

FRANCE EVACUATES 388 PEOPLE FROM SUDAN

As war intensified in Sudan, France on Monday evacuated 388 people from 28 countries, including Indian nationals. Evacuation from Khartoum, has proved intensely dangerous since conflict erupted over the weekend. **>A6**



HM THE SULTAN PARDONS PRISONERS

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Supreme Commander, has issued a Royal pardon to a number of prisoners convicted of different cases. They included 198 prisoners, 89 of them are foreigners, according to an official source at the Royal Oman Police (ROP). The Royal pardon coincides with Eid Al Fitr 1444 AH and in consideration of families of the prisoners. **-ONA**



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His Majesty offers Eid Al Fitr prayers



The Sultanate of Oman on Saturday celebrated the first day of Eid Al Fitr. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offered Eid prayers at Al Khor Mosque in the Governorate of Muscat.

>A4, A5



OMAN HEADS BACK TO WORK AFTER EID BREAK

Occupancy rates in most of the hotels in Oman reached 100 per cent during Eid holidays

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Citizens and expatriates across the Sultanate of Oman had a whale of a time spending their long Eid-Al Fitr holidays rejuvenating themselves physically and mentally to get back to work after the long break.

With the government announcing a five-day holiday, starting from April 20 until April 24, many preferred staycations rather than going outside the country.

Hotel industry executives told *Times of Oman* that occupancy rates in most of the hotels reached 100 per cent during this long weekend. "There are no rooms available at Masirah Island Resort, Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, Atana Stay Al Ashkhara," said the hotel's area general manager, Vijay Handa.

Arup Singh Deo, Director of Operations and Projects, Al Nahda Hotels & Resorts, said long weekends in Oman are always a blessing for the hotels as they boost domestic tourism.

"Our hotels remain fully occupied during all long weekends. Although travelling abroad has increased, staycations have also gone



up in the recent months," he said. Expats living in Oman said that they desperately look forward to Eid holidays as it rejuvenates them. "Work sometimes is very stressful, though some people don't realise it," Indian expat Prakash said. "We are always busy. With the onset of online culture, the work has moved into our living rooms, so my family and I were really looking forward to this long break. It's been great to disconnect from work for a while and reconnect with the family at home. We didn't go out of the country, but just relaxed and enjoyed right here in Muscat."

"We did go out for brunch and dinner a couple of times as there were exciting offers that we couldn't miss. After a few relaxing evenings at the beach, it was great for my wife as well, as she normally does the shopping when I am at work, but this offered her some time to relax



together," he added. Mohammad, an Indian expat, went to India to surprise his family during Eid. "My family had no idea that I was coming," he told the *Times of Oman*. "On the morning of my arrival, which was Thursday, my friends at home told my mother some consignment had arrived for her and that they were going to collect it at the airport. My mother had no inkling what it was, and she went about doing her chores." "When she opened the door after I rang the bell, she was amazed to see me," added Mohammad. "She didn't know that Eid holidays are long in Oman unlike India where it is mostly for one or two days. She thought I was here for a short break but when I told her that I was going to be there for almost a week, she jumped in excitement, and started making special dishes for me. My father hadn't even

seen half of those dishes in his entire life." As the UAE had an even smaller break, Ramesh Kumar, another Indian expat, came from Dubai to spend Eid holidays here in Oman with his friends. "Of course, we don't get as many days off in the UAE as in Oman, but I decided to add in a few days from my annual leave and come here to see my friends," said Ramesh, who grew up and did his schooling here, before leaving for Dubai. "Dubai is just a place to work for me but Oman is a home for me. I have so many fond memories here, so Oman will always hold a special place in my heart, no matter where I go." "I took my family to Al Ashkhara, a tourist hotspot known for its cool climate and scenic beauty. The region witnesses a massive influx of tourists from within and outside the Sultanate as temperatures here hover between 22 and 28 degrees Celsius." **>A3**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Shuwa, a delicacy for every Omani home

1 Shuwa has been a part of the Omani culture since ages. On the first day of Eid, roasted lamb or goat, which is blended with spices for up to 48 hours, is wrapped in banana leaves, and lowered into a deep fire pit. **>A3**

WORLD New Bangladesh president sworn in

2 Mohammed Shahabuddin was sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh on Monday. Parliament Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury administered the oath to Shahabuddin. **>A6**

MARKET Opaz introduces ChatGPT for services

3 The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) announced that it has started using ChatGPT service, reflecting its direction of urging employees to use AI techniques. **>B1**



MINISTER OF LABOUR

35,000 jobs for Omani youth in 2023: Ministry

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Minister of Labour plans to provide at least 35,000 jobs to Omani youth in 2023.

Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, confirmed that the Ministry aims to provide 35,000 jobs this year, through two initiatives. The first by recruitment and through replacement, including 8 percent in the professions of managers, specialists and technicians. The second initiative is through rehabilitation and training.

The Ministry of Labour has organised more than 2,000 training workshops in building career plans for over 130,000 employees, provided by 565 trainers from the units of the state's administrative apparatus. The Minister of Labour stated that in 2022, it aimed to provide 35,000 jobs, but 45,000 job opportunities were provided



in the two sectors, in addition to more than 35,000 people who had previously worked on rotation. He also pointed out that the total beneficiaries of the job security benefit amounted to 13,453 people. There are a number of reasons for the termination of service, one of which is the termination of the project, and the number in this category reached 9,000, while about 3,000 were in the end of contract period category. This came during a review by Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour, at the annual conference of the Ministry of Labour 2023.

PRAYER
TIMINGS

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Maghrib.....	6:37pm
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Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:18am

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SOUTH AL SHARQIYAH GOVERNORATE

Remote classes for students today due to heavy rain alert

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The University of Technology and Applied Sciences has announced virtual classes on Tuesday for the safety of students due to the climatic conditions in the South Al Sharqiyah governorate.

A statement issued by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Wilayat of Sur, said: “It has been decided to go for remote study in the University of Technology and Applied Sciences branch in Sur, on Tuesday, 25,2023.”

The statement added:” E-

ryone should be advised to take precautions and to not take risks, such as crossing valleys.”

The South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is witnessing rains and the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning System has issued alerts of heavy rains.

Rains fell on Monday in the Wilayat of Al Awabi in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, ranging from medium to light. Rains were mainly concentrated in the centre of the Wilayat.

A number of villages in Wadi Bani Kharus also witnessed light to medium rains, which led to the overflow of a number of wadis.

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Shuwa, a delicacy for every Omani home during Eid

Shuwa is eaten with rice, and is considered one of the signature dishes on every platter in Oman during Eid.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Shuwa has been a part of the Omani culture since ages. On the first day of Eid Al Fitr, roasted lamb, sheep, goat or even camel meat, which is blended with local spices for up to 48 hours, is wrapped in banana leaves, and kept in a date palm or jute bag and lowered into a deep fire pit underground.

On the third day of Eid Al Fitr, citizens take out the slow cooked meat that becomes tender and juicy under intense heat.

This meat is unique to the country because of special Omani spices blended with meat and this custom has been continuing here for hundreds of years.

Shuwa is eaten with rice, and is considered one of the signature cuisines on every platter in Oman during Eid.

Shuwa is best served with saffron or spiced rice and a yoghurt-based salad. The leftovers are kept till the next day for making shawarmas.

This process of slow cooking encases the meat in a thick crust of spices, beneath which lies



tender pieces of flesh that falls straight off the bone.

Shuwa is cooked in a special underground pit after it is blended with special spices. The special oven is prepared by

putting a drum or a metal container in a pit.

Fire is lit in the container and meat sacks are dropped into the pit. The container is closed with a lid to make it air tight.

One injured in Sohar house fire

Times News Service

MUSCAT: One person was injured in a house fire in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, said: "Teams from CDAA managed to put out a fire that broke out in a house in the Wilayat of Sohar, which resulted in the injury to a person."



INVITATION FOR 106 NEW VEHICLE SALVAGE SALE

On behalf of whomever it may concern, there is for disposal a quantity of 106 new Hyundai Tucson model vehicles (imported from the Czech Republic), which have sustained partial damage by stormwater.

The stock is presently lying at OTE Rusayl Yard. Please arrange an inspection of the vehicles by contacting Mr.Sureshkumar Gopalachari telephone 95332907. between 10.30am and 1pm on normal working days.

Written offers in sealed envelopes on a lump sum basis (applicable taxes, levies shall be additional) for the whole lot of 106 vehicles must arrive at Prudent Loss Adjusters office no.44, Fourth floor, Oman House, Muttrah High Street by noon on 07th May 2023 (last date of submission of the bid).

