

Online use for Majlis elections

The Majlis Ash'shura elections will be done online using the mobile application for the first time. The Intakhib application provides a package of electoral services, including preliminary and final lists of candidates, preliminary and final lists of voters, checking registration in the electoral register, requesting candidacy for elections, following-up on the automatic counting indicators for voting day. **DETAILS ON P3**



P10

OMAN TO START WITH IRISH CHALLENGE ON JUNE 19



P13

FDI INFLOWS RISE 10.5% TO RO 19.620BN IN 2022



P20

ANCIENT TRADITIONS IN OMAN EMPOWER YOUTH AND NURTURE MENTAL WELL-BEING



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY SENEGAL PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable to him on his country's National Day. In his cable, President Macky Sall expressed his sincere appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments. He wished His Majesty good health, well-being and continuous success. He also wished the relations between the two countries further development and growth. — ONA

Oman's role in promoting dialogue among civilisations hailed

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, received on Tuesday Dr Salim Mohammed al Malik, Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ISESCO).

After welcoming the guest and his accompanying delegation, HH Sayyid Fahd expressed Oman's appreciation for the efforts of ISESCO to upgrade the level of international cooperation in the fields of education, culture, information, human and social sciences, as well as its role in realising coordination and harmony among countries of the Islamic world.

HH Sayyid Fahd also highlighted Oman's continuous



PHOTO BY MOHAMED AL RASHDI

support for the organisation in carrying out its duties. Then, HH Sayyid Fahd reviewed the march of the sustainable development in the country. He affirmed that the government attaches great attention to education, science and technology, considering them as key pillars for development.

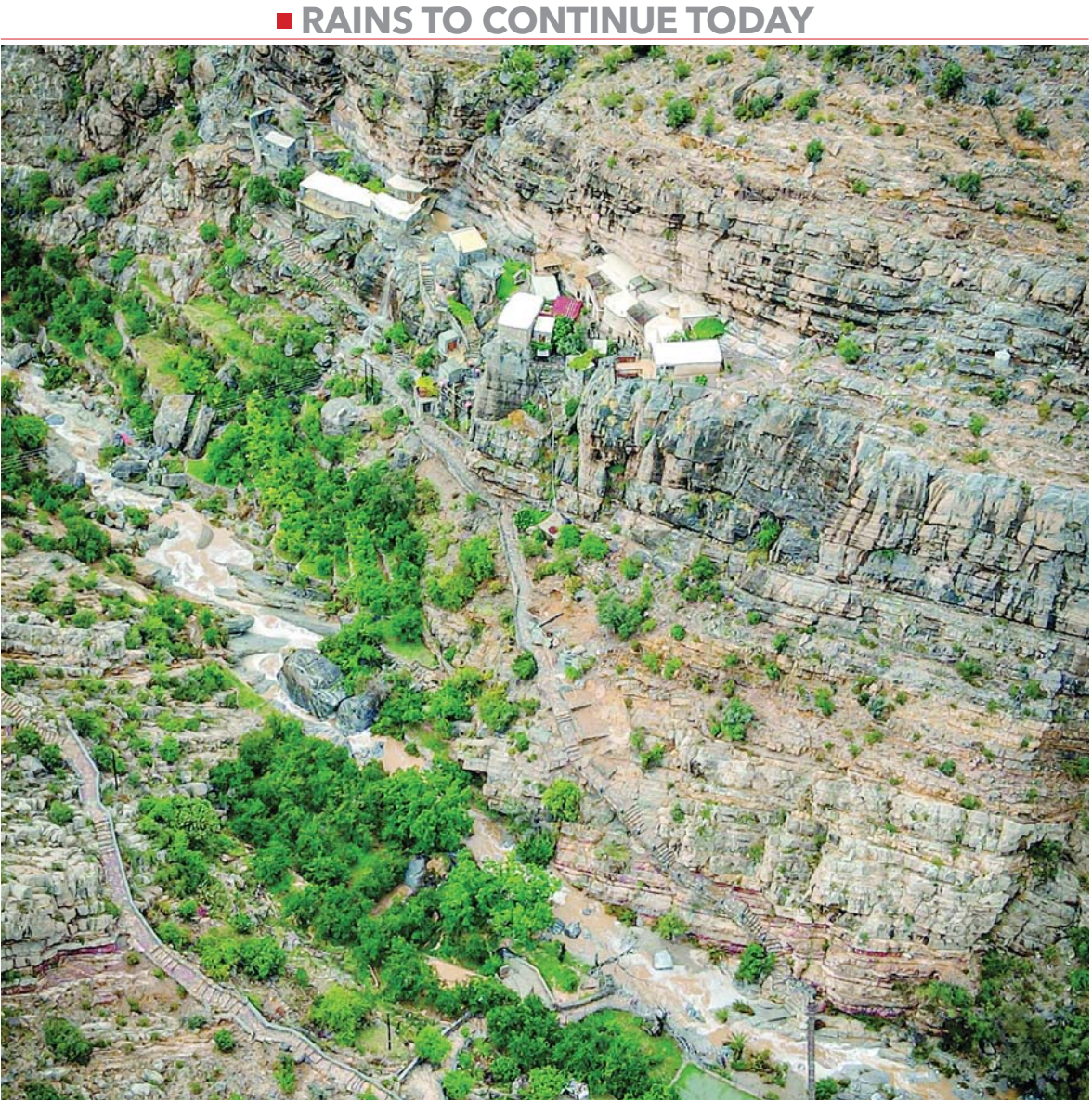
On his turn, ISESCO Director-General expressed his appreciation for the achievements made by Oman. He lauded Oman's constructive role in supporting ISESCO. He also commended the role of Oman, represented by Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science (ONCECS), in promoting dialogue among civilisations and encouraging cultural rapprochement. — ONA

