She also mentioned the importance of the association's keenness to hold the Oman Childhood Conference and Exhibition as the knowledge reference and a supportive platform for childhood in the Sultanate of Oman, and to give children the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. "Through this potential, children's abilities, skills and



talent indicators can be identified," she said.

The conference will bring together a group of academics, specialists and those interested in caring and educating gifted children from various Arab and foreign countries with the aim of exchanging experiences and spreading national, regional and international awareness of gifted and talented children.

The association seeks to benefit from several axes including anticipation of the future for children, strengthening the role of the family and the school in caring for and educating gifted children, highlighting role of civil society institutions and the private sector, voluntary and professional

institutions.

The holding of the first childhood exhibition is also considered to be the largest event in regards to childhood and its needs in all fields in the Sultanate of Oman. The exhibition will provide all the services and products a child needs in one place, such as companies and stores for baby products, clubs, medical centres specialising in child care as well as educational and entertainment institutions.

This is in addition to many local and international agencies and specialised companies, providing training workshops, entertainment corners and theatrical performances for children.

Oman Special Olympics team arrives in Germany



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Oman's Special Olympics team left for Germany to participate in the games. As the athletes gathered at Al Amal Centre before the departure, the energy was high as they prepared to take part in 13 sports.

Vice-President of Special Olympics Oman, Shaikh Naif al Shanfari, delivered words of motivation.

The delegation member and in charge of Public Relations, Dalia al Bassami said, "On

June 17, everyone will reach Berlin for the opening ceremony. We hope our athletes enjoy the international experience and achieve good results."

After few more days, family members will be joining the athletes to attend some of the events organised by the Special Olympics.

The games that they will be participating in include golf, rollerskating, futsal, sailing, powerlifting, equestrian, table tennis, bocce, bowling, badminton, athletics, tennis and swimming.

Zaina al Zedjali, while speaking to the

Observer, said, "As a mother I am so proud of my daughter Maryam al Zedjali as she is going to compete in swimming competition. The whole family is happy and Maryam is extremely thrilled. Her brother and sister will join her in Berlin."

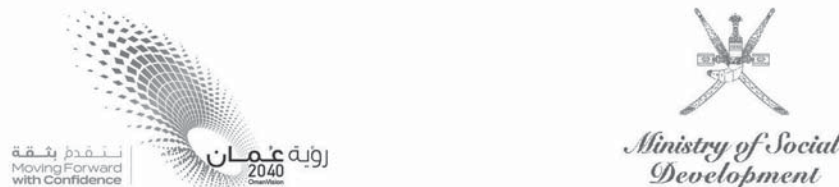
In 13 games Zaid al Jabri is the only golf player with Down Syndrome. His father, Ahmed al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Down Syndrome Society, explained how hard Zaid has been practicing. "He is perfectly fine on travelling on his own and I will be joining him in Berlin soon," he said.



Announcement of the tender TND GSI BV 11/06/2023 for the supply of Stainless Steel pipes and fittings

GS INIMA (BARKA) LLC have been awarded with the Engineering, Procurement and Construction of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC. Professional Omani and non-Omani companies are invited to quote for :

1. Material supply of Stainless Steel pipes and fittings.
 2. Pre- spooling and spooling for Stainless Steel pipes.
- To participate to bidding please send e-mail to barka.v.site@inima.com confirming participation accompanied with copy of CR , copy of VAT certificate and copy of MSE card if any, within 18th June 2023 1:00 PM.
- Bid documents will be send to you same day
 - Bid closing date 22th June 2023 1:00 PM



Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)
173/2023	General maintenance work for the Juvenile Affairs Department building	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second degree	Monday 3-7-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 24-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=
174/2023	General maintenance work for the building of the Al-Wafa Center for the Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities in the Wilayat of Taqah	Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the first degree	Monday 3-7-2023 02:00 PM	Monday 24-7-2023 10:00 AM	R.O. 25/=

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 14/6/2023**.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact through 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



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	70/2023/MHT/HQ-13	Tender Name	Providing material supply service for site maintenance projects in Al Dhairah Governorate.
	72/2023/MHT/HQ-14		Providing a labor supply service for site maintenance projects in Al Dhairah Governorate.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		70/2023/MHT/HQ-13	25 O.R
		72/2023/MHT/HQ-14	25 O.R
Tender Document Sales End Date		04/07/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission		24/07/2023	
Grade	70/2023/MHT/HQ-13	First	
	72/2023/MHT/HQ-14	Third	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E.Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- The Tenderers must acknowledge commitment to the bid .
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids.
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : stotc@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



Sudan war traps civilians as fighting intensifies



Smoke billows in the distance amid ongoing fighting in Khartoum. – AFP

KHARTOUM: Air strikes, artillery and gunfire rocked several areas of Sudan’s capital on Monday as fighting between warring factions intensified for a second day, trapping civilians in a worsening humanitarian crisis.

The war between the country’s army and paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has raged for almost two months, forcing almost 2 million to flee and wrecking the economy, causing frequent electricity and water outages.

Talks in Jeddah have failed to permanently end fighting and clashes intensified as soon as a ceasefire ended on Sunday.

While the RSF has spread out across most of the capital, controlling main streets and setting up camp inside some homes, the army has the advantage of air and artillery weaponry.

Residents of eastern Khartoum reported being hit by air strikes, while in southern Khartoum as well as northern Omdurman reported being hit by artillery fighting. Eyewitnesses reported

clashes in central Khartoum as well.

“Since yesterday, the war has come back and there’s strikes from all direction,” said Awatif Sidahmed, 43, living in Sharq el Nil across the Nile from Khartoum.

“Our neighbourhood is a war zone so leaving is difficult and staying home is difficult. We don’t know what to do.”

Those who stay also struggle with dwindling funds as the government has stopped paying salaries and pensions.

More than 200,000 of the 1.9 million Sudanese who have managed to flee their homes have gone to Egypt, which this week imposed a visa requirement for children, women and the elderly who had previously been exempt.

Hundreds of Sudanese were turned back at Cairo airport and sent back on return flights, according to Cairo airport sources, after a similar exemption for those with residencies in western and Gulf states was removed.

— Reuters

Amnesty condemns possible ‘war crimes’ in Gaza conflict

GAZA CITY: Amnesty International said on Tuesday that Israeli strikes on Gaza last month could amount to a “war crime”.

Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza, including Islamic Jihad, traded heavy fire in the May 9-13 flare-up that claimed 35 lives, including civilians and combatants.

The London-based human rights group charged that Israeli strikes carried out “without military necessity” amount to “a form of collective punishment against the civilian population”.

It also accused Palestinian groups of “indiscriminate” rocket fire aimed at Israel that “should also be investigated”.

Amnesty said the Israeli military operations damaged 2,943 housing units, including 103 homes which were completely destroyed.

“Israel also conducted apparently disproportionate air strikes which killed and injured Palestinian civilians, including children,” the statement added, noting that “intentionally launching disproportionate attacks... is a war crime”.

Israel and fighting groups in Gaza have fought several wars since Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007.

According to the Israeli army, more than 1,230 rockets were fired from Gaza towards Israel from May 10-13 before a ceasefire came into effect.

“Israel’s impunity for the war crimes it repeatedly commits against Palestinians, and for its cruel ongoing 16-year illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, emboldens further violations and



A Palestinian youth takes cover as he throws stones at passing Israeli army vehicles during a raid at the Balata camp for Palestinian refugees, in the occupied West Bank. – AFP

makes injustice chronic,” said Heba Morayef, Middle East and North Africa Regional Director at Amnesty International.

The Israeli army did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Amnesty’s claims.

A spokesperson for Palestinian Islamic Jihad said the group “welcomes” the report.

“We are doing our part to defend ourselves against the crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinian people,” it added in a statement.

Some 2.3 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip which has been under a crippling Israeli-led blockade since Hamas rose to power.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed a Palestinian in a West Bank raid while four Israelis were injured in a separate shooting incident, as fresh violence hit the occupied territory on Tuesday, officials said.

The Palestinian health ministry said 19-year-old Faris Abdel Moneim Mohammed Hashash

“was shot dead by the Israeli occupation forces during the aggression against Balata camp in Nablus”.

Israel’s Magen David Adom emergency service said it had treated five Israelis wounded by gunfire near a checkpoint close to the northern West Bank city of Jenin. It added they were hospitalised in moderate condition.

The Israeli army said it had received a report of a shooting near the town of Yabad. — AFP

Seven die as cyclone barrels towards western India, Pakistan

AHMEDABAD: Four boys drowned in rough seas off the western Indian financial hub of Mumbai on Tuesday as India and Pakistan began evacuating people from coastal areas, two days before a cyclone is expected to make landfall.

Classified as a very severe cyclonic storm, Biparjoy is expected to land around on Thursday evening between Mandvi in India’s Gujarat province and Karachi in southern Pakistan.

Meteorologists predict maximum sustained wind speeds of 125-135 km per hour, gusting to 150 km per hour.

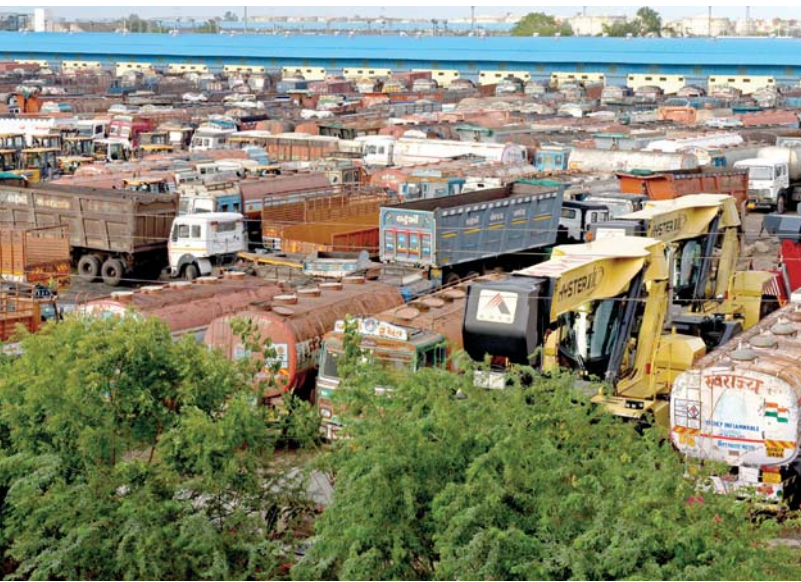
“Four boys drowned at Juhu

beach on Monday evening. So far, we have found the bodies of two, and the search is still ongoing to locate the remaining two,” said a police official in Mumbai, south of Gujarat.

High waves in the Arabian Sea, accompanied by heavy rains and gusting winds pounded Gujarat’s coastal areas, uprooting trees and resulting in a wall collapse that killed three people in Kutch and Rajkot districts, authorities said.

Eight districts in coastal Gujarat are expected to be affected, the state government said. Fishing has been suspended until Friday and schools have declared holidays.

Gujarat is home to many



Trucks are parked near a closed sea port before the due onset of cyclone Biparjoy, in Gandhidham, India. – AFP

offshore oil installations and major ports in the country and most have been forced to suspend operations.

Relief Commissioner Alok Kumar Pandey said that more than 20,500 people have been evacuated from coastal districts and the evacuation was expected to be completed by Tuesday evening.

In neighbouring Pakistan, paramilitary troops and local civil authorities also started moving people to shelters and relief camps, which were set up in schools and other government buildings, said Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman.

Ships and boats have been moved from some areas of Pakistan’s coast while hospitals in the region were put on high alert, added Rehman.

About 100,000 people will be evacuated by Wednesday, the chairman of Pakistan’s National Disaster Management Authority said.

Two of India’s largest ports, Kandla and Mundra, have suspended operations, the state government said. Other ports, including Bedi, Navlakhi, Porbandar, Okha, Pipavav and Bhavnagar, have also closed due to the cyclone, according to shipping sources. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

JOS Gunmen kill 23 in central Nigeria state

Gunmen have killed at least 23 people in separate attacks in central Nigeria, police said on Tuesday, in the latest violence in an area struggling with clashes between herders and local farmers. Two cattle herders were killed before 21 farmers were killed in attacks later in several villages, Plateau State police spokesman Alfred Alabo said.

“The two herders were killed first while the second attacks were launched later in the night,” he said. “The commissioner of



police has visited the scene of the incident. We are investigating the cause of the attack”.

President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has called on Nigeria’s armed forces to better coordinate to manage the country’s multiple security threats.

BEIRUT 22 US soldiers injured in helicopter ‘mishap’

Twenty-two US soldiers were injured in a helicopter accident in northeastern Syria that did not involve any reported enemy fire, US Central Command said on Tuesday. “A helicopter mishap in northeastern Syria resulted in injuries of various degrees to 22 US service members” on Sunday, Centcom said in a statement.

“The service members are receiving treatment for their injuries and 10 have been evacuated to higher care facilities,” it said. “The cause of the incident



is under investigation, although no enemy fire was reported.”

The United States has about 1,000 troops deployed in Syria as part of international efforts to combat militants, and periodically carries out strikes targeting them in the country. — AFP

AMMAN Jordanian army downs drone carrying drugs

The Jordanian army said on Tuesday it had downed a drone carrying drugs from Syria into its northern frontier region.

Damascus says it is doing its best to curb smuggling and continues to bust smuggler rings in the south.

The sharp rise in smuggling attempts has forced Jordan since last year to change army rules of engagement along the border, giving its military the authority to use overwhelming force.