The brief conditions attached to this sale are as follows:

1. The seller reserves the right to refuse the highest bidder or any offer without the need for providing any reasons.
2. The vehicles are sold in "as is where is condition", the seller nor vehicle manufacturer shall have no liability with regard to the performance, durability or any other reason it may be on these vehicles whether now or at any point of time later. The purchaser shall be liable to make all arrangements at their own cost for the removal of the vehicles from the yard within 10 days from the date of effecting full payment.
3. The bid bond of 3% of the offer amount is to be submitted in the prescribed format while submitting the offer, and it will be returned if the tender is not awarded. The tender will only be valid if accompanied by a bid bond.
4. If the awarded bidder is not ready to take the delivery of vehicles, the bid bond will be subject to execution immediately.
5. Storage charges @ RO.2 per vehicle / per day will apply after 10 days from the date of full payment.
6. 10% Payment must be paid to OTE (including VAT which will be added to the amount of the successful offer) within 3 days from the award notification date. Balance 90% Payment must be paid to OTE (including VAT which will be added to the amount of the successful offer) within 10 days from the date of award notification. Any additional tax, levies on the transaction (including VAT) that prevails on the date of payment will be added to the amount of the successful offer.
- If payment is not received by the end of ten working days from the award notification date, the salvage will be offered to the next highest bidder/any other buyer without any notice or intimation to the highest bidder
7. The vehicles are all salvaged and are strictly sold without any kind of warranty backup, further it is neither expressed or implied that these vehicles are of merchantable quality nor are they fit for any specific purpose.
8. Offers must be valid for 30 days from the last bid submission date.



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AL ASHKHARA

Lush green views

< FROM A1 "It was so cool there, with temperatures of around 26 degrees Celsius and its beaches and sand dunes are fascinating. Oman is such a lovely country and I am glad I came here for Eid with my friend, Suresh Babu," said Harpreet Singh, who stayed at Atana Stay Al Ashkhara.

Facing the beachfront, Atana Stay Al Ashkhara offers a rare pearl of hospitality in the country, where style and elegance are combined with luxury and a touch of Arabia.

Enjoy award-winning cuisine, a unique dining experience and serene lush green views with detailed personalised service at the beach hotel.

Families in Oman were definitely happy to enjoy the holidays, but there was one aspect that many craved for was that they wanted a few more days of break to revitalize themselves.

Young kids were happy that

they did not have to wake up early in the morning for school. Mothers were happy, feeling relieved for not making early breakfast and preparing their kids for school. "Every morning, the school bus comes to pick him up at seven, so he needs to be up by six, then I need to iron his clothes, and his mother has to make his lunch; this time there was nothing of the sort, so all of us could relax. I am not looking forward to waking him up on Monday, because that means I too have to wake up early," an expat said.

However, many parents whose children are in 10th and 11th standards, did not deviate from the normal routine. They put more pressure on their wards for study citing board and engineering/ medical exams fear.

"The exams are not far away, and I thought I would make my daughter sit and study, but that didn't happen at all," a frustrated mother said.





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His Majesty offers Eid Al Fitr prayers at Al Khor Mosque



The prayers were led by Dr. Mohammad bin Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, who delivered the Eid sermon

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Saturday celebrated the first day of Eid Al Fitr. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik offered Eid Al Fitr prayers at Al Khor Mosque in the Governorate of Muscat on Saturday morning.

Alongside His Majesty the Sultan, the prayers were performed by members of the Royal family, ministers, the chairmen of the State Council and Shura Council, Commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security units, heads of the diplomatic missions of Islamic countries accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, members of the State Council and Shura Council from Muscat Governorate, undersecretaries, advisers and officials.

The prayers were led by Dr. Mohammad bin Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, who delivered the Eid sermon. He started the sermon with expressions of glorification of Allah for His bounties. He wished that peace be upon the Messenger of the Almighty Allah.

Islamic religion

The Eid sermon venerated the huge volumes of goodness experienced in the seasons of obedience and worship. It underscored the ease and moderation of the Islamic religion due to its moderation that brings about balance among the believers and guides their conduct.

The Eid sermon reads as follows: "Allahu-Akbar...Allahu-Akbar (God is Great). He who has sent down bounties and blessings. There is no God but Allah. Praise be to the Almighty Allah whose names and attributes have to be glorified. I bear witness that there is no God but Allah. I bear witness that Mohammed is His servant and Messenger—May Allah's prayers and peace be upon Prophet Mohammed, his family and all those who followed their footsteps!

Celestial rewards

"O believers, hearts are beautified by the volumes of goodness that they receive, and this qualifies them to accommodate the volumes of celestial rewards. When the minds wander between different conditions, they find in life a pleasure that calls for good deeds. It is indeed a generosity from Allah, the Benefactor, that He facilitated the fasting of Ramadan for us. Here we are—thanks to His everlasting



grace—celebrate the happy Eid Al Fitr and rejoice. It is only a short period in the run-up to Hajj (pilgrimage) season—yet another blessed time when obedience endures. Along with that, observing human beings remain in close contact with their God and venerate His bounties, rewards and blessings. "If we contemplate the verses calling for fasting, we would read the Almighty Allah's words (in the Holy Qur'an) asserting that 'Allah desires ease for you and does not desire hardship for you', exactly in affirmation that religion is a practice of ease and mercy...that religion is an exercise of happiness, relaxation, moderation and facilitation. With this awareness in mind, the soul of the faithful

maintains balance and so he/she does not go astray or become miserable or desperate or become extreme, but he/she aspires for and observes piety and devotion." "Allahu-Akbar...Allahu-Akbar (God is Great). There is no God but Allah, and Allah is great. O Muslims, we are not alone in this world, but we exist and interact with many nations and peoples, with whom we share differences and interests. Wisdom requires remaining fast with the principle of 'Ihsan', which is kindness and beneficence...that we should coexist with other nations in a spirit of dignity and peace, rather than fear. We have to share our morals and civilization with them. We should not scare them, and this is the very

essence of the Holy Qur'an. "This interaction with the wide world has two dimensions and two requirements: A dimension focusing on the identity of good action, justice and ethics, and a dimension through which prove our human affiliation and contribution to knowledge, acquaintances and recognition of the Other."

Safety, stability

"Allahu-Akbar...Allahu-Akbar (God is Great). There is no God but Allah, and Allah is great. The Almighty Allah has enabled our country, Oman, to prosper in abundance of good fortunes, including the blessings of safety, stability, development and prosperity. Oman won the honour of Prophet Moham-

med's (PBUH) praise and commendation, who had sent a message to Omanis conveying these good news of peace. His wishes, prayers and commendation continued to take shape, thanks be to God for the Almighty Allah's grace and great benevolence.

"Despite these favours, blessings and gratitude in mind, Omanis did not remain captivated by the attractiveness of the past, but rather they set out from that point to build the present, anticipate the future and transform wishes into reality and practices. They have utilized those utterances as ingredients for growth, prosperity and comprehensive development. The realized outcome is a stable economy, a cohesive nation, a benign land, strong relations, empowerment of youth and a recognition for the status of women. Praise be to Allah the Almighty, who promised further rewards for those who remain thankful and observant."

Divine care

"Allahu-Akbar...Allahu-Akbar (God is Great). There is no God but Allah, and Allah is great. We pray to You, Almighty Allah, to endow us with the bounties of the earth and bless us with blessings of heavens. We pray to You to bless our crops and all our livelihoods. We pray to You to protect our homelands. We pray to You to protect our Sultan and support him with the truth and support the truth by him. We pray to You to support him with the conquests of goodness and to keep this country under Your di-

vine care and spare it all harm.

"Our Lord, grant us what is good in this world and what is good in the Hereafter. Save us from the torment of Hell and forgive all those who believe in You, both the living and the dead. {Indeed, God enjoins justice, kindness and providing for one's relatives. He forbids indecency, wrongdoing and transgression. He admonishes you all so that you may remember!}"

21-gun salute

After the prayers, His Majesty the Sultan and other worshipers headed to Al Alam Palace as the artillery fired 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan.

Upon his arrival at the Al Alam Palace Square, His Majesty the Sultan ascended the dais, the Omani Royal Anthem was played.

Then, at Al Alam Palace, His Majesty the Sultan received the well-wishers who came forward to greet him on the occasion of the blessed Eid Al Fitr. His Majesty the Sultan welcomed heartfelt wishes on this blissful occasion from Royal family members and senior officials. His Majesty reciprocated their gesture, wishing them a happy Eid and thanking them for their greetings and sincere prayers.

His Majesty the Sultan prayed to Allah the Almighty for many happy returns of this auspicious occasion and similar ones at a time the Sultanate of Oman and its loyal people are enjoying abundant welfare and blessings. He also wished the Arab and Islamic nations prosperity and progress. **OMA**







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France evacuates 388 people from Sudan

The evacuated people belonged to 28 countries, including Indian nationals

NEW DELHI : As war rages in Sudan, France on Monday evacuated 388 people from 28 countries, including Indian nationals.

Evacuation from the capital, Khartoum, has proved intensely dangerous since conflict erupted over the weekend between Sudan's military and a powerful paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, *New York Times* reported. But after days hunkered inside their homes, often as battle rages in the streets outside, more Sudanese and foreign nationals have sought to flee the city of five million people.