HM GREETINGS TO ERITREA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Isaias Afwerki of the State of Eritrea on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and welfare. His Majesty also wished the people of Eritrea further progress and prosperity. — ONA

OMAN TOPS AT ARAB CONTEST

Radio of the Sultanate of Oman won first prize in the Arab Music and Song Contest's 14th round dedicated to music tracks. Oman bagged first prize for its leading music track codenamed "Wahaj" (glow). In the song contest, Oman won second prize for its song titled "Aynak" (your eyes), which evolved around the theme of beauty. This was announced at the 30th meeting of the Arab Broadcasting Union's standing committee. **DETAILS ON P2**



Rains continued in a number of wilayats on Tuesday with varying intensity reported on Al Hajar Mountains and parts of Muscat, South Al Batinah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates and extended to North and South Al Sharqiyah governorates in the evening. Rain was associated with active wind blowing at a speed ranging between 15 and 30 knots. The Oman Met Office said rains are likely to continue on Wednesday. **DETAILS ON P3**

INVESTMENT OPTIONS FOR RO 13 MILLION

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with government and private sectors, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has outlined investment opportunities in the food industries sector, with an investment value worth more than RO 13 million.

According to the ministry, the opportunities are available in the sectors of value-added fish industries products, the centre for training, testing and developing food technology, dairy industries and date processing and packaging.

The ministry said that the value-added fish industries products opportunity is a new manufacturing facility that will be established

FISH INDUSTRIES
RO 4.2 MILLION
FOOD TECHNOLOGY CENTRE
RO 3.9 MILLION
DAIRY INDUSTRIES
RO 3 MILLION
DATE PROCESSING
RO 2.1 MILLION

in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm on a land area of 1,000 square metres, with an investment worth RO 4.2 million and an investment revenue of 13.9 per cent.

The centre for training, testing and developing food technology is an investment opportunity to address the gaps in the system of food safety and monitoring. The centre will be set up in the Governorate of Muscat on a land area of more than 20,000 sqm, with an investment value of RO 3.9 million.

The dairy industries investment opportunity deals with the establishment of a new unit for evaporating and condensing milk. The investment will have an Omani trademark. **TURN TO P2**

SPOTLIGHT



VEHICLE CHECK—SUMMER IS ON

TO ENSURE A TROUBLE-FREE SUMMER AND KEEP THE VEHICLE COOL



VEHICLE CARE DURING SUMMER

P4

This young chanter has six million viewers

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
[@lakshmioman](#)

The views of the poem, Nasheed, 'Daa Laziz Al Kara' narrated by the young, rising and creative vocalist Feras al Sulaimi, on a video format, has reached close to six million views on YouTube.