“We are continuing to deal



with resolve and force with any threat to our borders,” the army said in a statement.

The plane, which was carrying crystal methamphetamine, was intercepted and downed on Jordan’s side of the border, it said.

— Reuters



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In brief

■ PARIS



MACRON UNVEILS PLANS TO PRODUCE DRUGS

President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday unveiled plans to relocate the production of key medicines to France to tackle shortages of imported products, ranging from antibiotics to paracetamol.

Macron, who was visiting pharmaceutical laboratories in the Ardeche region, said the government had drawn up a list of 450 molecules for which it was key to secure supply chains.

“The long-term solution to avoid shortages in our pharmacies is to bring back our factories. That is what we are doing for many drugs,” Macron had said in a tweet ahead of his visit. — Reuters

■ NOTTINGHAM



POLICE ARREST SUSPECT AFTER BODIES FOUND

British police said a man had been arrested on suspicion of murder after three people were found dead on the street in the central English city of Nottingham on Tuesday and three were injured after an attempt to run them over with a van.

Detectives said they had an open mind about the motive for the linked incidents.

Two of the those killed were students from one of the city’s universities. A 31-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of murder and detectives said they were not looking for anyone else. The major operation began after police were called to a report of two people being killed on a road in the city centre. — Reuters

■ MIAMI



TRUMP TO FACE CHARGES IN DOCUMENTS CASE

Former US President Donald Trump was due to appear in federal court in Miami on Tuesday to face criminal charges that he unlawfully kept national-security documents.

He is the first current or former president to face criminal charges, but that has not dented his hopes of returning to the White House. Trump has maintained his innocence and portrayed the case as an effort to undermine his re-election effort.

Legal experts say the evidence amounts to a strong case, and Smith has said Trump will have a “speedy” trial.

— Reuters

Russia kills 11 in strike on Ukraine; Kyiv says troops make gains

KRYVYI RIH: A Russian missile strike killed at least 11 people in an apartment building and a warehouse in President Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s home town on Tuesday, while Moscow’s forces yielded ground in the early stages of a Ukrainian counteroffensive.

Residents sobbed outside the burnt-out apartment block and smoke billowed after the early-morning attack in Kryvyi Rih, a half-hour drive from the huge reservoir emptied last week by the destruction of a dam that flooded a swathe of southern Ukraine.

Officials said at least four people were killed in the apartment building and another seven in the warehouse. Broken glass and bricks were strewn across the street and courtyard outside the apartment block. At least five cars were ruined husks.

“Russian killers continue their war against residential buildings, ordinary cities and people,” Zelenskiy, who was born in the city, said.

Moscow denies intentionally targeting civilians but has repeatedly struck apartment buildings with long-range missiles, often at perceived turning points in the war. It killed 25 people in an apartment block in the central city of Uman six weeks ago, heralding the start of an intensified campaign of drone and missile strikes in the run-up to Ukraine’s long-awaited counteroffensive.

After seven months of a huge Russian offensive that yielded scant gains despite the bloodiest ground combat in Europe since World War Two, Ukraine began its counter assault last week.



Ukrainian servicemen fire a rocket from a BM-21 ‘Grad’ multiple rocket launcher towards Russian positions, near Bakhmut. — AFP

So far the offensive is still in its early days, with tens of thousands of fresh Ukrainian troops and hundreds of Western armoured vehicles yet to be committed to the fight.

Confirmed video footage from villages over the past two days show that Ukraine has already

captured more ground than at any time since November. But it has yet to pierce Russia’s main defensive lines, which Moscow has had months to prepare.

Russia has also accused Ukraine of cross-border shelling as Kyiv carries out counteroffensive operations. The governor of Kursk

in Russia said on Tuesday several houses had been damaged and power supplies disrupted in two villages in the region near the border. Ukraine does not comment on reports of incidents in Russia.

During the early hours of Tuesday, air raid sirens blared across the whole of Ukraine, with

Kyiv’s military officials saying air defence forces destroyed all Russian missiles targeting the capital.

Ukraine’s top military command said that air forces destroyed 10 out of 14 cruise missiles Russia launched on Ukraine and one of four drones. — Reuters

Kosovo PM presents plan to defuse tensions in Serb-majority area

PRISTINA: Kosovo’s prime minister on Tuesday presented a plan to defuse tensions in its Serb-majority north that would include fresh local elections and cuts in special police, bowing to pressure from key Western supporters of its independence.

But the arrest the same day of a Serb identified by the Kosovo Albanian interior minister as an organiser of assaults on Nato peacekeepers during Serb unrest last month stirred fresh anger in the volatile region.

Around 200 Serbs gathered in North Mitrovica to protest against the arrest, with Kosovo Albanian police in anti-riot gear standing a few hundred metres away. US soldiers with the KFOR peacekeeping force were also in the vicinity.

During the operation to arrest Milun Milenkovic, three Kosovo Albanian policemen were lightly injured, Interior Minister Xhelal Svecila said.

Some 30 peacekeepers and 52 Serbs were injured in the clashes late last month after ethnic Albanian mayors took office following a local election in which turnout was just 3.5 per cent after Serbs who form a majority in the region boycotted the vote.

The United States and European Union have called on Prime Minister Albin Kurti to withdraw



Police officers patrol a street after clashes with ethnic Serbs as tensions erupted in the flashpoint city of Mitrovica, north Kosovo. — AFP

the mayors, remove special police used to install them and uphold a 2013 deal for an association of autonomous Serb municipalities in the region.

Kurti said that “violent Serb groups have been withdrawn from Kosovo territory and therefore the presence of Kosovo police troops in three municipal buildings will be downsized”.

“The government of the Republic of Kosovo will coordinate with all the actors and announce early elections in four municipalities in the north,” Kurti told a press conference after meeting ambassadors of the United States, Italy, France, Germany and Britain, known as

the Quint group.

He said he had presented his plan to EU and US envoys and called for a follow-up meeting between Serbian and Kosovo officials in Brussels, where the EU is based.

Kurti said nothing about setting up the association of Serb municipalities which would ensure greater autonomy for the Serb majority area. He has been loath to implement the accord, citing fears that it would spur the region to seek to rejoin Serbia.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic urged Kosovo last week to grant more autonomy to Serbs before organising a new vote.

— Reuters

US lawmakers call for S Africa to lose summit over Russia ties

JOHANNESBURG: A group of US lawmakers is calling for a US-Africa trade summit planned for later this year to be moved from South Africa in response to what they said was the country’s “deepening military relationship” with Russia.

In a letter to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and other senior officials, they also suggested South Africa is in danger of losing its benefits under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) — Washington’s flagship trade programme.

South Africa is due to host the AGOA Forum in Johannesburg, a meeting of African leaders and US officials to discuss the future of the programme, which is slated to expire in 2025.

South Africa’s exports to the US under AGOA reached nearly \$1 billion in the first three months of this year, making it the second biggest beneficiary of the programme after Nigeria.

African nations are seeking to extend AGOA, which grants qualifying countries’ exports preferential access to the US.

“We are seriously concerned that hosting the 2023 AGOA Forum in South Africa would serve as an implicit endorsement of South Africa’s damaging support for Russia’s attack of Ukraine,” the letter stated.

Referring to the letter, South African foreign ministry



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken

spokesman Clayson Monyela said: “There is no decision by the State Department/White House to move the AGOA Forum from SA.”

South Africa’s Department of Trade and Industry, which manages the country’s trade relations with the United States, said it was not planning to respond publicly to the letter.

South Africa’s government has declared its neutrality in the war in Ukraine, and President Cyril Ramaphosa is participating in an effort by African leaders to mediate in the conflict.

However, the lawmakers voiced frustration with South Africa’s hosting of joint naval operations with China and Russia in February, and plans to hold a summit of BRICS leaders where Russian President Vladimir Putin is invited despite being charged with war crimes by the International Criminal Court.

— Reuters

Ensure algorithmic justice for responsible AI



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

So much has been written about artificial intelligence, or AI since its birth around 60 years ago. Recently, conversations about AI started to take a negative turn, including a UN statement warning humanity about all the evils of AI. We are at pivotal moment in history where we need to believe in science and judge innovative based on objectivity.

Since human beings create AI algorithms there has been cases where AI reflected biases, such as in the case of US prisoners’ probation recommendation cases. However, in the case of AI, this means that this is not the time to panic and judge AI as evil, rather this is the time for keeping an open mind to understand its definition, Large Language Models potential and impact.

WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

A simple way to define this genius human innovation is that it is systems that enable

machines to gather, clean, analyse and predict information in a way that resembles natural human or animal intelligence, hence the name artificial intelligence. This is the cumulative result of years of developing computer programmes that learn, for example, from our ability to see (computer vision) or use language (natural language processing-NLP) or similar natural abilities. AI has been making our lives easier for years, whether in our phones ability to search, and to predict words when we are texting, or in all sorts of cameras and lenses that identify people and objects in our roads or buildings, and more significantly in medicine where we are able to develop remedies much more faster that our ancestors because of AI’s ability to process large amount materials’ data used by the pharmaceuticals industry.

LLM

2023 will go down in history as the AI game-changer year. Open AI’s ChatGPT democratised

WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TODAY TO AUGMENT WHAT INTELLIGENCE CAN CREATE FOR US TO ACHIEVE FOOD SECURITY, A HEALTHIER LIFE AND A LIFESTYLE THAT BRINGS MORE CONTENTEDNESS

made it possible for anyone of us who can text to making use of huge amount of data, known as Large Language Models or LLM, to get answers that we need. ChatGPT enabled us to go beyond “searching” to obtaining synthesised and updated written feedback and reports based on all what the internet can offer.

IMPACT

Thinking that we can slow down innovations such as AI is like thinking that we can slow down time, and time slows down for no one. We have the opportunity today to augment what intelligence can create for us to achieve food security, a healthier life and a lifestyle that brings more contentedness. I believe that the most significant step we can take today is establish algorithmic Justice initiatives that ensure that the basic fabric of AI which as algorithms are doing no harm, and oversee the development of responsible AI codes of conduct in all aspects of life.

The tragic decline of ‘free’ news



LYDIA POLGREEN

In a recently published profile of former CNN executive Jeff Zucker, a tidbit of news caught my eye. Zucker, who has a venture fund with \$1 billion to invest, is one of at least three suitors seeking to buy a controlling stake in Air Mail, a glossy media company catering to the jet set elite, founded by former Vanity Fair editor-in-chief Graydon Carter. It’s a frothy mix of European royals, luxurious fashion and salacious true crime, redolent of the Vanity Fair of yore. Air Mail has made quite a splash: It threw a star-studded bash with Warner Bros. in Cap d’Antibes that was the toast of the Cannes Film Festival last month. It is generally a fun read. I have been a subscriber for a while.

Still, it was jarring to see that this confection has so many suitors, checkbooks at the ready, at a time when the butcher’s bill in American journalism grows longer and longer. Last week, The Los Angeles Times announced it will reduce its newsroom staff by 13 per cent, a month after the paper celebrated winning two Pulitzer Prizes. Last month, Vice, a company that once seemed like the invincible future of media, sought bankruptcy protection. BuzzFeed shuttered its Pulitzer Prize-winning news division. Insider slashed its staff by 10 per cent earlier this year; its journalists are currently on strike. The loss of jobs in any industry, particularly one as central to protecting our democracy as journalism, is always worrying. But what makes these losses particularly troubling is what many of these news organisations have in common: They sought to make quality news for the masses that cost little to nothing to consume.

In an ever more unequal world, it is perhaps not surprising that we are splitting into news haves and have-nots. Those who can afford and are motivated to pay for subscriptions to access high-quality news have a wealth of choices: newspapers such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal and The Financial Times compete for their business, along with magazines such as The New Yorker and The Atlantic. Niche subscription news products serving elite audiences are also thriving and attracting investment — publications like Punchbowl News, Puck and Air Mail. The people who subscribe to these publications tend to be affluent and educated.

It bodes ill for our democracy that those who cannot pay — or choose not to — are left with whatever our broken information ecosystem manages to serve up, a crazy quilt that includes television news of diminishing ambition, social media, aggregation sites, partisan news and talk radio. Yes, a few ambitious non-profit journalism outlets and



In an ever more unequal world, it is perhaps not surprising that we are splitting into news haves and have-nots.

quality digital news organisations remain, but they are hanging on by their fingernails.

I’ve been thinking about the problem of news for people who don’t pay for news since the last months of the 2016 presidential campaign, when I was offered a job as editor-in-chief at The Huffington Post, succeeding its namesake, Arianna Huffington.

Then Donald Trump won the presidential election, and I felt that maybe in that moment there was work to do elsewhere. Maybe HuffPost, with its huge home-page audience, could be a vessel for testing this question that had been nagging at me: How can you make a quality news product for people who were never going to pay for news? What would it mean to create a news organisation that saw itself not as writing about people who feel left out of the political, economic and social power arrangements, but for them? I took the job.

Capturing mass attention required access to expensive means of distribution: either a press and delivery trucks for print, or access to the public airwaves — which were licensed by the government — for broadcast. These costs allowed the news organisations that could afford them to corner the market on mass audiences, whose attention they then sold to advertisers. The handsome profits they reaped enabled investments in high-quality journalism, including high-risk and expensive endeavours such as investigative reporting and international coverage.

We all know what happened next. The internet, which initially promised to propel this old model even further by reducing distribution costs to near zero and creating the tools to sell ever more sophisticated kinds of advertising, instead created an economic crisis for journalism. Newspapers still had

to produce their expensive print products even as the advertisements that paid for them gave way to much cheaper and more highly targeted digital ones. Paid classified advertising evaporated. Local news cratered, and even titans like The New York Times faced existential threats.