"French evacuation operations are underway. Last night, two military flight rotations evacuated 388 people of 28 countries, including Indian nationals," tweeted the Embassy of France in India.

Millions of residents are trapped inside their homes, many running



low on water and food after the eruption of fighting on April 15 between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group. It has triggered a humanitarian crisis, killing at least 420 people and leaving behind charred tanks, gutted buildings and shops that have been looted and torched, reported Al Jazeera.

The WHO retweeted a post from Sudan's Health Ministry on Sunday saying at least 420 people had been killed and 3,700 injured in the fighting so far.

Countries scrambled to evacuate their diplomats and citizens from the Sudanese capital on Saturday and Sunday.

"Today, on my orders, the United States military conducted an op-

eration to extract US government personnel from Khartoum," President Joe Biden said in a statement.

In a separate statement, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that all US personnel and their families had been evacuated and operations at the US Embassy in Khartoum have been "temporarily suspended."

The foreign governments began landing aircraft and organising convoys in Khartoum to pull out their nationals.

The US said special forces using MH-47 Chinook helicopters swept into Sudan's battle-stricken capital from a US base in Djibouti, spending just one hour on the ground to bring out fewer than 100 people. -ANI

‘Ships, planes ready to bring Indians back’

NEW DELHI: As the fighting between the Sudanese Army and paramilitary groups intensified in the capital Khartoum, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar informed that its 'Operation Kaveri' to evacuate its citizens from battle-torn Sudan is underway and about 500 Indians had reached the Port Sudan.

India has launched "Operation Kaveri" to bring back stranded Indians from the war-torn Sudan. Taking to Twitter, Jaishankar said, "Operation Kaveri gets underway to bring back our citizens stranded in Sudan. About 500 Indians have reached Port Sudan. More on their way. Our ships and aircraft are set to bring them back home. Committed to assist all our brethren in Sudan."

Earlier, on Saturday, Saudi Arabia said it has evacuated 66 citizens of "brotherly and friendly" foreign countries that included a few Indian nationals from the conflict-hit nation.

The evacuation came days after Jaishankar spoke to his Saudi Arabia counterpart. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday chaired a high-level meeting to review the security situation in Sudan. -ANI



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Drunk man urinates on co-passenger

NEW DELHI : Another incident of 'urinating' on a co-passenger came to light last night when American Airlines landed at the Delhi Airport around 9 pm.

The security officer on duty told ANI on Monday, "It was learnt that an unruly passenger (Indian) arriving from New York by American Airlines Flight No. AA 292 in inebriated condition has argued with a co-passenger and urinated on him."

Soon after the aircraft landed at Delhi airport, the crew members contacted to Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officer regarding the incident. The airport

aviation security took cognisance and escorted the passenger to the airport police station.

"The said unruly pax along with complainant was taken to IGIA PS by concerned airlines security under the escort of CISF for further legal action," an official said.

Delhi Police said, "No official complaint has been lodged by the complainant yet."

There was no statement from American Airlines till the publication of the news. A similar incident happened last month when a passenger was caught allegedly urinating on a US passenger. -ANI

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Shahabuddin sworn in as Bangladesh's 22nd President

DHAKA : Mohammed Shahabuddin was on Monday sworn in as the 22nd President of Bangladesh. Bangladesh Parliament Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury administered the oath to Shahabuddin at the Durbar Hall of Bangabhaban at 11 am (local time), Dhaka Tribune reported.

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, cabinet members, and hundreds of distinguished guests attended the oath-taking ceremony of Mohammed Shahabuddin. Shahabuddin replaced Md Abdul Hamid, whose tenure as Bangladesh's President ended on Sunday. After the swearing-in ceremony, Mohammed Shahabuddin signed the oath documents for the president's office. Earlier on February 13, the 73-year-old politician was elected as the 22nd President of Bangladesh.

Mohammed Shahabuddin was born on December 10, 1949, in Bangladesh's Pabna town, Dhaka Tribune reported. He



District Shadhin Bangla Chatra Sangram Parishad, according to the statement on the office of the President of Bangladesh's website.

Mohammed Shahabuddin actively participated in the Liberation War in 1971 as a member of 'Mujib Bahini,' according to the Dhaka Tribune report. During his career, he served as a district and sessions judge and an Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) commissioner. He also worked as director of the Bangladesh Prime Minister's Office, as per the news report.

He was elected secretary general of the BCS (Judiciary) Association twice in a row. He was involved in the legal profession in the High Court following his retirement from service, as per the Dhaka Tribune report. He also served as a member of the Awami League's Advisory Council and chairman of the party's Publicity and Publication Subcommittee. -ANI

‘American middle class was wiped out during COVID-19’

WASHINGTON: Robert F. Kennedy Jr, a Democrat who recently announced his 2024 candidacy for the White House, effectively challenging President Joe Biden's presumptive re-election bid, argued that the American middle class was "systematically" wiped out during the COVID-19 pandemic, Fox News reported.

Kennedy Jr. told Fox News' Neil Cavuto: "More than anything, we have to rebuild the American middle class. And part of that is getting away from the warfare economy. And doing what China originally did which is to build its power and project power by building its economy at home. The strength of a nation comes from a strong economy and a vi-

brant middle class. And we have wiped out the middle class in this country systematically."

Lockdown measures

Kennedy Jr. while referring to lockdown measures introduced in 2020, said: "Worst of all is what it did to the economy. It caused \$16 trillion, according to Larry Summers, the IMF report, the Harvard report. We shifted \$4 trillion in wealth from the American middle class to this new aristocracy of billionaires. We created 500 new billionaires. The Oxfam report, which came out this week, shows that the billionaires that existed at the beginning of the pandemic, the people like Bill Gates, Mark Zuck-

erberg, Jeffrey Bezos, Bloomberg, etc., increased their wealth by 30 per cent during the pandemic. From the lockdowns. And Amazon got to shut down all of its competitors."

Cavuto challenged Kennedy Jr. on the stances of progressives within his own party, like Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who supported a wealth tax, noting how families like the Kennedys would be the ones paying for such stipulation. "I don't think these huge disparities in wealth are healthy for our country or healthy for democracy. To have very, very high concentrations of wealth in a nation that is now marked by widespread poverty," Kennedy Jr. said in response. -ANI

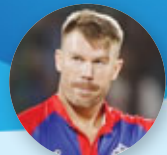


INDIAN PREMIER LEAGUE



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QUOTE OF THE DAY



“We are gonna bat first. Looks a nice surface, has a nice even sheen to it. If you put a nice total, you can defend it. It’s about being consistent. We got to start well in the first 6 with bat and ball.”

David Warner
Delhi Capitals captain

TODAY’S MATCH



VS

Gujarat Titans vs Mumbai Indians

6pm, Ahmedabad

POINTS TABLE

TEAM	P	W	L	NR	NRR	PTS
CSK	7	5	2	0	+0.662	10
RR	7	4	3	0	+0.844	8
LSG	7	4	3	0	+0.547	8
GT	6	4	2	0	+0.212	8
RCB	7	4	3	0	-0.008	8
PBKS	7	4	3	0	-0.162	8
MI	6	3	3	0	-0.254	6
KKR	7	2	5	0	-0.186	4
SRH	7	2	5	0	-0.725	4
DC	7	2	5	0	-0.961	4

CSK: Chennai Super Kings, DC: Delhi Capitals, GT: Gujarat Titans, KKR: Kolkata Knight Riders, LSG: Lucknow Super Giants, MI: Mumbai Indians, PBKS: Punjab Kings, RCB: Royal Challengers Bangalore, RR: Rajasthan Royals, SRH: Sunrisers Hyderabad



DC BEAT SRH BY 7 RUNS

Chasing a target of 144/9, Sunrisers Hyderabad could manage only 137 for 6 in 20 overs

HYDERABAD: Delhi Capitals defeated Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) by 7 runs in a match played at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium in Hyderabad, on Monday.

Chasing a target of 144/9, Sunrisers Hyderabad could manage only 137 for 6 in 20 overs.

While David Warner scored 21 runs, Manish Pandey and Axar Patel scored 34 runs each for SRH.

The Sunrisers needed 13 runs off the final over but Mukesh Kumar allowed five to register Delhi Capitals’ second win of the season.

Aiden Markram’s side struggled

from the outset and could only score 58 runs in the first 10 overs. However, with the firepower of Heinrich Klaasen and Aiden Markram, the side was expected to get home.

The dismissal of Mayank Agarwal, on 49, was the start of the decline for the home team.

Earlier after winning the toss, Delhi Capitals captain opted to bat against Sunrisers Hyderabad in their Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 match.

David Warner-led side has lost five games on the trot but they finally managed to register a win in their last outing as they defeated Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) by 4 wickets. Sunrisers Hyderabad lost their first two matches, won the next two and then again have lost two to be in this precarious position.

Speaking at the time of toss, Delhi Capitals captain David Warner said, “We are gonna bat first. Looks a nice surface, has a nice even sheen to it. If you put a nice total, you can defend it. It’s about being consistent. We got to start well in the first 6 with bat and ball. My mindset is to thank the crowd, they’ve been a great support. For me, it’s about entertaining them. Absolutely love this venue, I owe it to the fans. Sarfaraz Khan comes in and Rival Patel is in. I owe it to the curator, you have to start well.”

Sunrisers Hyderabad captain Aiden Markram said, “We would have bowled first, not too unhappy. The surface shouldn’t get worse. It’s an important game for us, we need to start getting points on the board. We are looking forward to the challenge. Should be a good game of cricket. There’s one change within the sixteen. Nitish Reddy gets into the 16-bowling all-rounder for us. In terms of our batting, it has been up and down but we’ve made a conscious decision to pick a top six/seven that we are going to hopefully back for the remaining games. Looks good, pretty similar to the Mumbai game. Plenty runs there, hopefully, we can deliver a good performance.”

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Rahane, Conway’s heroics seal 49-run win for CSK against KKR

KOLKATA: Ajinkya Rahane and Devon Conway’s scintillating knocks in the first innings and Maheesh Theekshana’s allowed Chennai Super Kings to register a dominant victory against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2023 on Sunday.

Chasing 236, Kolkata Knight Riders were rocked early as opener Sunil Narine was cleaned up by CSK’s Impact Player Akash Singh without opening his account, off the fourth ball of the innings. N Jagadeesan departed in the second over. Venkatesh Iyer and Nitish Rana then got together and steadied the sinking ship. The duo hit two fours and a six each as KKR reached 38/2 at the end of the Powerplay.

Akash Singh bowled four overs straight up and finished with impressive figures of 4-0-29-1. Dhoni then introduced Moeen Ali into the attack and he struck off his first ball, trapping Venkatesh Iyer LBW as he missed his slog sweep. Iyer reviewed it but the ball tracking system showed all three reds.

Jason Roy, who had injured himself while fielding, then came out all guns blazing hitting three consecutive sixes off Moeen Ali.

But Ravindra Jadeja brought CSK back into the game as he picked KKR skipper Nitish Rana’s wicket after being hit for a four off the previous ball. KKR hobbled to 76/4 at the halfway mark.

Roy and Rinku Singh then pressed the accelerator button, hammering a couple of sixes and a four off Jadeja. Roy took on Theekshana in the next over hitting a six and a four to make it 33 from two overs. Roy brought up his fifty, off just 19 balls. Roy cracked a couple of fours off Theekshana but the Sri Lankan spinner bounced back hard to clean him up with a yorker on 61(26).

With the required run rate touching almost 20 (99 required from 30) Rinku and Andre Russell went after Tushar Deshpande and took 19 off the over including two fours and a six.

Pathirana then got rid of Russell (9 off 6) as he ended up mistiming his shot. The Sri Lankan pacer bowled a brilliant over and gave away just eight including the wicket of Russell.

Rinku Singh tried to put up a fight, bringing up his fifty with a six, off Pathirana but the equation was out of his reach as well, as KKR fell short by 49 runs. Rinku Singh remained unbeaten on 53 off 33 balls with four sixes and three fours.

Put to bat first, CSK got off to a fine start as their openers Devon Conway and Ruturaj Gaikwad kept KKR bowlers on their toes from the very first over of the innings. The hard-hitting duo took their team’s total beyond the 50-run mark in under 6 overs.

However, Suyash Sharma provided his team with a crucial breakthrough as he sent Gaikwad packing back to the pavilion for a score of 35(20) in the 8th over of the game. The right-handed batter Ajinkya Rahane then came out to bat. Conway continued his blistering form in the match against KKR too as he slammed a 34-ball half-century in the 10th over of the game. **ANI**



\$68.7BN WITHDRAWN

Swiss bank Credit Suisse said on Monday that 61.2 billion Swiss francs (€62.6 billion or \$68.7 billion) in assets left the bank in the first quarter of the year as it rapidly collapsed.

Opaz introduces ChatGPT to develop services using AI

Introducing this service is aimed at improving the quality of services provided by Opaz and increasing the efficiency of internal operations and employee performance



“Employees will be able to access this service on their desktops and mobiles while getting continuous and immediate support at any time, and from anywhere, to carry out their tasks in a faster and more efficient manner. The service will also improve internal processes within departments, especially for new employees and projects, where new information is required about them, and from multiple resources that can be compared immediately

Mohammed bin Abdulmajeed Al Hooti

In charge of managing the Opaz digital transformation programme

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) announced that it has started using Chat GPT service, reflecting its direction of urging employees to use artificial intelligence techniques.

Introducing this service is aimed at improving the quality of services provided by Opaz and increasing the efficiency of internal operations and employee performance. This serves to uplift the provided services and expedite processing and completing investors' applications.

Mohammed bin Abdulmajeed Al Hooti, In charge of managing the Opaz digital transformation programme, said that Opaz will allow its employees in the different

divisions to use the Chat GPT service to improve the quality of services, increase data analysis and provide integrated and innovative experiences for the challenges encountered at work and when processing investors' applications.

“Employees will be able to access this service on their desktops and mobiles while getting continuous and immediate support at any time, and from anywhere, to carry out their tasks in a faster and more efficient manner. The service will also improve internal processes within departments, especially

for new employees and projects, where new information is required about them, and from multiple resources that can be compared immediately," Al Hooti explained.

Increase efficiency

"Opaz aims to increase efficiency and productivity, hones employees' communication skills and make the most of their time. Instead of training a large number of employees to answer common questions, Chat GPT can be implemented to answer these questions automatically and immediately, and at times

when employees are not even on duty,” Al Hooti further commented.

Analyse data effectively

Moreover, employees will be able to analyse the data they receive from clients and potential investors more effectively, allowing the follow-up and quality control departments to obtain valuable data about the services provided by Opaz.

These insights can be used to uplift Opaz's overall performance and implement operations in a more resourceful and effective manner, in addition to the pos-

sibility of using ChatGPT to enhance the experience of investors and customers with Opaz services. Through this new service, investors can get quick and accurate answers to their inquiries related to the services provided, which facilitates their procedures and ensures their satisfaction.

The Chat GPT service is considered one of the artificial intelligence techniques and one of its most important applications, as it allows users to analyse data more accurately and effectively. Likewise, problems can be identified and responded to rapidly, an attribute that would achieve work efficiency and easier management.

Using artificial intelligence technology and Chat GPT service marks a valuable addition to the smart services provided by Opaz and reflects its aspirations to improve the quality of services, increase the efficiency of internal operations, and enhance communication with investors and beneficiaries of its services.

Strategic objective

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones aims to introduce the ChatGPT service in all its affiliated zones in the future as part of its vision to fully benefit from advanced technologies and apply international best practices in managing its zones, being incubators for artificial intelligence technologies.

This comes within Opaz's efforts to achieve its strategic objectives by enhancing the investment environment in the 14 economic, free and industrial zones supervised by Opaz, in addition to the new under-construction zones.

INFLATION MODERATING

Asia's central banks may start cutting interest rates by fourth quarter of 2023

NEW DELHI: Inflation in Asia is moderating and the central banks in the region are likely to cut interest rates to support economic growth come the fourth quarter of 2023 (October-December), Morgan Stanley said in a report.

The global investment banking firm said Asia's inflation has already peaked in September 2022 and is on the disinflation path.

“We think central banks in Asia could start cutting rates in 4Q23, ahead of our expectations that the Fed (in the US) cuts rates from 1Q24,” the report titled ‘Asia Economics: The Viewpoint: Why Asia Could Cut Rates Ahead of the Fed’ co-authored by Chetan Ahya, Derrick Y Kam, Qiusha Peng, and Jonathan Cheung said.

Raising interest rates is a monetary policy instrument that typically helps suppress demand in the economy, thereby enabling the inflation rate to decline and vice versa.

Eight out of 11 central banks in the region have already paused their rate hike cycles in early 2023. They have noted that they would like to assess the impact of their monetary policy tightening on inflation as one of the key reasons why they have paused. According to the report, inflation is expected to reach the central banks' comfort zone for 90 per cent of Asia by the third quarter of 2023.

"Inflation is well on track to decelerate towards central banks' comfort zones by 3Q23. Eight out of 11 central banks in the region have already paused their tightening cycles," it said. -ANI


OmanCables
الكابلات العمانية

OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY (SAOG)

UNAUDITED RESULTS FOR THREE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31 MAR 2023

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Oman Cables Industry (SAOG) "Oman Cables" has the pleasure in submitting the report on the performance of the Parent Company and the Group for three months period ended 31 Mar 2023.

Parent Company: "Oman Cables".

The Group: Oman Cables and its two fully owned subsidiaries: Oman Aluminum Processing Industries SPC in Sohar "OAPIL" and Associated Cables Private Ltd in India "ACPL".

Safety first

Policies and procedures of the Group focus on a safe workplace, identifying hazards, assessing risks, training staff with an overall goal of avoiding occupational diseases and reducing the frequency and severity of injuries.