Meanwhile, the digital revolution brought a new crop of news organisations roaring to life, unburdened by physical production costs and powered by new forms of information distribution. HuffPost figured out how to reverse-engineer news articles that matched information people were searching for on the internet. Then social media arrived, and with it the opportunity to build huge audiences across people’s social networks, an art perfected by BuzzFeed. Sensing the opportunity for hypergrowth, venture capitalists piled into the media business, sending the valuations of these digital upstarts into the stratosphere. On paper, at least.

Powered by those dollars, some companies invested in quality journalism, just like the old-school newspaper publishers had when the market buoyed them. HuffPost won a Pulitzer in 2012. Vice News produced groundbreaking television coverage of the far right. BuzzFeed News invested deeply in investigative journalism and international reporting, and also won a Pulitzer. It seemed, for a time, that a new form of quality mass media was emerging on the back of new technology.

And then it all fell apart. Advertisers began cutting out the middlemen — publishers — and buying advertising directly from social media platforms, which offered what was sold as laser-sharp targeting of a company’s most desirable customers. And after Trump, who

augured a new era of misinformation online and a ton of new headaches for social media companies, digital platforms largely fell out of love with news. The spigots that had gushed money-spinning traffic to new sites ran dry.

It turned out that I had arrived at the digital media party just as it started to wind down. It was almost impossible to sustain quality journalism with advertising alone. At HuffPost, we went through several rounds of layoffs in three years. Ultimately, I encouraged Verizon Media, which was then HuffPost’s owner, to sell the site to a company more focused on news. When it didn’t sell, I decided to leave. Less than a year later, Verizon all but paid BuzzFeed to take HuffPost off its hands.

HuffPost, with its big home-page audience, is less reliant on social media networks and has survived. It is smaller and less global than it once was, but it continues to employ talented and enterprising journalists who break news. But with all the layoffs, closures and bankruptcies it is hard not to feel that the old dream of digital news — lots of free, quality and diverse news from lots of different places — is mostly dead.

Instead, there are a few very successful media companies that charge people money for high-quality journalism. The best news organisations take their public service mission seriously, and do create news products that are free to all, like podcasts and email newsletters. Some have relatively porous paywalls, and even drop their paywalls entirely for coverage of major events involving public safety. But many surviving free consumer sites are cutting staff and focusing on aggregation — which is an important service, but not the same as investing in original journalism. Television news is dominated by talking heads as budgets for real newsgathering shrink. Cable news is in terminal decline in the age of cord cutting.

The current landscape means the mass audience that never paid for news and never will pay remains underserved, and that has big implications for the future of our country. Creating a shared reality was always the work of mass media. But our present and future look much more like the 1830s, with one class of people getting tips on summering in the South of France from Air Mail and everyone else reading whatever AI-generated aggregation the internet spits up.

For the better part of two centuries, news that was free — or at least felt free, owing to its reliance on advertising — was good business. But the advertising dollars that once underwrote ambitious mass journalism are now stuffing the pockets of technology billionaires. We’re all — even those of us willing and able to pay for quality journalism — the poorer for it.

— The New York Times.

Oman strives for food security

We saw in recent years how countries worldwide became panicky following interruptions in food supply due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflicts in Eastern Europe, in addition to the increasing frequency and severity of climate shocks.

All these calamities have forced some countries to ban their food exports leading to their shortage and sky-high prices. Many countries, dependent on imports, especially those in the Gulf region, began purchasing food items, especially grains, at high prices to maintain domestic supplies.

This food scenario and the potential threat to its supplies should serve as a stark reminder to policymakers in countries dependent on others for the food supply of their vulnerability to food supply disruptions and price hikes.

In the event of another global catastrophe again, such as a pandemic or a significant geopolitical or ecological or environmental upheaval, countries which are overwhelmingly reliant on food imports, could be confronted with a serious threat to their growth and progress.

These countries should seek ways to insulate themselves to ensure food security in their respective countries. As the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations suggests, “ensuring food security requires action in multiple dimensions”.

The governments, therefore, should ensure measures like improving the governance of food systems; responsible investments in agriculture and rural areas, in health and education; empowering small producers; and strengthening social protection mechanisms for risk reduction.

Oman is one of the countries in the Gulf region that has developed strategic planning and stringent policies to maintain its place as a



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SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOOD, AS DEFINED BY DECREASED DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTS, CONTINUES TO GROW IN THE SULTANATE. THIS FOCUS HAS SEEN THE GOVERNMENT INCREASE DOMESTIC PRODUCTION, REDUCING ITS RELIANCE ON IMPORTS.

food-secure nation. Self-sufficiency in food, as defined by decreased dependence on imports, continues to grow in the Sultanate.

This focus has seen the government increase domestic production, reducing its reliance on imports. By the end of 2040, it is set to achieve a target of food sufficiency of 100 per cent.

For this purpose, Oman’s leadership has developed a comprehensive food security strategy that sets forth a number of objectives seeking to enhance the country’s food basket in terms of production, import, storage and distribution. Chiming in on cue, the private sector is working side by side with different state entities in order to ensure food security.

The 2040 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy in Oman aims to promote agricultural sector sustainability through investments, increase economic revenues, create job opportunities for nationals, support rural communities and limit structural imbalances in the agricultural sector.

Oman’s food security situation has improved tremendously during the recent past. The country has ranked third in the Arab world, 35th in the Global Food Security Index report for the year 2022. The index is based on evaluation criteria derived from the globally adopted elements of the concept of food security, namely, accessibility to food, food availability, food quality and safety, food sustainability and adaptation, and the comparison includes 113 countries.

The Omani government opts to encourage its citizens to produce and invest in agriculture and livestock fields by providing them with lands to establish economically viable projects. Efforts have also been directed towards improving and updating relevant laws and executive regulations that organise agricultural development activities and maintain the sustainability of agricultural production and food safety.

GIFTS GET READY



Palestinian artisan Reham Shurab makes toy sheep at her home workshop in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Tuesday amidst preparations for Eid al Adha. – AFP

Fostering climate agency where it counts

The gap between the resources needed to achieve net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050 and the resources that are available currently amounts to trillions of dollars – and is still growing. As many developing and emerging economies lose ground in the wake of the pandemic, public and private capital must be mobilised to accelerate mitigation and adaptation efforts. But this requires governments to produce credible plans for achieving global sustainability goals, to design and implement these policies themselves, and to ensure that their strategies’ costs and benefits are fairly distributed.

Last November’s United Nations Climate Change Conference in Egypt (COP27), dubbed the “implementation COP,” laid the groundwork for a fairer, more robust climate-finance system. The conference’s “guidebook” called on the international community to advance a transformative agenda that accounts for developing countries’ national priorities and ensures equitable access to financial and technical resources. It included in its definition of climate justice “equitable access to quality and quantity climate financing” that considers “historical responsibility for climate change” and “supports resilient development pathways, leaving no one behind.” With this in mind, Egypt launched its Nexus of Water, Food and Energy investment programme during COP27, providing a practical and replicable



Erik Bergl f



Rania Al-Mashat

PREDICTABILITY IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT FOR THE POOR, AND FAIRNESS IS ESSENTIAL TO WINNING LONG-TERM PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE MEASURES

model for ensuring a just net-zero transition through the NWFE’s concept of “country platforms.” These platforms are meant to help countries build state capacities, and emphasise the importance of developing countries’ agency (or “ownership,” in aid parlance).

NWFE (pronounced “nuafiy,” which is Arabic for “fulfilling pledges”) builds on Egypt’s commitments under the 2015 Paris climate agreement and aims to attract financial support for the country’s development agenda while accelerating climate action. The stakeholders include multilateral development banks (MDBs) such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the African Development Bank, the European Investment Bank, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

The NWFE platform integrates several high-priority water, food and energy projects worth a total of \$14.7 billion. The projects seek to replace existing inefficient thermal power plants with renewable energy; enhance small farmers’ adaptation to climate risks; modernise farming practices to increase irrigation efficiency and boost crop yields; strengthen the resilience of vulnerable regions; create water desalination capacity; and establish early-warning systems.

By using innovative financing



Smoke rises from chimneys at a factory in the port of Dunkirk. – Reuters file photo

mechanisms to mobilise public funds, technical assistance and private investment, Egypt seeks to leverage its partnerships with the MDBs and other development stakeholders to accelerate its climate agenda. This would support the country’s green transition and show that climate action and economic development can go hand in hand. Egypt can also rely on these partnerships to help it phase out “brown” oil, gas, and mineral assets. For example, partial concessional financial support from the United States will enable the country to retrain (or retire) fossil-fuel workers.

Yet, the most innovative instrument may be debt-for-climate swaps, whereby Egypt receives partial debt relief from,

say, Germany, in exchange for commitments to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions. These types of performance-linked financial instruments could provide many developing and emerging countries with an opportunity to lower their debt burden or obtain low-cost funds. By tying development assistance to progress on a common global target, such swaps could also prove to be significant in mitigating the worst effects of climate change.

As a 2018 report by the G20 Eminent Persons Group on Global Financial Governance notes, collective action through country platforms has the power to unlock public and private investment to achieve climate-resilient and sustainable development. Such

investment platforms can take different forms. For example, Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) – first introduced during COP26 in Scotland in 2021 – aim to direct private capital towards decarbonisation targets in the energy sector. Since launching in South Africa, JETPs have also been established in Indonesia, India, Vietnam and Senegal.

Egypt’s NWFE initiative provides a useful model for how developing and emerging countries can expedite the implementation of their national climate agendas in line with global priorities. By encouraging coordination among domestic and external stakeholders, such programmes could help bridge the information gap, establish shared standards and increase the number of bankable projects.

But the platform’s success hinges on domestic agency, transparency and accountability in managing these partnerships. Most importantly, the green transition must be perceived as just in order to be sustainable. Predictability is particularly important for the poor, and fairness is essential to winning long-term public support for climate measures. To achieve these goals, governments must lead on climate finance. The net-zero transition depends on it.

  Project Syndicate, 2023

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Oman triumph over Lebanon in Al Watani Earthlenik WAFF U23

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

The Oman Olympic team kickstarted their group C campaign at Al Watani Earthlenik WAFF U23 championship with a resounding 1-0 victory over Lebanon, at Al Madina Stadium in Iraq.

The first half witnessed an impressive display of technical prowess from the Oman team. They applied relentless pressure on their Lebanese counterpart, earning several set pieces. However, these opportunities went untapped due to ineffective execution.

In the 40th minute of the first half, Nasser al Rawahi was awarded a penalty kick. Taking charge, Olympic striker Salim al Abdulsalam skilfully netted the ball, granting the Oman

team a crucial 1-0 lead at halftime.

The second half saw the red warriors enter the field with a determination to solidify their dominance and seek a second goal, providing a sense of security and confidence to the players. Meanwhile, the Lebanese team showcased a different approach, employing a fast-paced, high-pressure style to disrupt the Omani players and find opportunities to level the score.

The final minutes of the second half witnessed a thrilling display of technical prowess from both teams, as they aimed to breach each other's defences. Despite their efforts, neither team managed to find the back of the net. As a result, the referee signalled the end of the match, declaring the victory of the Oman national Olympic team with a clear goal.

Salem al Abdalsalam, the striker of our Olympic national team, was honoured with the best player award in the match against the Lebanese team.

In other matches of the first round, the Palestinian team secured a clean goal victory over Syria in the group B, while the Iraqi team settled for a draw against their Jordanian counterparts with a 2-2 scoreline in the group A.

Looking ahead, the Oman team, under the guidance of the coach, Akram Habrish, is set to face the Yemen team in the second round on Wednesday evening. The team is determined to achieve a positive outcome in the match against Yemen, ensuring their qualification and direct passage to the semi-final round of the Al Watani Earthlenik WAFF U23 championship.

RACING CHAMP RETURNS HOME TO WARM WELCOME

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Oman's national racing champion, Ahmad al Harthy, and the Oman Racing with TF Sport team were accorded a warm welcome after arriving back from achieving the 'proudest day of career' at 24H Le Mans with remarkable P2 finish in GTE Am class.

The Oman team rewrote the endurance racing history books once again in remarkable style over the weekend, 10th/11th June, with a truly exceptional performance to finish second in the GTE Am class on their 24H Le Mans debut.

Hailing the proudest day of his glorious motor racing career so far, an ecstatic Al Harthy scaled the Le Mans podium on Sunday afternoon with team-mates Michael Dinan and Charlie

Eastwood to put the icing on the cake of an outstanding performance in the 100th anniversary 24H Le Mans.

Dedicating the dream runner-up finish to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, and expressing immense gratitude to his partners, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, Al Harthy also saluted the whole Oman Racing with TF Sport squad for exceptional work.

"This is the first time I think I've ever been truly speechless – wow! What a dream come true this is, to finish on the podium in P2 at the world's largest and greatest event ever in endurance racing, and at our first attempt as well, is something I can't describe. This is the big one, the Le Mans 24 Hours, and we got it – we got onto the podium," a



jubilant Ahmad al Harthy said.

In addition to the prestige of finishing second on his debut in the world-famous endurance racing classic,

in the Centenary event no less, the performance elevates Al Harthy and his team-mates from eighth to second in the FIA World Endurance Championship standings – the race also forming round four of the WEC season.

"The race had everything you could think of, from the beginning to the end, it was one of the most challenging races and for it to be at the 100 year centenary race, it's amazing. I am so proud of everyone, Michael, Charlie and everybody at the team for an amazing job all week here in Le Mans.