The Group is implementing various projects aimed at protecting the health and safety of the employees within and outside the company boundaries.

Group Performance

The Sales of the Group for the three months period ended 31 Mar 2023 were Rial Omani (RO) 61.8 million compared to RO 69.2 million for the same period last year, decrease of 10.8%.

The Group Net Profit after tax (NPAT), for the period is RO 4.5 million compared to RO 2.1 million during the same period in 2022, increase of 111.2%.

The Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) for the period was RO 5.9 million compared to RO 3.6 million during the same period in 2022, increase of 65.5%.

Oman Cables (Parent) Performance

Sales of Oman Cables for the three months period ended 31 Mar 2023 were RO 45.9 million compared to RO 49.3 million in the same period last year, decrease of 7.0 %.

The NPAT for the three months period ended 31 Mar 2023 was RO 3.3 million as compared to RO 1.6 million for the same period in 2022, increase of 105.7%.

EBITDA for the period was RO 4.2 million compared to RO 2.6 million during the same period in 2022, increase of 62.4%.

The business environment continues to recover due to stable oil prices. The Company continues to consider operational excellence as a success factor while delivering better profitability. Main drivers are an effective dynamic pricing, an agile design-to-cost, a continuous focus on fixed cost management and financial discipline, while leveraging on a wider product portfolio with high value-added products and services, and a wider geographical export reach. The focus on sustainability remains a priority, playing the company a crucial role in enabling the transition to green energy and providing the link to a sustainable future.

Oman Aluminum Processing Industries SPC, Sohar (OAPIL) (subsidiary) and Associated Cables Private Ltd (ACPL), India (Subsidiary)

OAPIL continues to focus on margin improvement, through focus on high yielding product mix and market channels. Control on fixed costs and purchasing efficiencies are also driving to improve the overall profitability. The results for the three months period ended 31 Mar 2023 have consistently improved compared with the same period in 2022.

Also ACPL is delivering improved results in the months period ended 31 March 2023, with an increase in sales, contribution and EBITDA thanks to a strong focus on market share increase, while strengthening efficiencies and design to cost activities to gain better competitiveness.

Oman Cables is recognizing the support extended by various Government Authorities and wish the best for our beloved Oman to further develop under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

On behalf of the Board of Directors
Oman Cables Industry SAOG

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED INCOME STATEMENT

	3 Months ended 31 March 2023 Group	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Parent Company	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Group	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Parent Company
	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000
Revenue	61,754	45,901	69,247	49,377
Cost of sales	(54,024)	(40,139)	(63,624)	(45,503)
Gross profit	7,770	5,762	5,623	3,874
Other income	121	108	55	31
General and administrative expense	(1,347)	(1,129)	(1,349)	(1,088)
Selling and distribution expenses	(1,488)	(1,074)	(1,561)	(741)
Operating profit	5,056	3,667	2,768	2,076
Finance income	241	231	84	84
Finance costs	(17)	24	(244)	(153)
Net allowances for credit loss	(17)	(17)	(110)	(110)
Profit (loss) before income tax,	5,263	3,905	2,498	1,897
Continuing operations				
Income tax expense,	(785)	(589)	(378)	(285)
continuing operations				
Profit for the period	4,478	3,316	2,120	1,612
Basic and diluted earnings per				
share attributable to ordinary				
equity holders of the parent company	0.050	0.037	0.024	0.018
Gross profit margin	12.57%	12.55%	8.12%	7.85%
Net profit margin	7.25%	7.22%	3.06%	3.26%

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	3 Months ended 31 March 2023 Group	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Parent Company	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Group	3 Months ended 31 March 2022 Parent Company
	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000
Net Profit / (Loss) for the period	4,478	3,316	2,120	1,612
Other comprehensive income				
Other comprehensive income (loss)				
to be reclassified to statement of				
income in subsequent periods,				
net of tax				
Changes in fair value of cash flow hedges	(987)	(1,182)	(1,951)	(2,054)
Foreign currency translation	(4)	-	11	-
Other comprehensive (loss)/ income	(991)	(1,182)	(1,940)	(2,054)
Total comprehensive income	3,487	2,134	180	(442)

UNAUDITED CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION (BALANCE SHEET)

	As on 31 March 2023 Group	As on 31 March 2022 Parent Company	As on 31 Dec. 2022 Group	As on 31 Dec. 2022 Parent Company
	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000	RO' 000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				

MARKET

More than \$68.7 billion withdrawn in Q1 2023

Credit Suisse has published its financial details for the first quarter of the year when it rapidly collapsed. It shows investors rushing to withdraw billions amid rumours of the bank's precarious position

ZURICH: Swiss bank Credit Suisse said on Monday that 61.2 billion Swiss francs (€62.6 billion or \$68.7 billion) in assets left the bank in the first quarter of the year as it rapidly collapsed.

The Swiss government ultimately stepped in and arranged for its takeover by rival UBS, using emergency laws to push the deal through and issue state guarantees for the risk UBS would take on.

The data also showed that capi-



tal outflows had continued this month after the UBS rescue deal was agreed upon.

According to the bank, the asset outflows amounted to about 5% of all of its assets under management. Most of the outflows were from its wealth management division and occurred across all regions.

"These outflows have moderated but have not yet reversed as of April 24, 2023," Credit Suisse said.

Assets managed by the flagship wealth management division dropped to 502.5 billion Swiss francs at the end of March, compared to 707 billion francs reported for the same period last year.

Major 'profit' after some bonds written off

Credit Suisse also reported that its first-quarter net income attributable to shareholders was 12.43 billion Swiss francs, compared to last

year's loss of 273 million francs. Pre-tax income was 12.76 billion francs, compared to a loss of 428 million francs a year ago.

However, this figure can be mainly explained by high-risk bonds worth around 15 billion francs being written down to zero, benefitting the bank's nominal bottom line but infuriating investors. The step was ordered by the Swiss Financial Market Supervisory Authority FINMA as part of the merger, but investors have since launched legal action against the regulator.

The bank also said that by March 31, it had net borrowings of 108 billion francs under credit support provided by Switzerland's central bank guarantees that were a pillar of the rescue plan that helped avoid a possible collapse of the bank.

A week earlier, Switzerland's

lower house of parliament issued a symbolic rebuke of the emergency plan spearheaded by the executive branch, voting against the UBS takeover even though it had been pushed through under emergency laws and could no longer be stopped.

Last quarterly report as Credit Suisse?

The takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS is expected to be completed in the coming months and was designed in part to help stabilise the global financial system that was first rocked by the collapse of two US banks before investors turned their eyes to the Swiss lender's stability.

Looking ahead, Credit Suisse expects to report a substantial loss before taxes in the second quarter and fiscal 2023. However, Monday's quarterly report could be Credit Suisse's last one, depending on how long it takes to finalise the merger.

UBS has already said Credit Suisse would continue to operate under its own name in Switzerland for the foreseeable future, but it plans to scale back Credit Suisse's investment bank.

Swiss media reported that UBS was considering laying off up to 30% of its workforce after taking over Credit Suisse. Before the merger, the number of employees at UBS and Credit Suisse was around 72,000 and 50,000, respectively. -**W**

LATEST INNOVATIONS

Arabian Travel Market to feature world's top travel technology firms

DUBAI: The upcoming Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2023 in Dubai is set to feature over 80 of the world's top travel technology companies, showcasing their latest innovations and advancements.

The four-day event, which will take place from May 1 to 4 at the Dubai World Trade Centre, will offer more than 2,000 square metres of exhibition space dedicated to the technology sector, representing a 54.7 per cent increase in sector participation compared to last year.

In addition to the Travel Tech space, ATM 2023 will also include a brand-new Sustainability Hub, highlighting the latest environmentally-responsible travel trends and innovations. The ATM Travel Tech Stage, sponsored by Sabre, will host several in-depth panel discussions exploring modern innovations such as artificial intelligence, big data, and Web3 and how they can enable seamless operations, professional development, payments, accessibility, sustainable travel, and enhanced customer experiences.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market, stated that innovation is a crucial component of the event's theme, 'Working Towards Net Zero'. Curtis emphasised the importance of supporting and investing in the most promising

technologies to build a better and more sustainable travel sector for future generations.

One of the innovation-centric discussions at the ATM Travel Tech Stage will be the "Technology: The Enabler of Sustainable Travel" session, where industry experts will discuss how online tools are making it easier for consumers to reduce their environmental impact when purchasing and planning trips. The panel will be moderated by Shashank Nigam, Founder and CEO of SimpliFlying, and will feature insights from Tom Kershaw, Chief Product and Technology Officer at Travelport; Lucas Bobes, Group Environmental Officer and Head of ESG Reporting at Amadeus; and Carlo Olejniczak, Vice President and Managing Director of EMEA at Booking.com.