"I dedicate this win to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, for their unwavering support over the years. We dreamt of this day, we managed to make it happen and we saw the flag of Oman flying at Le

Mans! It's a very proud moment for me, the proudest day of my racing career, so I say a huge thank you to all of our supporters and everybody back home in Oman, this is for everyone."

During the event, Ashraf bin Hamad al Maamari, CEO of People, Technology and Culture at OQ, stated, "OQ's sponsorship of the OQ Champion Ahmad al Harthy epitomises His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's profound interest in sports, as mentioned during his meeting with Shaikhs and dignitaries of the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate on January 9, 2022. His Majesty the Sultan emphasised that sports have become an industry and an integral part of the country's development process. Additionally, it reflects our belief in the importance of nurturing Omani champions across various sports on a global stage".

THE Denver Nuggets sealed their first title in franchise history on Monday, defeating the Miami Heat 94-89 to end a 47-season wait for a maiden NBA championship.

Nikola Jokic scored 28 points with 16 rebounds as the Nuggets won the best-of-seven NBA Finals 4-1 to bring the Mile High City an NBA crown as a sellout crowd roared in delight and pondered what more the young squad could achieve.

"I've got news for everybody out there. We're not satisfied with one," Nuggets coach Michael Malone said afterwards. "We want more."

The championship filled the final gap in the impressive resume of Serbian star Jokic, a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player and five-time All-Star centre in his eighth NBA campaign.

Two days after countryman Novak Djokovic won the French Open for his record 23rd Grand Slam tennis crown, Jokic was named the NBA Finals MVP.

"For us he's the best ever of course," Jokic said of Djokovic. "Now we have our NBA championship. It's a really good moment to be a Serbian."

Jokic delivered on a night when the team struggled with early shooting futility but blanked Miami for more than five minutes of the fourth quarter.

"It was amazing effort by the team," Jokic said. "It was an ugly game. We couldn't make shots. But at the end we figured it out, how to defend and we scored 90 points. That's why we won. I'm just happy we won the game."

"It's good. The job is done and we can go home now."

Michael Porter Jr. added 16 points and 13 rebounds and Jamal Murray added 14 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets.

"We had the belief from the get-go," Murray said. "It's just great to see it through."

"To do it with this group of guys, nothing could feel better than this," Porter added.

Jimmy Butler led Miami with 21 points while Bam Adebayo added 20 and 12 rebounds.

Denver was the playoff top seed in the Western Conference while the eighth-seeded Heat, who had to win a play-in game just to reach the playoffs, lost in the finals for the third time in 10 seasons.

"One hell of a basketball team that we couldn't really find enough solutions to be able to get us over the top," Heat coach Erik Spoelstra said.

With their seasons on the line, players brought intensity and physical defending over the final minutes to create an electric atmosphere inside Ball Arena.

The Nuggets, down by as many as 10 points in the first half, pulled within 51-44 at half-time despite going 1-for-15 from 3-point range, the worst-ever NBA Finals shooting half from beyond the arc.

Out of a movie

A Murray jumper gave Denver an 81-76 lead with 6:43 remaining while the Heat began the fourth quarter hitting only 2-for-14 from the floor and going scoreless for more than five minutes.

Butler, who had struggled all night, sank back-to-back 3-pointers and made three free throws after a controversial foul on Denver's Aaron Gordon was upheld on video review.

Butler and Jokic traded hoops and Butler followed with two free throws to give Miami an 89-88 lead.

Bruce Brown answered with a rebound basket to put Denver ahead 90-89.

"Those last three or four minutes felt like a scene out of a movie," Spoelstra said. "Two teams in the centre of the ring throwing haymaker after haymaker."

"It will probably rank as our hardest, competitive, most active defensive game of the season, and it still fell short."

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope stole a pass by Butler and sank two clutch free throws with 24 seconds remaining to give Denver a 92-89 edge.

"For me it was all about defence," Caldwell-Pope said. "We've got to get stops. Defense was going to win us a championship. I always told them that."

Butler missed a 3-pointer, Brown grabbed a rebound for Denver and then made two free throws to seal the victory with 14 seconds remaining. — AFP



DENVER NUGGETS WIN NBA FINALS FOR FIRST TITLE



MBAPPE

TELLS PSG HE WILL NOT RENEW CONTRACT IN 2024



PARIS: Kylian Mbappe has told Paris St Germain he will not take up the option of a one-year extension in his contract when it expires next June, L'Equipe reported, with the France forward adding that the club had been notified of his decision last year.

Mbappe, a World Cup winner in 2018, confirmed his decision in a letter to the club and could even be sold this summer as PSG will seek to avoid losing him for free, according to the local reports.

The player would be free to negotiate and sign a pre-contract agreement with a new club from January should he decide to see out the remaining year of his deal at PSG.

In a statement sent to news agency AFP on Tuesday, Mbappe said PSG “were informed on July 15, 2022” of

his decision not to extend his contract, adding that “the only aim of the letter was to confirm what had already been spoken about previously”.

On Tuesday, Mbappe dismissed reports saying he wanted to join Real Madrid in the close season transfer window, saying on Twitter: “I’ve already said that I’m going to continue next season at PSG where I’m very happy.”

If Mbappe sees out the remainder of his contract, PSG risk losing him for free at the end of the 2023-24 season. According to Swiss research group CIES Football Observatory, Mbappe is worth around 250 million euros (\$270 million).

The French club, owned by Qatar Sports Investments, have already lost Lionel Messi on a free transfer after the

Argentina forward left at the end of his two-year contract to join Major League Soccer’s Inter Miami.

PSG have not responded to a request for comment.

Mbappe was widely tipped to join Real Madrid last season but rejected a move to Spain to sign a contract extension with PSG.

The 24-year-old has long been admired by Real, who had a bid reported to be as high as 200 million euros (\$215 million) turned down in 2021.

Real, who have already agreed a deal to sign England midfielder Jude Bellingham from Borussia Dortmund, could step up their interest in Mbappe following striker Karim Benzema’s move to Al-Ittihad in Saudi Arabia.

Mbappe, one of the game’s finest

talents who burst onto the scene as a teenager, has won five Ligue 1 titles with PSG but the Champions League trophy has remained out of reach.

PSG signed Mbappe from AS Monaco in 2017 in a deal reported to be around 180 million euros, making him the world’s second-most expensive signing after Neymar, who joined them from Barcelona for 222 million euros.

Mbappe became PSG’s all-time top scorer after netting 41 goals in 43 games in all competitions and helped the capital club win a record 11th French title.

He was named France captain after leading them to a second straight World Cup final in December, where he netted a hat-trick against Argentina before losing on penalties. (\$1 = 0.9281 euros) (\$1 = 0.9265 euros). — Reuters



Oman to compete in 5 events at 15th Arab Sports Games

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

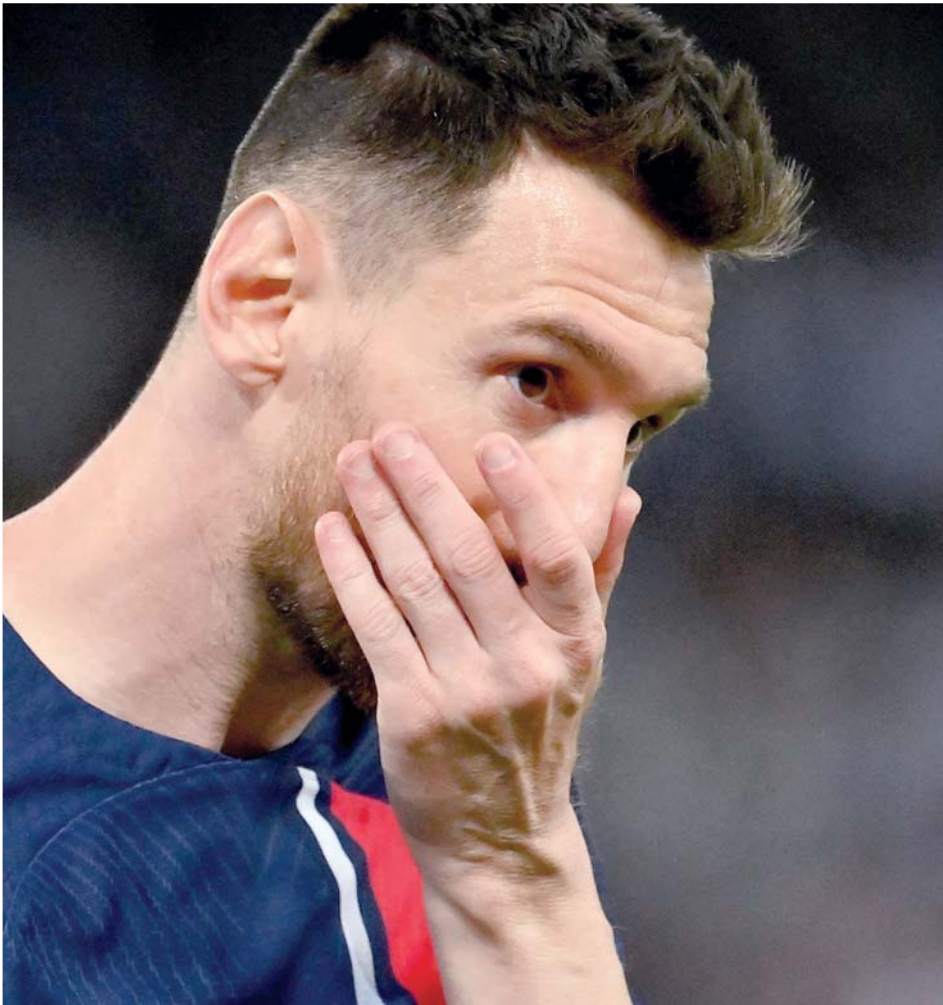
The Oman Olympic Association (OOA), headed by Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of the Committee, announced the participation Oman at of the 15th edition of the Arab Sports Games, hosted by Algeria from July 5 to 15.

Oman will take part in football, weightlifting, athletics, sailing and athletics for disabled. The competitions draw will take place on June 21-22.

The tournament will feature 22 events namely football, handball, volleyball, basketball, athletics, boxing, judo, wrestling, swimming, karate, gymnastics, badminton, cycles, weightlifting, sailing, table tennis, iron ball, fencing, chess and three games for disabled.

These competitions will take place in 5 Algerian cities; 11 in Algiers, four in Oran, two each in in Tipaza and Constantine. The football matches will be held in Annaba.

The Board of Directors also approved the participation of Oman teams that fall under the Oman Olympic Committee in the second World Beach Games, which will be held in Indonesia’s Bali from August 5 to 12; the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, from September 23 to October 8; the Sixth Asian Indoor Games, hosted by the Thai capital, Bangkok, from November 17 to 26; and the first edition of GCC sports tournament for juniors in UAE in December.



Messi confirms triumphant 2022 World Cup was probably his last

BEIJING: Lionel Messi on Tuesday confirmed he “doesn’t think” he will play at another World Cup in an interview with Chinese media, after the 35-year-old led Argentina to victory at last year’s tournament in Qatar.

“I have said several times before that I don’t think so, that (2022) was my last World Cup,” he said when asked by China’s Titan Sports in a video interview if he might feature at the 2026 tournament in North America.

“I will see how things go but in theory I don’t think I will be around for the next

World Cup,” he added in Spanish in the video published on the app Kuaishou.

The seven-time Ballon d’Or winner is currently in Beijing where Argentina will play a friendly against Australia on Thursday.

His comments come after he said earlier this year to Argentinian newspaper Ole that it would be “very difficult” to play at another World Cup.

He will turn 39 during the next tournament.

Messi last week announced he would join MLS side Inter Miami after his

two-year deal with Paris Saint-Germain came to an end.

Argentina will play Thursday’s friendly against Australia at the 68,000-capacity Workers’ Stadium in Beijing.

The match is a repeat of the last-16 tie between the teams at the World Cup in Doha, which Argentina won 2-1.

With Chinese fans desperate to see the former Barcelona star in action, tickets have been rapidly snapped up despite being sold at prices rising to 4,800 Yuan (\$671). — AFP



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Six new Souroh residential neighbourhoods to unlock major investment opportunities

Growth potential: Integrated residential neighbourhoods to come up in Al Rustaq, Sur, Khasab, Salalah, Suhar and Bidbid

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

Investment opportunities linked to the planned implementation of six new mega-scale integrated residential neighbourhoods were broadly showcased at a symposium held at Barka on Tuesday by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

Discussions during the daylong forum focusing on investment opportunities for the private sector available under the National Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods (Souroh).

The event was held under the auspices of Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman – OCCI. In attendance were representatives from the real estate development, construction, and engineering consultancy sectors, among other stakeholders.

Following the tremendous success of the Ministry's maiden Integrated Residential Neighbourhood, named 'Hay Al Naseem' near Barka, six new neighbourhood projects have been

unveiled for implementation over the next several years.

Covering a total area of nearly 2 million sq metres, these integrated neighbourhoods are due to come up in Al Rustaq, Sur, Khasab, Salalah, Suhar and Bidbid.

Speaking at the forum, Eng Hamoud bin Salem al Saadi, OCCI Chairman in Al Batinah South Governorate, said the Souroh programme represents an opportunity for partnership and collaboration between the government and various sectors involved in this significant domain, including real estate, construction, and engineering consultancy firms.