ATM 2023 is set to feature over 20 innovation-focused sessions and events during the four-day event, including the Tech Stage, which will provide the backdrop for a selection of panels discussing the main trends impacting travel in 2023 and beyond. The session, in partnership with Sabre, will explore how the travel industry has harnessed innovation in response to the global pandemic and how technology is likely to drive further advancements in the future. -**WAM**

SOBHA REALTY

Luxury villa community project Sobha Reserve launched in Dubai

DUBAI: Sobha Realty, one of the UAE's leading premium real estate developers, announced the launch of 'Sobha Reserve' project, worth AED 2.8 billion.

Located in the heart of Wadi Al Safa 2, Dubailand, Sobha Reserve raises the benchmark for luxury villa communities in Dubai, adhering to the highest standards of modern architecture and urban design.

Set in an open canvas of 3.47 million square feet (approx. 80 acres), Sobha Reserve is set to offer a luxurious villa community with a lush forest landscape, comprising just over 300 villas of four- and five-bedroom configurations, each with its own private luxury pool adjoining garden. These exquisite villas range in size from 4900 square feet, offering the highest levels of palatial villa luxury, with their modern architecture and



amenities, superior finishes and interior design.

Commenting on the launch, Francis Alfred, Managing Director of Sobha Realty, said: "Sobha Realty operates with quality and luxury at the core of its operations, and our projects have the capability to change perceptions, lifestyles, and skylines. We are committed to contributing to the

growth of Dubai's real estate sector, and we strive to constantly set higher benchmarks in the luxury real estate segment. The realty sector is projected to continue its expansion with a significant boost from the tourism and hospitality sectors. Dubai's economy has been booming and has maintained its ranking amongst the top global economic regions."

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

Hydrogen, e-planes may need 1,700TWh clean energy by 2050

GENEVA: Hydrogen and electric aircraft could require 600-1,700 terawatt-hours (TWh) of clean energy by 2050, according to a new white paper from the World Economic Forum (WEF). For context, the total amount of renewable energy produced in 2021 was just over 8,000 TWh globally.

To meet the estimated energy demand from hydrogen and electric aircraft in 2050 would require the amount of energy produced from 10-25 of the world's largest wind farms, or a solar farm half the size of Belgium, the paper suggests.

Alternative, carbon-free propulsion options, such as battery and hydrogen-powered aircraft, are some of the options the aviation industry is pursuing to reach its net-zero carbon goals. By some estimates, hydrogen and electric planes could account for 21-38% of flights by 2050.



"The aviation sector must make key investments in its infrastructure now if it wants to reach its net-zero target by 2050," said David Hyde, Aerospace Projects Lead, World Economic Forum. "Given that the share of aviation's global warming impact is set to rise significantly if action is not

taken, the sector must consider all the options available for decarbonisation. This includes preparing to use aircraft that are powered by carbon-free fuels at scale."

While the timeline may feel distant, the first commercial flights by such aircraft are expected to take place this decade. -**WAM**

RANA PLAZA COLLAPSE

New accord keeps Dhaka garment factories workers safer

DHAKA: The collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory building on the outskirts of Bangladesh's capital city, Dhaka, on April 24, 2013, killed 1,138 people. Its legacy one decade on is a mix of reform and endless battles to keep workers safe.

The groundbreaking so-called Bangladesh Accord agreement came into force in 2013, giving unions a greater say while holding fashion brands legally accountable for ensuring factories remained safe. Over 220 brands eventually signed on to the original accord, which ran until 2018 and has since been renewed as the "International Accord."

According to the Clean Clothes Campaign group, the accord has made more than 1,600 factories in Bangladesh safer for over 2.5 million workers. Only two brands have been brought to court for violating the regulation contract since 2013.

"We have seen a dramatic change in terms of workers being safe in the factories that are covered by the accord. Nobody needs to fear being hurt anymore like that," Alke Boessiger, deputy general secretary of Uni Global Union, told DW.

A preexisting proposal for factory safety signed by two brands, however, was already on the table before the Rana Plaza disaster.

"If we take a step back and consider what would have happened if brands said this is a great idea and signed up [earlier], you think to yourself what could have been prevented," said Christie Miede-



ma, campaign co-ordinator for the Clean Clothes Campaign group based in the Netherlands.

"It was a long battle to even get the two brands to sign, and there was a clause that said it would only go into effect after a total of four brands signed. It wasn't even operational yet," she told DW. In the aftermath of Rana Plaza, brands clamoured to sign up to legally binding agreements, she said, "because there was no way out for them and it was very convenient that there was a proposal already on the table."

Europe leads, America lags

Europe has led the way in cracking down on human rights abuses in the supply chain. Germany introduced the Supply Chain Due Diligence Act, in effect since January 1 this year. Firms found using child labour, forced labour and inadequate safety standards can expect fines of over €400 million (\$443 million) and up to 2% of the average annual turnover.

The EU published a draft proposal in February 2022, though it is yet to be presented to the European Parliament.

Some major brands continue to dodge signing the International Accord protecting safety standards, among them German brands Tom Tailor and Deichmann, Swedish home store giant IKEA, and US online retailer Amazon.

America has been particularly resistant to reform. In July 2013, US brands Gap and Walmart announced their programme, rejected by accord advocates as a corporate-driven scheme that shunned trade unions.

After five years, the American alliance declared its work "done."

"Factory owners can put products in front of a fire escape at any moment in time," said Babul Akhter, general secretary of the Bangladesh Garment and Industrial Worker Federation and one of the founders of the Bangladesh Center for Workers Solidarity group.

Akhter, who was imprisoned in Bangladesh for his trade union work in 2010, told DW that "continuous inspection" of factories was needed which is why "the work is never done."

Unpaid wages and violations persist

The accord has its limitations. It primarily focuses on factory safety issues and does not address key issues, most notably wage theft and mass redundancies.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, garment workers across Asia, particularly in the supply chains of companies like Nike, Levi Strauss, and North Face, suffered wage theft and income loss.

German clothing group s.Oliver recently paid €100,000 to 2,000 former garment workers in Indonesia, for whom it legally owed \$5.5 million (€5 million) in severance pay.

The fear of losing work is pertinent to Rana Plaza.

Just hours before the collapse, banks on the ground floor of the complex shut their doors while factory workers were forced to step inside a structurally unsafe building. "Dismal wages and the lack of union representation [meant] that people felt they had to go back. They couldn't lose a day or a whole month of wages," said Miedema.

Still, Rana Plaza's legacy lives on. The accord has now been extended into Pakistan, a move that's been welcomed by campaigners after a factory blaze on April 14 injured dozens. -**W**



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ANIMALS TRAVEL MORE SLOWLY SINCE THEY CAN'T KEEP COOL

According to a new study led by Alexander Dyer from the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research (iDiv) and the Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Germany, published in the open-access journal PLOS Biology, an animal's travelling speed is limited by how effectively it sheds the excess heat generated by its muscles.

An animal's capacity to travel is a crucial part of its survival and

dictates where - and how far - it can migrate, find food and mates, and spread into new territories. This becomes even more challenging in a human-dominated world characterized by increasingly fragmented habitats and limited food and water resources under climate change.

Dyer and his colleagues developed a model to look at the relationship between animal size and traveling speed, using data from

532 species. While larger animals should be able to travel faster due to their longer wings, legs or tails, the researchers found that medium-sized animals typically have the fastest sustained speeds. The researchers attribute this to the fact that larger animals require more time to dissipate the heat that their muscles produce while moving, and therefore, they must travel more slowly to avoid overheating. They conclude that any

animal's traveling speed can be explained by jointly considering how efficiently it uses energy and sheds heat.

"The new study provides a way to understand animal movement capacities across species and can be used to estimate any animal's traveling speed based on its size," says Dyer. "For example, this approach can be applied to predict whether an animal might be able to move between habitats frag-

mented by human development, even when the details of its biology are unknown."

Last author Dr. Myriam Hirt from iDiv and the University of Jena adds, "We anticipate that large animals are potentially more susceptible to the effects of habitat fragmentation in a warming climate than previously thought and therefore more prone to extinction. But this needs further investigation." -AM

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FEATURE



MORE problems, more money. That is a key takeaway from the latest data published Monday by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a leading global security think tank.

For 2022, researchers recorded a year-on-year jump of 3.7% in worldwide military expenditure. That marks an all-time high and follows several years of continuously higher spending.

“Irrespective of whether economies are doing better or worse than expected, the military is taking up more financial resources than in previous years, or previously ever in history,” Nan Tian, a senior researcher at SIPRI who helped author the report, told DW.

For those who follow world events, the doubling down on defense likely comes as no surprise. Russia’s all-out war against Ukraine has led European countries in particular to pay renewed attention to their military budgets. Ever since the first Russian missiles struck Ukrainian cities in late February 2022, country after country has announced new spending.

Spending as a safety blanket
Defense outlays among NATO members — the Euro-Atlantic military alliance incorporating most European countries — have been going up since at least 2014. That’s when Russia initially attacked Ukraine, illegally annexing the Crimean Peninsula and backing separatists in the eastern part of the country. NATO members agreed to meet a defense spending goal of 2% of national GDP by 2024, and many have been slowly working toward that target.

The Russian threat that all this money is meant to counter, however, has not materialized as frightfully as first imagined. The fact that Ukraine has so far managed to counter the Russian forces, which are theoretically superior, and hem them into a corner of the country has cast serious doubt on a broader danger to the rest of Europe.

Still, money for new military kit and other defense-related spending keeps pouring in. Russia may be a flop on the battlefield, Nan Tian said, but it could still be a potent adversary in cyberspace. Attacks on digital infrastructure can be low-cost, but high-damage.

And, of course, Russia maintains a considerable nuclear arsenal.

“For a lot of European countries, it’s really about how to beef up all aspects of defense,” he said. “The

Despite economic uncertainty, global military spending has surged. Inflation, Russia’s war on Ukraine and US efforts to outpace China are major factors



higher military spending is a sign of deterrence to Russia.”

What the numbers mean
A chicken-or-egg scenario has taken shape. As governments respond to a growing sense of unraveling security, they contribute to its further deterioration. At the same time, however, the SIPRI data shows that the spending spree may not be as pronounced as headlines and policymakers sometimes make it out to be.

While actual spending is up, topping a combined \$2.2 trillion (€2 trillion) in 2022, as a share of GDP it is 0.1% lower than it was in 2013. That is despite double-digit increases over the past decade across many countries, including nuclear powers and those known for prioritizing armed forces, such as China (63%), India (47%) and Israel (26%).

In each of these countries, however, defense spending has declined as a percentage of national economic output.

The discrepancy suggests economic expansion has outpaced national budgets in areas such as defense, even if dollar figures can



appear eye-popping; and rapid, record inflation has forced governments to spend more just to keep up.

In other words, they have lost purchasing power. A defense ministry faces similar price pressures when shopping for a squadron of fighter jets that a normal household does for buying a carton of eggs. Countries looking not just to maintain, but grow or upgrade their militaries, have to spend even more, which has been reflected in SIPRI’s reporting.

“Despite countries having increased spending by 15%, in nominal terms, once you adjust for inflation, they actually decrease,” Nan Tian said, giving a ballpark example.

Inflation has also been a political problem, particularly in Germany, which early last year pledged an additional €100 billion for its armed forces in response to Russian aggression. After years of facing criticism for not spending enough, higher prices have muted its efforts to finally do so.

Not just bombs and bullets
The additional sum, which comes

on top of Germany’s regular defense budget, is not reflected in the SIPRI data because none of it was ready to be spent last year. Even when the funds do start flowing, Germany may still fall short of NATO’s goals, according to an analysis by the German Economic Institute at the end of 2022.

Earmarked for a five-year period, it’s a chunk of change intended to buy Germany new weapons and other equipment. The SIPRI figures, however, cover broader ground.

National defense establishments are sprawling institutions, employing hundreds of thousands of civilian and military personnel, sometimes in far-flung and hostile regions, at great cost. These employees need to be fed and clothed and have an administration to manage them.

More spending, therefore, does not necessarily translate into more weapons and upgraded fighting forces. Although the arms industry is booming and under pressure to keep up with demand, defense ministries are also paying to keep the lights on and toilets clean, like in any office.

The year-on-year increase also accounts for military aid, which has seen an exceptional increase due to Russia’s war in Ukraine. The United States alone has contributed more than \$47 billion to Ukraine’s defense, according to the Kiel Institute, a German economic think tank.

The portion of spending that does go directly to weapons varies by country, and it can be difficult to assess how effectively it is invested. That’s because there is a “lag effect,” SIPRI researcher Nan Tian explained.

Weapon systems are large and complex and can take years to develop, procure and press into service. Many of the aircraft, missile batteries and armored vehicles considered top-of-the-line that Ukraine has pushed to receive from NATO members are decades old. Some of the latest spendings, SIPRI noted, is going toward modernizing nuclear forces that most hope are never used.

How much bang taxpayers get for their buck spent on defense is always a question when such huge sums of money are at play. That is especially the case for the US,

which is by far the leader in military output. In 2022, the official US defense budget came in at \$877 billion (€790 billion), according to the report. That accounts for 39% of global military expenditures.

Taken as a percentage of national GDP, this defense spending may be less than it was in 2013 and a far cry from Cold War highs of nearly 10%. But no matter how you crunch the numbers, Nan Tian said it still enabled the US to project power and “spread that influence to the rest of the world.”

China, which the US has said is a major reason for increases to the defense budget, is a distant second, putting out \$292 billion (€263 billion) last year. Despite the disparity between the world’s two largest economies, many US officials and security analysts are warning of China gaining a military edge.

The extent to which that is true may have to do with where that money is spent. Whereas China is flexing its military muscle in its Pacific neighborhood, the US seems intent on maintaining a security footprint around the world — a position it has held since World War II. **bw**