The real estate sector, he said, plays a pivotal role in meeting housing demands, improving community and economic conditions, driving economic growth, enhancing infrastructure,

and creating new employment opportunities.

It is considered a vital sector for economic growth and urban development as it caters to the housing needs of residents, he said.

"We firmly believe that the success of the National Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods (Souroh) primarily relies on partnership, cooperation, and integration between the government and the private sector. This initiative represents the culmination of the government's efforts to support and strengthen the real estate sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Establishing the appropriate investment climate, supporting and developing this sector are essential for sustainable growth and inclusive development in Oman."

Eng Osama bin Nasser al Harbi, Director of the Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods

Department at the Ministry, said in a white paper that the Souroh Initiative aims to embrace various alternatives and solutions to provide adequate and affordable housing for different segments of society. She outlined the contracting and construction scopes linked to the neighbourhood projects, the roles and responsibilities of investors and contractors, and the scope of work for real estate developers.

This included conducting feasibility studies, implementing housing units, designing the project, and creating multiple designs of residential units that align with the overall project design, she noted.

Eng Mariam bint Hamad al

Sharjiyah, Director of the Real Estate Development Services Centre at the Ministry, outlined procedures for opening escrow accounts for real estate development projects, as well as the necessary documents to secure the buyer's rights. The official also provided an overview of the ministry's "Tadweer" platform, which aims to strengthen the housing and urban planning sector through partnerships with the private sector. She stressed the importance of registering through the development platform to obtain licenses for projects, ensuring guaranteed real estate investments.

Plan for integrated development of Ras Al Hadd Airport

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

With stunningly diverse Al Sharqiyah South now being positioned as a new hub for eco-tourism in Oman, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has embarked on a plan to support the integrated development of Ras Al Hadd Airport to help drive the governorate's tourism and economic growth.

To this end, the Authority has invited qualified consultants to bid for its contract to provide consultancy services covering the feasibility study, master-plan and concept design of Ras Al Hadd Airport which, while partially built, has yet to be brought into operation.

"CAA aims to develop Ras Al Hadd Airport area to (enhance its appeal to) new business opportunities, while

CATALYSING GROWTH: CAA TENDER SEEKS TO APPOINT CONSULTANT TO MASTER-PLAN AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT TO SUPPORT AL SHARQIYAH SOUTH'S TOURISM AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

promoting tourist facilities in the governorate, as part of Oman Vision 2040," the Authority said.

"CAA intends to invite consultants to provide a feasibility study, master plan and concept

design, by analysing accurate and up-to-date data on the existing airport area and the proposal for further enhanced development of the airport area, including – but not limited to – the analysis of the potentials for Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO), cargo, hotel facilities, commercial and mixed use development, while also identifying potential investors and lessors (local and international), etc."

TURN TO PAGE 14

ABRA HOLDINGS LTD OFFERS TO BUY UP TO ADDITIONAL 15.42% OF OMAN CEMENT COMPANY SAOG

Abra Holdings Ltd ("Abra") is extending an offer to acquire an additional 15.42% or less (the "Offer") of the issued share capital (the "Issued Capital") of Oman Cement Company SAOG ("OCCI") pursuant to the Takeover and Acquisition Regulation (Capital Market Authority Decision No. 2/2019 (the "Takeover Regulation")) to the shareholders of OCCI who are registered as of the Record Date set out below (the "OCCI Shareholders").

Key Dates:

Record Date:

13 June 2023

Offer Opening Date:

14 June 2023

Offer Closing Date:

25 June 2023

Offer Price:

A cash only offer of OMR 0.379 per share, which represents (1) 17.3% premium versus the volume weighted average price ("VWAP") of the last 5 months starting from 1 January 2023; (2) 16.4% premium versus the last three months' VWAP; and (3) 13.5% premium versus the closing price of 4 June 2023.

Important:

The Offer is open to all of the OCCI Shareholders as of Record Date. Abra intends to acquire up to an additional 15.42% or less of the Issued Capital (being 51,017,895 shares). This would increase Abra's shareholding in OCCI to 75% of the Issued Capital. OCCI Shareholders are under no obligation to accept the Offer. However, if an OCCI Shareholder wishes to accept the Offer, such OCCI Shareholder must indicate her/his/its intention by duly completing and signing the Acceptance Form that will be available in the on the websites of Uthmaniyah Capital SAOC and the Muscat Stock Exchange.

Offer Manager:

Uthmaniyah Capital SAOC

For any queries related to the offer, kindly contact following in Uthmaniyah Capital SAOC:

Talal Al Balushi

Vice President - Brokerage

Tel: +968 24 949 051 / 99267286

Email: talal@u-capital.net

Hunaina Banatwala

Vice President - Institutional Sales

Tel: +968 24 949 053 / 99378351

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The offer document and acceptance forms are available on Muscat Stock Exchange (www.msx.om) & Uthmaniyah Capital SAOC website (www.u-capital.net)

Nama restructuring to streamline supply services and power distribution



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

International law firm Trowers & Hamlin advised groups of over 30 lenders (conventional and Islamic) and hedge providers in connection with the restructuring exercise being carried out by the Nama group of entities across the electricity distribution and supply sectors in Oman.

The reorganisation is aimed to streamline the operations in the electricity distribution and supply sector in all governorates of Oman (other than Dhofar) and to reduce the overall costs involved.

The exercise is pursuant to a Royal Directive and driven by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and the Authority for Public Services Regulation. It will result in a merger and consolidation of the relevant group entities into two companies – one company for the purposes of supply and the other for the purposes of distribution.

Nama group is fully owned by Oman Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund in Oman. It commenced its commercial operations on May 1, 2005, with operations spanning across procurement, generation, transmission, distribution and supply of electricity and water services in the Sultanate of Oman.

Trowers advised the existing lenders (both conventional

and Islamic) and the hedge providers on all matters in relation to the reorganisation exercise, particularly on various lenders and regulatory consents required, transfer of debt obligations, issues involving non-consenting lenders, the preparation of the suite of amendment and novation agreements and liaising with different stakeholders to align commercial and legal position across all facilities.

Salman Ahmed, Partner and Head of the International Banking & Capital Markets practice in Trowers & Hamlin, Oman commented: “We congratulate Nama, its financiers and hedge providers, many of them with whom we already have a close and long-term collaborative relationship, on successfully concluding this landmark exercise.

We are pleased and honoured to have supported the parties on one of the largest restructuring deals in Oman and also in the GCC region to date.

Our ability to field a cross-border team meant that the financiers and the hedge providers always had access to expert advice on issues as and when they arose, allowing Nama to achieve its timeline.

This transaction demonstrates Oman’s leadership and long-term vision in achieving operational efficiency in the energy sector ultimately benefiting the energy consumers.”

Fitch revises outlooks for three major Omani companies

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 13

Fitch Ratings has revised the outlooks for three major Omani companies — Oman’s OQ, Energy Development Oman SAOC (EDO) and Omantel — to BB/Positive. The revision of the outlooks for these companies reflected the revision of the outlook on Oman’s ‘BB’ sovereign rating in April 2023.

The upgrade in outlook also reflects Fitch’s confidence in the companies’ ability to navigate the challenging economic environment and manage their debt obligations effectively.

Fitch Ratings is a global credit rating agency that provides credit opinions, research and data to investors worldwide.

The agency assesses the creditworthiness of companies and countries based on their financial strength and ability to meet their debt obligations.

OQ SAOC is an integrated energy company that operates in the upstream and downstream sectors of the oil and gas industry in Oman.

It is fully-owned by the Omani



FITCH RATINGS’ REVISION OF THE OUTLOOKS FOR THESE COMPANIES TO BB/POSITIVE INDICATES THAT THEY HAVE A STABLE OUTLOOK WITH POSITIVE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE UPGRADES.

government via Oman Investment Authority and was established to strengthen and centralise the country’s oil and gas industry.

The company’s revised outlook reflects Fitch’s expectation that OQ will maintain its strong liquidity position and continue to generate positive free cash flow.

EDO is a wholly state-owned Omani company works on the

development of energy and alternative energy sector in line with Oman Vision 2040. It owns 60% of Block 6 oil concession, 100% of Block 6 non-associated gas concession, and 100% of Hydrogen Oman LLC.

Fitch’s revision of EDO’s outlook to BB/Positive reflects the agency’s expectation that the company will benefit from the strong support of its shareholders, as well as its diversified project portfolio and strong financial position.

Omantel is a leading telecommunications company in Oman that provides a range of services including fixed-line,

mobile, broadband and data services.

The company is 51% owned by the government, through wholly-owned investment funds, with the balance held by Omani pension funds and free float.

The company’s revised outlook reflects Fitch’s expectation that Omantel will continue to maintain its leading market position in Oman, supported by its strong brand recognition and diverse revenue streams.

Fitch Ratings’ revision of the outlooks for these companies to BB/Positive indicates that they have a stable outlook with positive potential for future upgrades.

This is a positive development for these companies as it reflects their strong financial position and ability to meet their debt obligations.

In August 2022, Fitch Ratings upgraded Oman’s Long-Term Foreign-Currency Issuer Default Rating (IDR) to ‘BB’ from ‘BB-’ with a stable outlook. This upgrade was based on Oman’s improving fiscal position due to higher oil prices and fiscal consolidation measures implemented by the government.

Plan for integrated development of Ras Al Hadd Airport

FROM PAGE 13

In keeping with its broad appeal as a distinctive destination for nature tourism, Al Sharqiyah South has been attracting investments in a range of hospitality projects catering to all kinds of tourists.

The most prestigious of these is Diar Ras Al Hadd, a five-star eco-themed resort backed by the partnership of Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company and Omran. The high-end development will offer 700

residential properties in addition to hotel rooms and villas.

Some elements of the Ras Al Hadd Airport are already in place, constructed nearly a decade ago in two phases. It includes a 4 km-long and 75 metre wide runway, complete with apron, taxiway and other facilities.

A contract for a final third phase, covering the construction of a passenger terminal building, is yet to be awarded.

Initial plans for the airport envisaged a roughly 5,600 sq metre

terminal with a capacity to handle around 500,000 passengers per year, along with the installation of four passenger boarding bridges.

With South Al Sharqiyah pulling in significant numbers of visitors for, among other attractions, turtle-watching, diverse bird and wildlife, historical landmarks and maritime traditions, tourist inflows are anticipated to grow exponentially when a full-fledged airport is brought into operation.

This growth also has the

potential to drive investment in new aircraft maintenance services, air freight, specialised tourism service providers and hotel projects – opportunities that the new master-plan seeks to unlock.

Competing for the consultancy contract are a number of international firms, including Flughafen Munchen, ADP Ingénierie, LEA Associates South Asia, Tecnica Y Proyectos and Unstudio Middle East, among a host of local firms as well. Bids close on June 20, 2023.

Suhar Industrial City attracts investments worth RO 44 million

SUHAR: Suhar Industrial City, an affiliate of Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), witnessed a remarkable activity in the investment movement and growth in a number of its digital indicators during Q1 2023, receiving 24 investment applications, 16 of which were signed in various industrial, service and commercial activities with an investment volume of RO 44 million.

The total number of projects in the industrial city, with a total land area of 30 million sqm, reached 375 projects, with a total investment volume of RO 2.2 billion, employing 13,828 employees, with an Omanisation rate of 41.7 per cent.

Eng Abdullah bin Ahmed al Mayasi (pictured), Director General of Suhar Industrial City, said, “Madayn has made great strides in completing the project to develop the seventh phase of the industrial city, with the completion rate reaching 95 per cent.



The project includes a 32-kilometre road network equipped with lighting poles and a drinking water network and drainage system, in addition to a wastewater treatment plant with a capacity of 2,000 cubic metres, a rainwater drainage network, a flood wall, an irrigation network and two reservoirs to supply water

with a total capacity of 2,700 cubic metres.

He explained that Madayn had tendered a draft phase study and assessment (1-6) on the study and evaluation of existing infrastructure and the development of plans for the treatment and development of services provided in phases 1 to 6 on an area exceeding 18 million square meters.

In addition, the implementation of the security gates project is aimed at improving the efficiency of loading and unloading operations and supply chains through control and monitor of the entry and exit of trucks into

and out of the city.

With regard to the “plastics complex” project, he noted that the project had begun to attract one of the bags manufacturing projects, including polyethylene bags and plastic with an investment size of up to RO 2 million on an area of 12,000 sqm.

The Industrial City, in collaboration with OQ Group, has worked to market the project externally by organising visits to major plastic manufacturers in various countries of the world and providing several incentives and concessions to invest in the project.

The Director General of Suhar Industrial City added that the city plans during the next phase to establish a solar cell plant with a capacity of 86 megawatts as a first stage, to keep pace with the global transformation of clean energy and to contribute to achieving zero-carbon neutrality for the Oman 2050.

The project is expected to be completed in Q1 of 2025. — ONA

National Finance organises blood donation initiative

MUSCAT: National Finance, a leading financial services provider, has successfully concluded its blood donation initiative, held in commemoration of World Blood Donor Day.

The event, hosted at the company’s headquarters, witnessed an overwhelming response from employees, who wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to make a difference.

Their selfless act of donating blood exemplified a remarkable sense of unity. Impressively, a significant count of individuals registered forward as blood donors, totalling 150.

This notable participation contributed to the cause of saving lives and addressing the ongoing challenges related to the blood supply. A commendable number of units of blood were collected during the drive. These notable statistics stand as a testament to the generosity of the National Finance team, actively supporting the well-being of the



community.

Tariq al Farsi, the Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, expressed his gratitude and pride for the enthusiastic participation of employees and the successful outcome of the blood donation drive. He remarked, “We are thrilled to have made a significant impact in the lives of others through our blood donation Initiative.

Our employees’ overwhelming response and active involvement showcase their compassion and dedication to making a difference. We believe in the power of collective action and this event exemplifies the spirit of giving back to the community that lies at the core of National Finance’s values.”



Oil prices rise on bargain hunting as demand worries weigh



A worker fills a vehicle with petrol at a gas station in Riyadh. — Reuters

LONDON: Oil prices rose on Tuesday on apparent bargain hunting, recovering some ground from the previous day's plunge.

But gains were limited as investors remained cautious ahead of key policy decisions by central banks and on weak economic data from China.

Brent crude futures climbed \$1.47, or 2.1%, to \$73.53 a barrel by 1034 GMT. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude was at \$68.59 a barrel, up \$1.20, or 1.8%. Equities, which often trade in tandem with oil, also rose.

Brent's six-month backwardation, a market structure whereby shorter-dated futures trade above longer-dated ones, has fallen to its lowest since March at around \$1.30, indicating faltering market confidence in demand outstripping supply over the year.

"For market participants to start building up long positions again, they likely need to see larger inventory declines," said UBS strategist Giovanni Staunovo, adding he expected this to happen within weeks.

Both benchmarks fell around \$3 a barrel on Monday after analysts highlighted rising global supplies and concerns about demand growth just ahead of US inflation data due at 1230 GMT and a US Fed monetary policy meeting concluding on Wednesday.

Most market participants expect the Fed to leave interest rates unchanged.

The Fed's rate hikes have strengthened the greenback, making dollar-denominated commodities more expensive for holders of other currencies weighing on oil prices, so a rate hike pause could be bullish.

Elsewhere, the European Central Bank is expected to hike interest rates by another quarter percentage point on Thursday while the Bank of Japan is expected to maintain its ultra-loose policy on Friday.

— Reuters

Opec holds oil demand view steady despite economic growth warning

LONDON: Opec left its forecast for 2023 global oil demand growth steady for a fourth month on Tuesday, though the producer group warned that the world economy faced rising uncertainty and slower growth in the second half of the year.

Global oil demand this year will rise by 2.35 million barrels per day (bpd), or 2.4%, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) said in its monthly report. This was virtually unchanged from the 2.33 million bpd forecast last month.

"There are rising uncertainties regarding economic growth in the second half of 2023 amid ongoing high inflation, already elevated key interest rates and tight labour markets," Opec said in its report.

"Moreover, it is still unclear as to how and when the geopolitical conflict in Eastern Europe might be resolved," it added, referring to Ukraine.

Opec+, which comprises Opec, Russia and other allies, has been taking more steps to support the oil market in 2023. On June 4 the group announced its second package of output cuts since April and Saudi Arabia pledged a voluntary cut for July.



A man fixes a sign with Opec's logo next to its headquarters' entrance in Vienna, Austria. — Reuters

Crude prices, however, have remained under pressure from concern over slowing economic growth and demand.

The Brent crude benchmark added to an earlier gain after the report was released, rising 2.5%

gain to trade above \$73 a barrel. Chinese oil demand is now expected to rise by 840,000 bpd, Opec said, up from the 800,000 bpd forecast last month, adding to a recovery after strict Covid-19 containment measures were

scrapped.

Opec left its 2023 global economic growth forecast at 2.6% and said momentum was slowing. A graphic in the report showed that growth could slow to 0.1% quarter on quarter in the final

three months of the year.

Potential upside factors, other than a drop in inflation, include an even stronger than previously expected economic rebound in China and the United States being able to maintain its first-half momentum, Opec said.

The report also showed Opec's oil production fell in May, reflecting the impact of earlier output cuts pledged by Opec+ as well as some unplanned outages.

The Opec report said its May output fell by 464,000 bpd to 28.06 million bpd as voluntary cuts, promised by Saudi Arabia and other members, took effect.

Last year, with prices weakening, Opec+ agreed to a 2 million bpd cut in its output target from November — its largest reduction since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. On April 2 several Opec+ members pledged voluntary cuts that added to the deal agreed last year.

Opec kept its estimate of the oil demand needed to balance the market at 29.3 million bpd, pointing to a supply deficit if Opec keeps pumping at May's rate and makes the further promised curbs. — Reuters

US consumer prices slow in May; core inflation sticky



A shopper buys food at a supermarket in Chicago. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices rose moderately in May, leading to the smallest annual increase in inflation in more than two years, though underlying price pressures remained strong, supporting views that the Federal Reserve would keep interest rates unchanged on Wednesday while adopting a hawkish posture.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased 0.1% last month as gasoline prices fell, the Labour Department said on Tuesday.

The CPI gained 0.4% in April. In the 12 months through April, the CPI climbed 4.0%.

That was the smallest year-on-year increase since March 2021 and followed a 4.9% rise in April.

The annual CPI peaked at 9.1% in June 2022, which was the biggest increase since November 1981, and is subsiding as last year's large rises drop out of the calculation.

Economists polled had forecast the CPI gaining 0.2% last month and increasing 4.1% year-on-year. The report was published as Fed officials prepared to gather for a two-day policy meeting.

— Reuters

China cuts short-term borrowing costs to support recovery

SHANGHAI: China's central bank lowered a short-term lending rate for the first time in 10 months on Tuesday, to help restore market confidence and prop up a stalling post-pandemic recovery in the world's second-largest economy.

The cut to the lending rate signals possible easing for longer-term rates over the next week and beyond as demand and investor sentiment weaken, adding to the case for urgent policy stimulus to sustain growth.

The People's Bank of China (PBOC) cut its seven-day reverse repo rate by 10 basis points to 1.90% from 2.00% on Tuesday, when it injected 2 billion yuan (\$279.97 million) through the short-term bond instrument.

"The central bank's rate cut decision was not a complete surprise to the market," said Ken Cheung, chief Asian FX strategist at Mizuho Bank. "Commercial banks have already lowered deposit rates, and PBOC governor Yi Gang also mentioned strengthening counter-cyclical adjustment recently."

The yuan hit a six-month low of 7.1680 per dollar after the rate decision while yields on China's benchmark 10-year government bonds fell to a fresh 7-1/2-month low.

Cheung said the PBOC may have wanted to mitigate the impact of any future policy easing on the Chinese yuan ahead of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting this week, which is keenly watched by financial markets.

China remains an outlier among global central banks as it loosens monetary policy to shore up growth while its major peers raise interest rates to counter



A man on a phone walks past the People's Bank of China in Beijing. — Reuters

THE YUAN HIT A SIX-MONTH LOW OF 7.1680 PER DOLLAR AFTER THE RATE DECISION WHILE YIELDS ON CHINA'S BENCHMARK 10-YEAR GOVERNMENT BONDS FELL TO A FRESH 7-1/2-MONTH LOW.

surging consumer prices.

Further interest rate cuts in China would only widen the yield gap with the United States, even if the Fed pauses this week, sending the yuan lower and accelerating capital outflows.

China is due to release May credit lending data and activity indicators, including retail sales and industrial production, this week. Tuesday's rate cut suggests policymakers are increasingly worried about the health of China's recovery, traders and

analysts said.

"This reminds the market of the challenges that the Chinese economy faces during its recovery period," said Marco Sun, chief financial market analyst at MUFG Bank (China). "However, the market is expecting the PBOC to cut the policy rate further. Looking ahead, the PBOC could make marginal adjustments to the policy rate in order to stimulate credit growth and avoid inflation issues in the coming quarters."

China's central bank said on late Tuesday it lowered borrowing costs of standing lending facility (SLF), another type of loans that the PBOC lends to commercial banks to fulfil their temporary cash demand, by 10 basis points across all tenors.

Bloomberg reported on

Tuesday, citing unnamed sources, that China was considering at least a dozen stimulus measures including cuts to interest rates to support areas such as real estate and domestic demand. The next adjustment to rates could come as soon as Thursday, when the central bank is due to roll over 200 billion yuan (\$27.93 billion) in medium-term lending facility (MLF) loans.

"The 10 bp cut in the open market operations (OMO) reverse repo rate can be seen as a precursor to an MLF rate cut this Thursday," said Frances Cheung, rates strategist at OCBC Bank. "Rates may continue to trade on the soft side but given much economic pessimism and a rate cut are already in the price, we see limited downside to rates from here." — Reuters

ECB gives banks final post-Brexit orders



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European regulators have started informing investment banks which businesses and staff they must move to the continent, starting the clock on compliance as a long-running post-Brexit review comes to a close.

Officials from the European Central Bank have been meeting banks in recent weeks and have given them feedback on its “desk-mapping” review, according to a person familiar with the matter.

The ECB has been probing international leaders’ footprints on the continent in the wake of Brexit. Leaving the European Union ended UK banks’ automatic right to trade in the EU under passporting rules. This meant they had to ensure they complied with regulatory requirements in each

jurisdiction.

This included shifting more staff to the bloc from London. The relocating of staff to favourable EU cities had been a subject of discussion almost from the time the ‘leave’ vote won the referendum. I recall Dublin was considered one of the most favourable cities to relocate to with language being one of the big advantages.

However, the ECB said in May 2022, even after such length of time, that it had found evidence of shell offices and trading models with distant risk management. It said it would issue “binding decisions” telling banks which staff and products they needed to move.

All the banks involved have now received these decisions. Each will have between a year and

two years to comply, depending on their individual requirements, according to the person familiar with the matter.

Citibank Europe CEO, Kristine Braden, said at a Bloomberg conference in April the bank was moving people and products as it prepared to receive its ECB review results.

“As a result, there will be a lot of moves,” she told the event. However, other bank insiders have suggested the results do not amount to a radical shift. According to a person familiar with Morgan Stanley’s plans, the bank has had to move “tens” of people. “Have people moved? Yes. Is it a step change? No,” they said.

JPMorgan was not part of the review, as it had engaged early with the ECB and had moved and hired people to and within the

European Union. USB and HSBC declined to comment. Goldman Sachs, Barclays, Bank of America and Citi did not respond to requests for comment.

International banks have already moved more assets to the EU than initially predicted, the ECB said in response to a request under EU freedom of information laws.

The assets of the largest international banks relocated to the EU and directly supervised by the ECB stood at around 1.6tn euros at the end of 2022. This was higher than the 1.2tn euros it had originally agreed with lenders under ‘target operating models’ in 2018.

The ECB said it had already pushed back its time frame due to Covid-19 to ensure institutions “had sound risk management

arrangements in place to manage their relocated business.”

But the official desk-mapping review decisions have taken longer than some expected. The ECB was set to issue binding decisions for desks that present a “material” risk by the end of 2022.

“Decisions will be issued to the institutions in the course of 2023,” the ECB said in its response to a request for information. The response also revealed that international banks have only managed a “gradual” reduction in “dual-hatting”, which is where directors served on boards in multiple jurisdictions.

However, the central bank said “the number of banks in intense dialogue to this topic has significantly decreased due to the banks’ recent and wider-spread adoption of best practices.”

Germany seeks more solar on farmland to meet green goals

NEIL FORD

Last month, Germany’s energy and climate ministry BMWK set out a new solar strategy to improve land availability for developers, speed up permitting and grid connections, and support skills and supply chain development.

Solar installations must accelerate rapidly to achieve the government’s solar target of 215 GW by 2030, compared with 63 GW in 2022. By 2030, the government aims to generate 80 per cent of power from renewable energy, double the level seen in 2022, slicing carbon emissions and ending the country’s reliance on Russian fuel supplies.

To achieve its goals, annual solar installations must rise from 7.4 GW in 2022 to 22 GW by 2030, including 11 GW of ground-mounted solar, BMWK said.

The government predicts 10 GW could be installed this year and the last auction of utility-scale solar contracts in April was oversubscribed for the first time since June 2022, indicating signs of growth amid a challenging cost landscape for developers.

In a key measure, the government will allow large agri-solar development, where solar arrays share land with farming, on set-aside land, Daniel Holder, Head of Global Policy and Markets at BayWa r.e. said. Based in Germany, BayWa develops agri-solar and other renewable energy projects across Europe.

The EU common agricultural policy (CAP) requires 4 per cent of agricultural land to be set aside to promote biodiversity and agri-solar would qualify for this. “If we only use about a quarter of this to generate solar energy, we would be able to achieve Germany’s current PV expansion targets,” Holder said.

By opening up more land, the strategy addresses the

right areas for developers, but this must feed through to local level action, Claus Urbanke, Vice President Wind, Solar & Storage Development Germany at operator Statkraft, said.

Nature protection rules must be standardised across local authorities and approval teams must be equipped with sufficient personnel and digital resources, he said.

Across Europe, solar and wind permitting currently takes several years, due to complex administrative processes and a lack of resources at approval authorities.

In a bid to speed up development, Germany is fast tracking new faster permitting laws that will soon be rolled out across the EU.

The laws require governments to set aside land for faster solar and wind permitting and designate renewable energy as projects of overriding public interest.

Germany’s coalition government has shown it is willing to adjust regulations to achieve its deployment targets, a spokesperson for industry group SolarPower Europe said.

Germany’s Federal Network Agency increased the maximum price limit in the last utility-scale solar auction to 74 euros/MWh (\$79.3/MWh), prompting an unprecedented 2.9 GW of bids for 2.0 GW of available contracts.

Developers have faced rising costs and delivery issues following the pandemic and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and industry officials have called for power authorities to factor in inflationary pressures in tender criteria.