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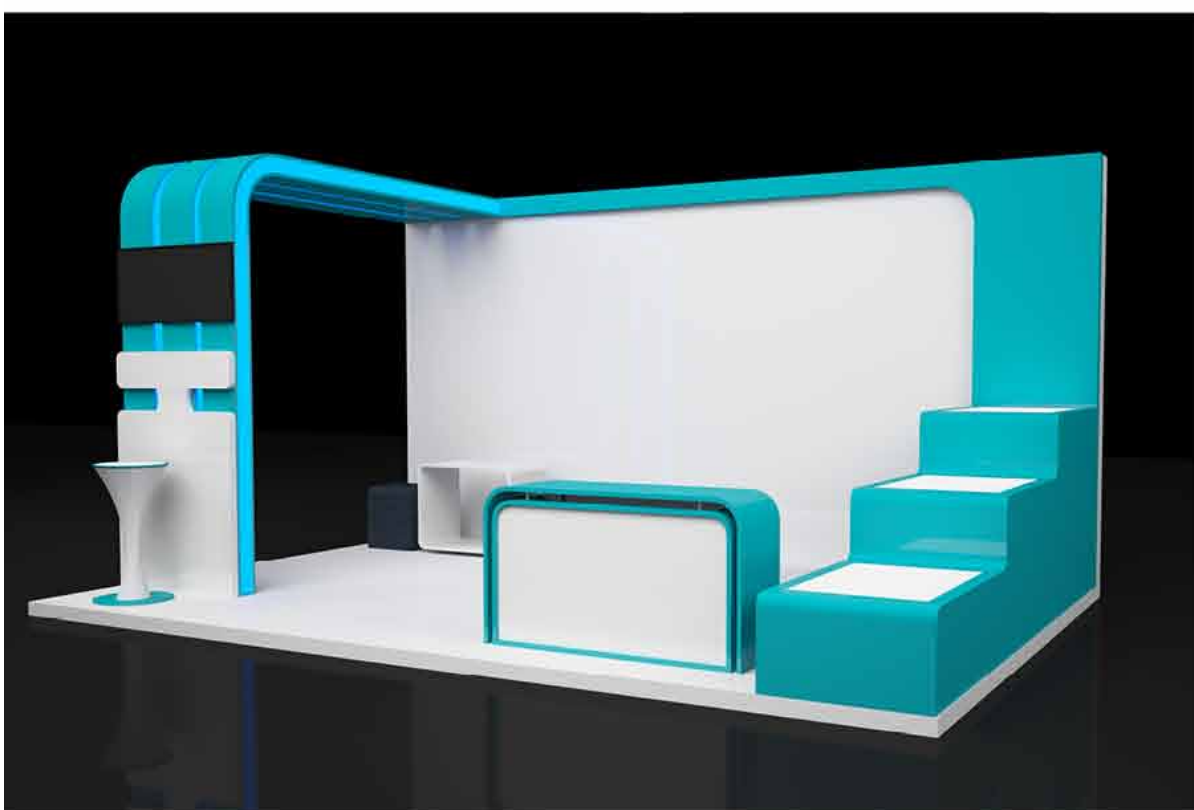
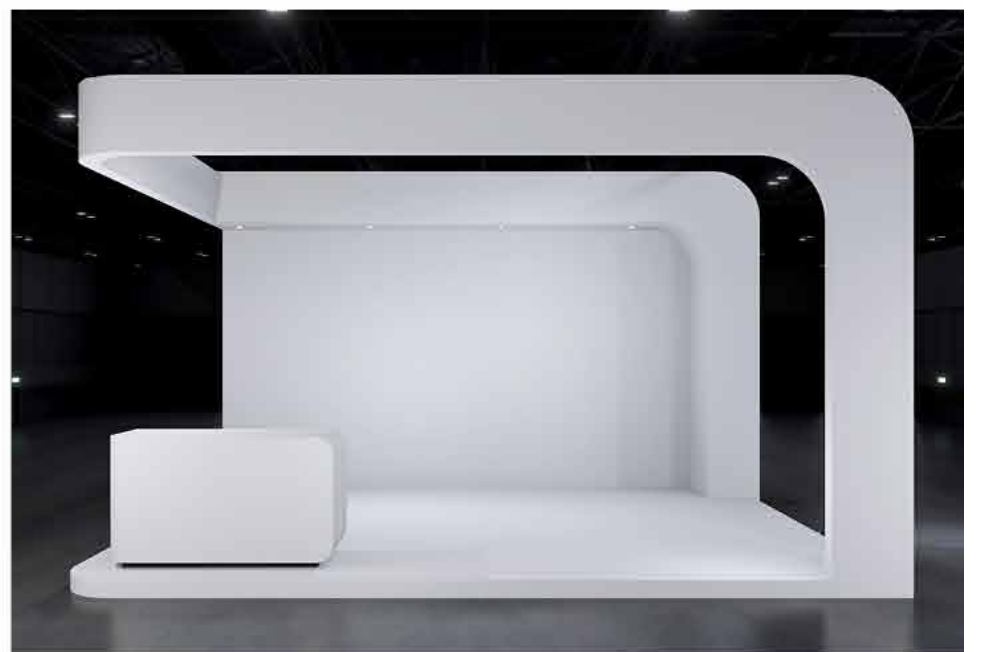
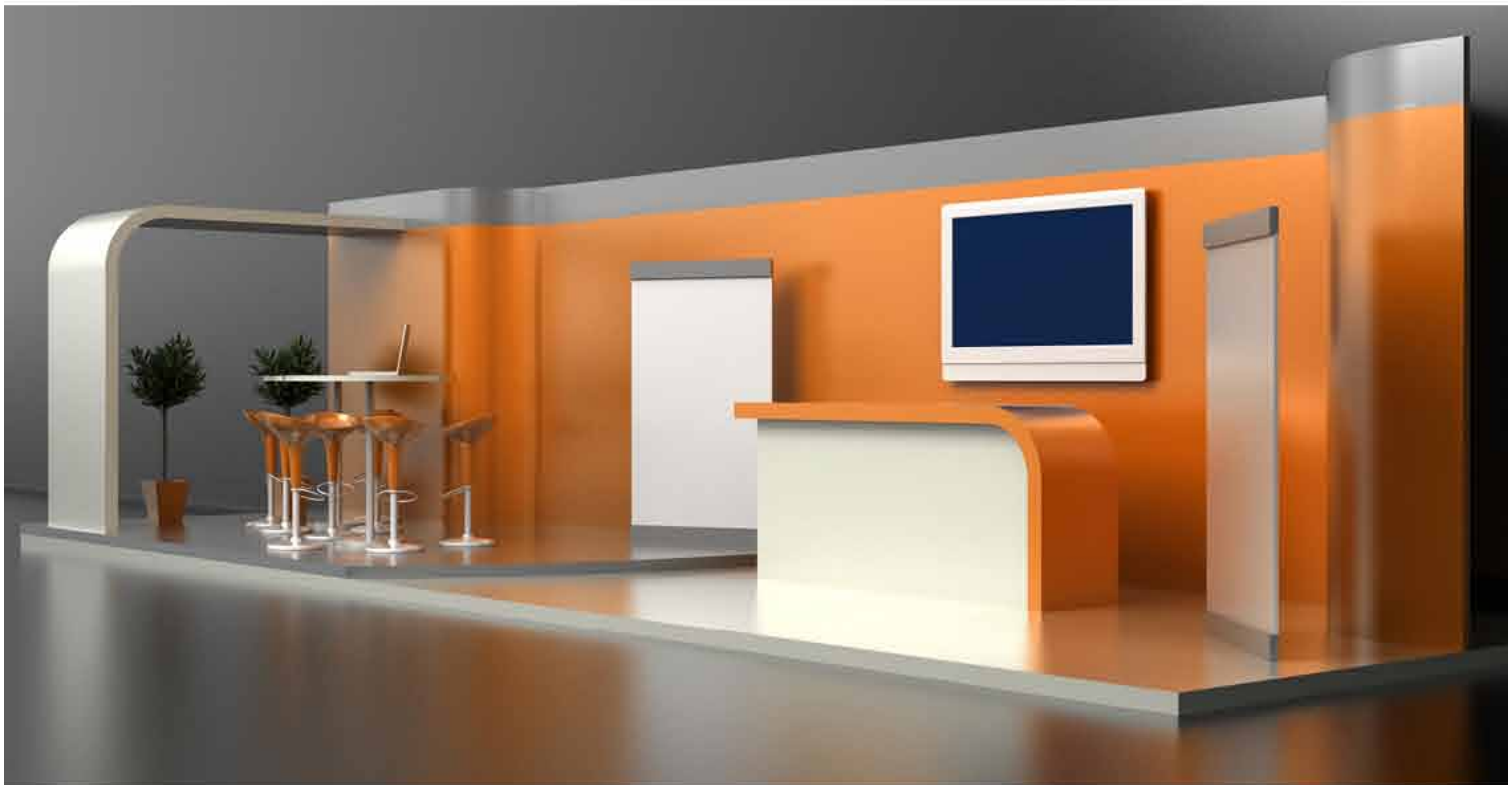
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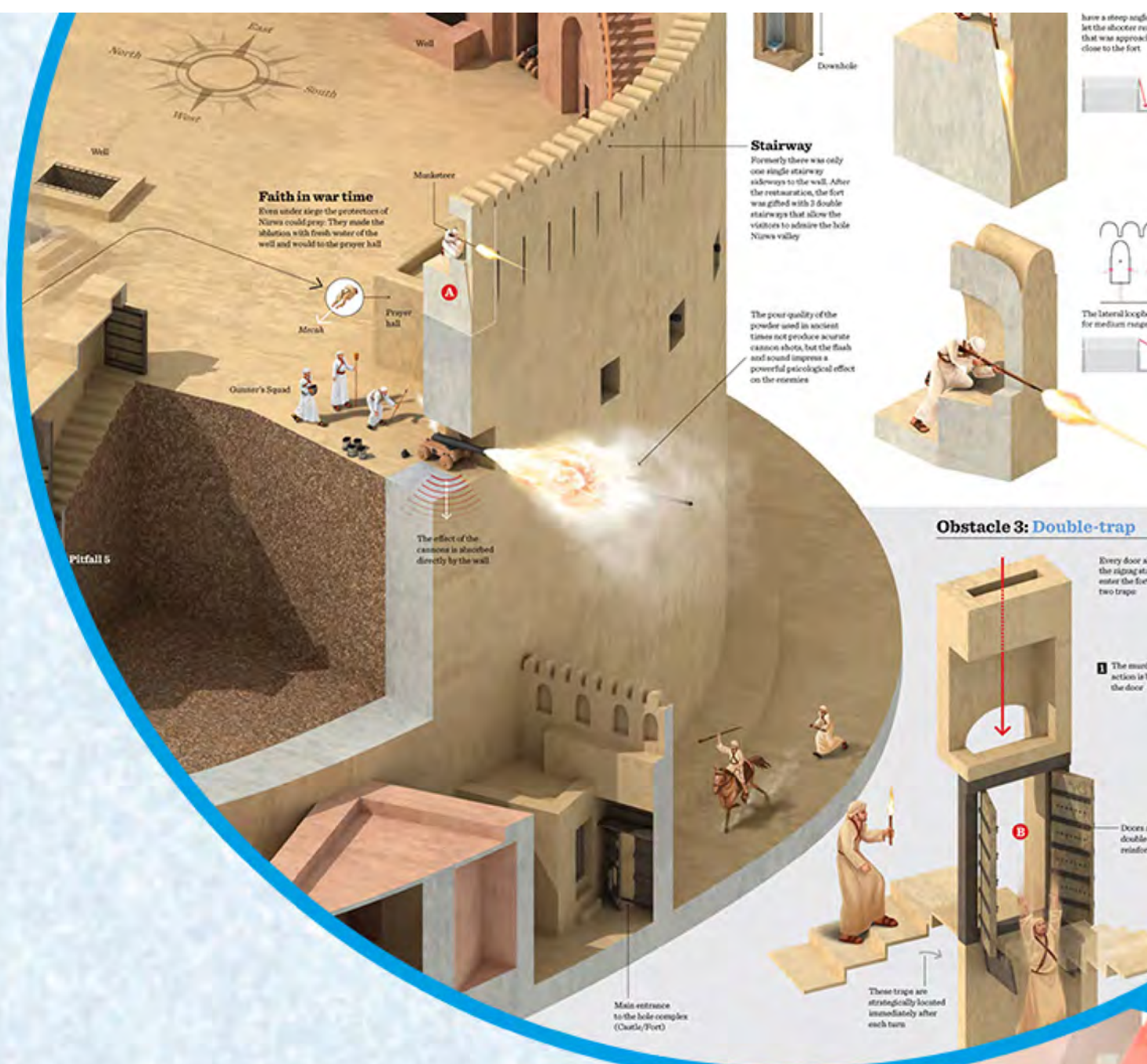
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