The average volume-weighted price was 70 euros/MWh and projects on former farmland and grassland accounted for 851 MW while projects on the side of railways and motorways accounted for 755 MW. More action should be taken to prioritise new grid connections, Holder said.

— Reuters

Making the AMF a reality



M. NIAZ ASADULLAH

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SYED ABUL BASHER

The writer Professor of Economics at East West University in Bangladesh, is a former research macroeconomist at the Qatar Central Bank.

Although the International Monetary Fund has long been the most prominent global institution for promoting financial stability, calls to create regional alternatives are growing louder. During his visit to China in late March, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim revived the idea of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF).

Pointing to “the strength of the economies in China, Japan, and others,” Ibrahim argued that now was an opportune time to establish an AMF, as well as discuss “the use of our respective currencies.” This new push for multilateral alternatives to the IMF reflects the US dollar’s dominance, coupled with recent trade disruptions caused by Western sanctions on Russia.

Historically, resentment of the Fund peaks during crises, because its loans to countries in financial distress often require fiscal consolidation.

The debt crisis of the 1980s, the structural adjustment programmes of the 1990s, and the global financial crisis of 2008 created new economic challenges, widened social inequalities, and, in some cases, undermined countries’ sovereignty, stoking anger at the IMF and its policies.



Leaders of Asean countries pose during a photo session during opening 42nd Asean Summit in Indonesia. — Reuters

The AMF was first proposed in 1997 by Japanese financial authorities seeking a regional alternative to the IMF in response to the Asian financial crisis.

Japan would take a leading role, and the United States would be excluded from participating. But the initiative was eventually abandoned, owing to a lack of consensus.

The US, fearing that an AMF – and East Asian regionalism more generally – would undermine the IMF’s (and thus its own) dominant position, staunchly opposed the Japanese proposal.

Later, in 1999, then Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad fanned the embers by claiming that the Asian financial crisis would not have occurred or been as severe had a regional monetary fund existed.

Nearly a quarter-century later, the context has changed. The Sino-American rivalry has undermined multilateralism. China currently enjoys much stronger trade ties with Asean economies than the US did in the 1990s.

And Asian emerging markets’ relatively fast post-pandemic recovery, compared to Western economies, has reinforced the idea of the “Asian century” – characterised by a shift in the global economy’s centre of gravity from North America and Europe toward East Asia.

Equally important, the renewed calls for the creation of an alternative financial order, and optimism about its prospects, reflect the region’s experience following the 1997 crisis.

Most Asean countries were able to escape the worst fallout of the 2008 financial crisis because of

reforms undertaken under IMF programmes during the previous decade.

Trade liberalisation, bank restructuring, and labour-market and corporate-governance reforms had helped these economies to emerge stronger from the Asian financial crisis.

For example, the reforms had a fundamental impact on South Korea’s chaebols, or family-owned conglomerates. Daewoo, the second-largest chaebol at the time, was forced into bankruptcy, while Samsung, Hyundai, and LG were split up into smaller, more manageable entities.

Likewise, Thailand has maintained an average fiscal deficit of around 1 per cent of GDP since 2000, and an average inflation rate of just above 2 per cent – comparable to the US.

Both the Philippines and Malaysia reined in fiscal deficits, while Indonesian banks went from “opaque dens of cronyism to models of good management.”

Despite the success of the post-1997 reforms, resentment toward the IMF ran deep in Asia, as evidenced by the speed with which East Asian countries paid off their loans.

Since then, many economies (and central banks) in the region have amassed significant foreign-exchange reserves to insure themselves against future external shocks without the Fund’s help.

This deep anger also underpinned the Asean+3 economies’ creation of the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation in 2010. Established to provide short-term liquidity in times of economic distress, the CMIM currently has an estimated

liquidity capacity of \$240 billion, or nearly a quarter of the \$1 trillion that the IMF has at its disposal.

The CMIM is widely considered a pilot version of an elusive AMF. But its pledge-based system, which relies on bilateral swaps, renders it less effective in a time of crisis, and no member countries have used it.

This underwhelming experience raises doubts about the viability of a pan-regional alternative to the IMF.

Nonetheless, Ibrahim is eager to leverage the shifts in regional power configurations and is certain that major Asian economies can be convinced to take collective action.

To succeed, an AMF needs to learn from the IMF’s current identity crisis.

The Fund, caught between the US and China, is drifting, rudderless. Multilateralism and inclusiveness – engaging influential players like Japan and China – must be prioritised above all else; otherwise, a major power could easily dominate the institution.

Furthermore, an effective AMF must clearly define its mission and avoid policy objectives, such as climate change, that other institutions are better equipped to address. Ideally, it would focus on providing a financial safety net to countries in distress, while cooperating with other international institutions.

It remains to be seen how an AMF’s lending conditions would differ from the IMF’s, and whether recipient countries will be prepared – politically and psychologically – to receive advice from their neighbours.

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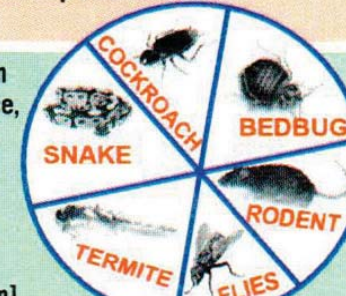
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ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUHLI VOL. 39 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

Be Careful, Be Responsible!
 #Living_with_COVID19

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

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

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Chairman of the Administrative Judiciary Court and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al-Hadi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court Suleym Khalifa bin Said bin Khalifa al-Busaidi, and Chairman of the Administrative Judiciary Court Saad bin Khalifa al-Busaidi took the oath of office at Al-Nasr Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

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

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

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears. A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves."

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

AND in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Hamed al-Wahabi, who stopped his car to scare away a group of people at a sidewalk in Ruwi. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19. While expressing his ire, Hamed said, "The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can scare them away." TURN TO P4



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ENTERTAINMENT

The cast of “Extraction 2” including Anthony Russo, Adam Bessa and Chris Hemsworth arrive for the US premiere of “Extraction 2” at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. — AFP

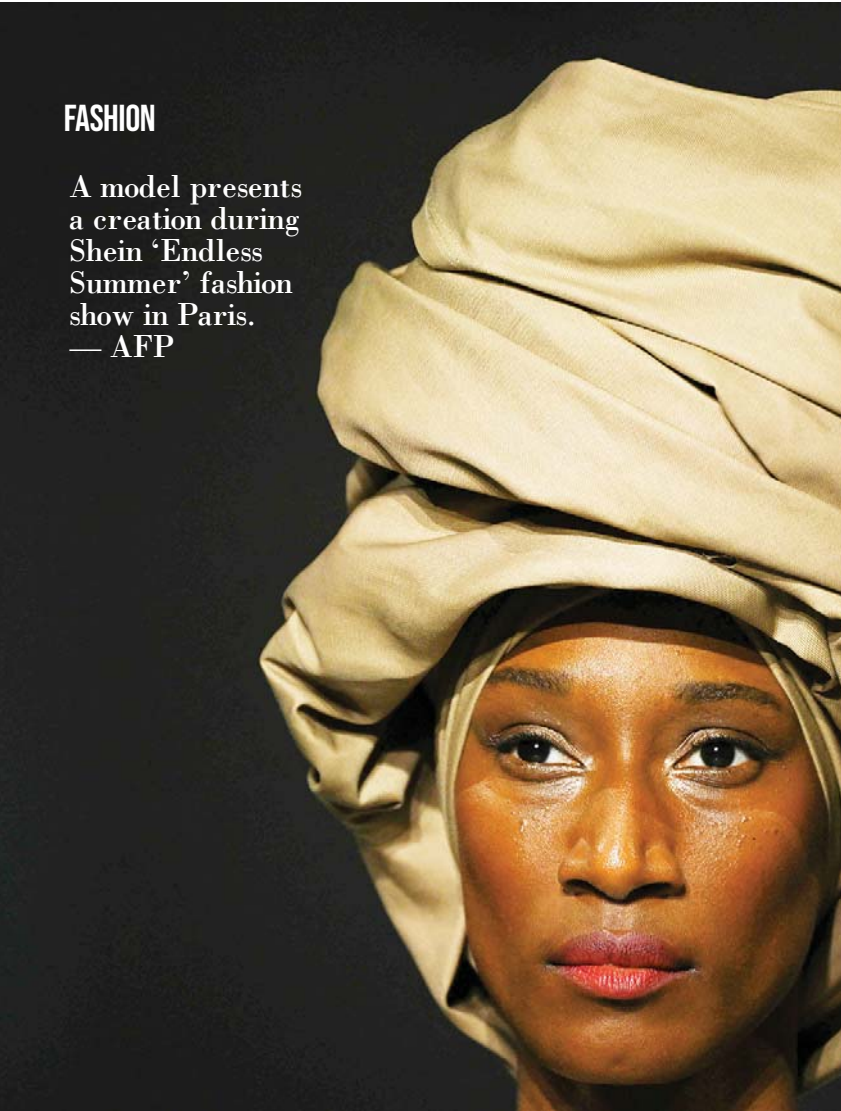
TRAVEL TALES

The Museum of the Future (bottom) is pictured before the Capricorn Tower (top) and other skyscrapers in Dubai. — AFP



FASHION

A model presents a creation during Shein ‘Endless Summer’ fashion show in Paris. — AFP



PERFORMANCE ART

Dancers perform in “Frida: My Two Accidents”, a contemporary dance piece by Moveo Dance Company, choreographed by Diane Portelli, based on the life of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, in Valletta, Malta. — Reuters



ART

A gallery worker stands in front of Zambian artist Nolan Oswald Dennis’ installation ‘No Conciliation is Possible (working diagram)’, which forms part of the 25th Liverpool Biennial festival of contemporary art in Liverpool, Britain. — AFP



art & life

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From Oman's 21 km Himam Trail to Italy's 250 km Lake Como Endurance Trail

Two popular faces in the running community of Oman signed up for the challenging Utlac Endurance Trail of Lake Como in Italy – a 250 km route with an elevation of 12,000 m above sea level with only 90 hours to finish the trail and a GPS to guide them.



ENTERTAINMENT

Acrobats show off Art Nouveau heritage of Brussels

BELGIUM'S CAPITAL Brussels is a treasure trove of Art Nouveau gems and now the city is trying to attract new audiences to its rich heritage, with the help of acrobats and trapeze artists.

The Belgian capital's decorative delights are thanks in large part to famed architect Victor Horta (1861-1947).

To mark the 130th anniversary of Horta's first landmark masterpiece, Tassel House, the authorities have designated 2023 the year of Art Nouveau.

The aim is to stake Brussels' claim as the capital of a style that for many captures the essence of the Belle Epoque's languid beauty before the horrors of World War I.

Born at the end of the 19th century, the Art Nouveau movement was based around the aesthetics of curves, combined with intense craftsmanship centred in particular on sgraffito wall decorations and stained glass.

Among the initiatives aimed at shining a spotlight on the Art Nouveau riches is the eye-catching decision to invite acrobats



into these museum-like spaces.

"It's an architecture inspired by life, the body and plants," Michael Hottier, co-director of the Brussels-based acrobatic company behind the project, said.

"You very quickly get the natural connection with grace, the organic side."

A trapeze artist dangled down the middle of a sweeping staircase and acrobats perched in front of an intricate window at another house designed by Horta.

The students from Brussels' Higher School of Circus Arts were being captured for a visual project 'Arabesque' that will go on display to draw attention to the masterpieces.

Staging shows for lots of people in the protected buildings is not feasible, so the photo and video displays should help bring it to a broader audience.

But it wasn't always the case that these architectural jewels were treated with such reverence.

As Brussels went through the upheavals of the 20th century, they were often left abandoned, damaged by war or denigrated by city planners.

Horta's piece de resistance – the grand People's House – was torn down in the 1960s to be replaced by a high-rise office block.

Those that did survive have now been restored to their former glory and are being showcased to the public.

That is the case for the magnificent Solvay House, which was listed as a Unesco World Heritage Monument in 2000 and opened as a museum in 2021.

Hottier hopes the acrobatic exhibition will tour beyond Brussels and spread knowledge of the city's Art Nouveau wealth outside of Belgium.

"These are buildings where you feel good, where the light is beautiful," he said. — AFP

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



goingthewholehogg and vibes_of_oman
Oman





amar_clicks
Salalah, Oman





amie76
Sur, Oman



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

0

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.

By Rumpa Mitra
Instagram: @rumpa_mitra

Alone in a new country, Iranian Zohreh Hashemabadi fought loneliness by taking up running and joining like-minded enthusiasts in pursuit of her passion.

Embraced by the running community of Oman, Zohreh, in just a few months time, would eventually participate in the Himam Trail Run, which covers 21 km along the tricky roads of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. Despite being a newbie to running, Zohreh immediately fell in love with the sport, and her first



venture into the competitive arena would land her second place, which was an amazing feat, especially for a newbie like her who only used to run 2-3 km.

"I've never run beyond the 2-3 km distance I used to do for fun with my friends. After winning second place in the women's category and understanding the difficulty level, I've come to realise that I am up for this kind of challenge," she shared.

The 2022 edition of the now-popular trail run gathered more than 500 runners from 41 countries, the challenge of which combined a flat run followed by a challenging ascent in the Al Hajar mountains.

When Zohreh won second place, she immediately became a brand ambassador for the Himam Trail Run, clearly establishing that if women put their minds into a certain sport, they can definitely achieve something remarkable.

Fresh from her win and upon learning that Italy is organising the Utlac Endurance Trail of Lake Como, Zohreh decided to register and see if she will be able to overcome the 250 km route with an elevation of 12,000 m above sea level. With only 90 hours to finish

the trail, Zohreh knows that it will be an amazing challenge for her to try.

Scheduled from May 10 to 14, the second edition of the Lake Como Endurance Trail gathered 600 runners. Out of this number, only 60 runners from 13 different countries registered for the Ultra 250 km route, which covered the Sentiero del Viandante, the Via dei Monti Lariani, and the paths of the Dorsale del Triangolo Lariano – a connection that created a circular route around Lake Como.

Zohreh was joined by another expat based in Oman, Indian Subash Anchalos, who is also an avid runner and one of the popular faces of the sport in Muscat.



my previous trail run at Himam of 100 km. I was not looking for the position, however, I was looking forward to finishing the race in a decent time," he said.

UTLAC 250 km not only challenges the participant's endurance level; it also takes an extreme test of their mental stability. The entire route is not mapped; the participants have been given the live GPS tracker, and they are supposed to follow and finish their own way.

While the distance was long, families were able to track their locations live, and both runners shared, "We felt very safe and motivated to be in touch with our family members and close friends who were constantly

Subash finished his trail run in 78 hours, including approximately 2 hours of break time at different break points. As for Zohreh, she finished the trail in 70.50 hours, including a break time of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes, which landed her in fourth place for the women's category.

"It was an amazing feeling to have been able to finish the trail and to place within the top 5, it was an added motivation that I can do more of this," Zohreh shared.

While both Zohreh and Subash have plenty of tips for those aspiring to follow in their adventure, they said that foremost of all is understanding your fitness level, doing the right training and mental conditioning, get-



Subash has participated in various competitions within Oman and India and has actively organised running challenges within his sports community. In his few years of experience, he has completed multiple marathons, but he was looking for a bigger challenge to look forward to. Being consistent in running, Subash knew that he could manage this ultra-trail run if he followed his training

methods and would be able to finish before the cut-off time.

Subash registered at UTLAC250 to challenge himself to see his ability to stay in the challenge and finish the run in a decent time.

"I prepared myself only to be consistent to be in the race and to see how I finish the trail run of 250 km which was a bigger jump from

monitoring our race and motivating us to go further and push our limits."

"On the last day, it was very difficult as the weather changed. It started raining and we kept on missing the right tracks, which made us run for a few extra kilometres and hallucinate. The right kind of training kept us on the path to finish the race with a smiling face," both shared.

ting the right nutrition, adhering to a proper diet plan, and investing on the right gears.

Both agreed it is important to acclimatise your body and to take control of your mind before the race.

For both Zohreh and Subash, UTLAC has been their biggest and longest challenge, and having conquered the said race, they look forward to the Istanbul Marathon in November and the Himam 110 km in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar after that.

"Being runners, Oman is the best place to train. If someone needs to focus on marathon runs, Oman has beautiful long tracks and road safety at its best," Suresh shared.

"The great thing about Oman is that there are different elevation levels and trail run challenges. There's also good infrastructure and facilities and top of all, a healthy and supportive community," Zohreh said.

Both shared that without the support of the runner's community like Muscat Road Runners, Get off the Road, and Oman Sportzone, their achievements would not have been possible as these groups have helped them stay motivated and achieve bigger goals.

MUSIC

'Final Beatles record' out this year aided by AI: McCartney

A "FINAL BEATLES RECORD", created with the help of artificial intelligence, will be released later this year, Paul McCartney told the BBC in an interview broadcast on Tuesday.

"It was a demo that John (Lennon) had, and that we worked on, and we just finished it up," said McCartney, who turns 81 next week.

The Beatles – Lennon, McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr – split in 1970, with each going on to have solo careers, but they never reunited.

Lennon was shot dead in New York in 1980 aged 40 while Harrison died of lung cancer in 2001, aged 58.

McCartney did not name the song that has been recorded but according to the BBC it is likely to be a 1978



Lennon composition called "Now And Then". The track – one of several on a cassette that Lennon had recorded for McCartney a year before his death – was given to him by Lennon's widow Yoko Ono in 1994.

Two of the songs, "Free As A Bird" and "Real Love", were cleaned up by the producer Jeff Lynne, and released in 1995 and 1996.

An attempt was made to do the same with "Now And Then" but the project was abandoned because of background noise on the demo.

McCartney, who has previously talked about wanting to finish the song, said AI had given him a new chance to do so.

NOW AND THEN

Working with Peter Jackson, the film director behind the 2021 documentary series "The Beatles: Get Back", AI was used to separate Lennon's voice and a piano.

"They tell the machine, 'That's the voice. This is a guitar. Lose the guitar,'" he explained.

"So when we came to make what will be the last Beatles' record, it was a demo that John had (and) we were able to take John's voice and get it pure through this AI.

"Then we can mix the record, as you would normally do. So it gives you some sort of leeway."

McCartney performed a two-hour set at last year's Glastonbury festival in England, playing Beatles' classics to the 100,000-strong crowd.

The set included a virtual duet with Lennon of the song "I've Got a Feeling", from the Beatles' last album "Let It Be".

Last month, Sting warned that "defending our human capital against AI" would be a major battle for musicians in the coming years.

The use of AI in music is the subject of debate in the industry, with some denouncing copyright abuses and others praising its prowess. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Golden Globe Awards sold, Hollywood Foreign Press group shut down

THE GOLDEN GLOBE Awards were sold on Monday to a new owner that will shut down the Hollywood Foreign Press Association (HFPA), the voting group that faced controversy over ethical lapses and a lack of diversity.

Eldridge Industries purchased the Golden Globe assets with Dick Clark Productions (DCP), which will continue to manage the awards telecast and focus on expanding the Globes' viewership around the world, a press release said. DCP is co-owned by Eldridge and Penske Media.

The sale comes after the HFPA struggled to repair its reputation after a Hollywood backlash over its



ethics and lack of diversity, which led US television network NBC to drop the Golden Globes ceremony in 2022.

A Los Angeles Times investigation in 2021 revealed the organisation had no Black journalists in its ranks. Some members were accused of making sexist and racist remarks and soliciting favours from celebrities and movie studios.

The HFPA responded by expanding and diversifying its membership and instituted new ethics policies.

Eldridge Industries Chairman Todd Boehly aims to reshape the HFPA, a nonprofit organisation of

international entertainment reporters, into hired workers in a for-profit venture. All of the 310 current voters will be eligible to cast ballots for the next ceremony in January 2024, a spokesperson said.

"Today marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the Golden Globes," Boehly said in a statement.

NBC aired the Globes again in 2023. No network has yet signed up to run the 2024 ceremony.

Financial terms of the deal, which was approved by California's attorney general, were not disclosed.

— Reuters



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WEDNESDAY | JUNE 14 | 2023

DINING

Denmark vies to stay gastronomy star in post-Noma era

WITH OFF-THE-WALL dishes like butterfly wings or simple local products, restaurants in Denmark, the recent darling of the culinary world, are outdoing each other to emulate Noma, a soon-shuttering three-starred eatery.

Tucked away at the far end of an industrial zone in an old shipyard, Alchemist is turning food into gold, offering its fortunate-enough visitors — the single set menu costs 4,900 kroner (\$707) — a “holistic experience” consisting of 50 “impressions”.

“The ambition is to change the world through gastronomy and try to make a very immersive experience (by) bringing different artistic fields into

reports.

For one dish, caviar is placed in the pupil of a fake eyeball made from dried cod broth. Here, titillating diners’ minds is almost more important than teasing their tastebuds.

“My favourite part is when people begin to debate and create some interaction with the food and experiences,” says Munk, whose establishment has two Michelin stars.

Noma, ranked the best restaurant in the world several times, announced

But despite the tranquil feel, Mota, recently opened by another star of Danish cuisine Claus Henriksen, is “a place where you’re allowed to do a lot of crazy things”.

Surrounded by an abundant flora and fauna offering up mushrooms, asparagus, algae and hake, Henriksen picks what he can from his nearby surroundings to compose his menus.

“Twenty years ago we did a lot of classic French, Italian cooking... We forgot our own products,” says the

tant way of looking at products,” he recalled.

Putting Denmark on the culinary map, Noma also attracted young chefs from around the world to the small windswept country.

Long gone are Denmark’s days of boiled potatoes, pork chops and gravy. In their place is a plethora of refined dishes topped with Nordic berries and edible flowers.

“I could watch it developing, getting more people more and more interested,” says Louise Bannon, an Irish former chief pastry chef at Noma and now a baker in vogue in Denmark.

“People have travelled all over the



the culinary world,” says Alchemist’s 32-year-old chef, Rasmus Munk.

And that experience is drawing crowds. Around 10,000 people are usually on the waiting list at Alchemist, which serves 52 people a day.

Behind a heavy bronze door, diners are plunged into an almost mystical ambience, including music and light effects and a contemporary dance performance.

A first room is reserved for the bite-size amuse-bouches.

Guests then head into “the dome” for the rest of the meal, enjoyed under a cupola screening colourful scenes of ocean life ravaged by plastic pollution, followed by anxiety-inducing news

in January that it would close for good at the end of 2024 to reinvent itself as a food laboratory.

But Denmark has a long line of restaurants that continue to attract foodie tourists.

On Monday, five new eateries were awarded their first Michelin stars.

STARS IN AN OLD ASYLUM

A hundred kilometres (62 miles) west of Copenhagen, diners can have a completely different gastronomic experience at Mota.

Located in a former psychiatric hospital, the restaurant is quiet, simple and bucolic, and gives pride of place to local products.

42-year-old chef.

Even the wine menu features local bottles, which are gaining renown amid Europe’s warming climate.

The focus on local Nordic flavours and ethical cuisine — a movement started by Noma founder Rene Redzepi — has enabled restaurateurs to reinvent Scandinavian cooking, and reap the financial benefits.

Almost 40 per cent of recent tourists to Copenhagen said they visited for the cuisine. Henriksen said he spent two “wonderful” years working in Redzepi’s kitchen.

“There was a creativity. It was also a place where you could find your different ways of being, there (was) an impor-

world to go and work there (and) to go eat there,” she notes.

During her years at Noma, she developed a hankering for bread baking.

After months spent travelling and training to hone her skills, she returned to Denmark and now makes her bread solely with flour milled locally, including her own.

She says her customers, many of whom own vacation homes at the tip of a wild peninsula, are connoisseurs who can tell the difference.

“People here really appreciate the quality. If you’re using fresh flour they know... they can taste it and they will pay for the quality.” — AFP

LIFESTYLE



Massive ‘chirping’ egg sculpture hatches in Warsaw

IN A SQUARE IN central Warsaw, a couple of people are bent over a huge sculpture of a blue egg, their heads turned and pressed against the shell.

As they listen to the soft sounds of a baby bird hatching, a hooded crow cocks his head and sips from a shallow pool of water installed nearby.

“This chick and the mini-pond next to it speak to a sensitivity to Warsaw’s non-human residents,” Warsaw deputy mayor Aldona Machnowska-Gora said at the unveiling.

“Don’t hesitate to walk up to the egg and hug it. It makes for an incredible experience,” she said.

Located at Five Corners Square — once home to an arena where animals would fight to the death — the acoustic installation titled The Hatchling is a call for empathy with other life forms in the era of climate change.

“The idea was to bend people’s bodies over something other than themselves,” said Joanna Rajkowska, the artist behind the sculpture.

“We care about our well-being so much. It’s like a



complete obsession... It’s time to think about other species,” she said.

THE HATCHLING SPEAKS

At around two metres (6.6 feet) high and three metres long, The Hatchling is a larger than life version of a song thrush’s blue spotted egg.

The colour is more intense than the real blue because the sculpture will inevitably fade in the sun.

“Inside, instead of a bird, we have a lot of electronics, a lot of circuits and sound transducers... So The Hatchling speaks,” said Rajkowska.

“Literally, like pecking the shell. But also the heartbeat, which is three times faster than the human heart. You can also hear all the movements and the chirping,” she added.

“So it’s a whole spectrum of sounds. Basically the desperate life that is trying to get out of the egg.”

She teamed up with her musician partner for the recordings, though they do not come from a song thrush, as the stress of the process would have been enormous for a wild bird.

“An ornithologist told me that if I take an egg from the nest and then return it, the parents will not accept it... So I decided to find safe conditions,” Rajkowska said.



They came across “this crazy guy who is trying to revive old species of chickens” who allowed them to record in his lab as long as they kept the eggs warm.

“So we had to really rush to do the recording and put it back in the incubator,” Rajkowska said.

SURREAL, UNEXPECTED

The artist is also the creator of a massive fake palm tree that has for years added a tropical note to the Polish capital and even become a popular post-card landmark.

Similarly, the egg — whose top is already speckled with bird droppings, to Rajkowska’s amusement — is meant to be “surreal, unexpected and slightly out of touch with reality.” Piotr Nowacki, a life-long Warsaw resident, is a fan of the project, which he has visited several times and calls “a break from routine, somewhat abstract, surprising”.

“It also educates (and) draws your attention to nature... It’s cool that it’s dynamic, that it’s alive, right?” the 36-year-old software engineer said.

Rajkowska has also exhibited a series of collages juxtaposing old and new magazine clippings, old photographs of the plaza — and birds, of course.

“I love that they evolved from the dinosaur and they have such a long, long history... And we make their habitats smaller and smaller and smaller. We concrete everything,” Rajkowska said.

“The Hatchling is actually a sad project. It is tinged with disappointment but also with hope that we mature enough to see beyond ourselves.” — AFP