In his post, Twitter user Ali al Rashdi said the poem is by the poet Mohsen al Hazani, who is believed to have narrated this while praying for rain in Saudi Arabia.



WONDERFUL VOICE

He added, "Feras has a wonderful voice, which we hope will be explored and will reach the ranks of the world in singing."

The video of chanting the names of Allah had exceeded 1,400,000 views in just two months since being launched on March 15, 2023. The video

currently has 5.9 million views, while writing this report.

"This is a record that no Omani singer has attained in such a short period," said fans of young vocalist,

Feras.

Yet another viewer on YouTube, Abdul Hamad, wrote, "Since we are young, we have been listening to this poem and have heard elders singing it, but with this angelic voice, it's as if it is the first time we heard it. The words are pronounced clearly. The dialect is of the people from Al Najd."

The chanting was performed by Yousuf Sa'Sriya from Saudi Arabia a few years earlier. Currently, there is also a version that is remixed, combining the chantings of both vocalists. This track has also been attracting viewers and listeners across the region. **TURN TO P3**



North Batinah, China’s Yunnan Province explore partnership

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 23

Mohammed bin Suleiman al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah, and Saeed bin Ali Al Abri, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Oman in North Al Batinah Governorate, and a number of officials in the governorate welcomed on Tuesday morning at the Crowne Plaza Sohar Hotel, Wong Yu Bo, head of the delegation of the Chinese Yunnan Province. The two sides exchanged the bright and positive aspects that the visit could achieve.

The delegation was briefed on the facilities, factories and companies operating in the port and free zone. The port administration provided a detailed explanation of the work of the administration and the direct, indirect and logistical services it provides to all companies and factories. The delegation also was exposed to the investment opportunities available in the port, free zone and Sohar Industrial Zone (Madayn) and the facilities offered to investors.

After that, a seminar to strengthen partnership and



investment between North Al Batinah Governorate and Yunnan Province of China) began, organised by the Office of the Governor of North Al Batinah and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Al Batinah Governorate. A number of business owners and those interested in the investment aspects of the governorate participated in the Seminar.

The seminar included a presentation, presented by His Excellency Mohammed bin Sulaiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah, in which he introduced the Governorate of North Al Batinah in terms of area, population, and the industrial, agricultural and commercial activities that the governorate is

famous for.

Then, he talked about the comparative advantage of the governorate in terms of geographical location and weight. Population, logistical readiness and existing resources such as agricultural, fisheries, animal and natural resources such as minerals and others, in addition to the province's richness in heritage, cultural and historical aspects, the interaction of civil institutions and other features that characterize the province.

Al Kindi discussed the economic activity in the governorate, where he mentioned the economic and commercial activity provided by Sohar Port, Free Zone and Sohar Industrial Zone (Madayn)

and the important and vital commercial roles provided by small and medium commercial enterprises. He mentioned that the volume of investments in Sohar Port and Free Zone reaches more than \$27 billion, mentioning the logistical readiness of the governorate to be at the forefront of the governorates in attracting investments, as Sohar Airport, Sohar ports, Al Suwaiq, and Shinas, and the presence of well-developed road networks at high levels, such as the Al Batinah Expressway, the public road, and the Al Batinah Coastal Road, in addition to the railway linking the Wilayat of Sohar with the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, which connects the state with the (Madayn) industrial zone.

After that, Al Kindi spoke about the existing development projects in the governorate and the opportunities for economic growth, where he indicated that the port of Sohar receives about 3,000 ships annually, with a total of 85 million tonnes, and connects with more than 55 ports around And that the Sohar Industrial City (Madayn) has more than (354) projects.

This young chanter has six million viewers

FROM PAGE 1

Feras al Sulaimi is originally from Samayil, but lives in Al Amerat. The 12-year-old is a seventh grader at Abdullah Bin Salam School, and his favourite subject at school is maths because he believes maths is a challenging subject and pushes one to find solutions. Observer spoke to his father, Moosa al Sulaimi, about Feras al Sulaimi's talent and when he first noticed it.

“When he was a child in kindergarten, he used to listen to the Nasheeds of famous chanters,” replied Moosa al Sulaimi.

His parents used to play the chants in the car, and he started memorising and enacting them at home. His parents discovered that he had a lovely voice and the ability to memorise at an early age. His favourite chanter from the begging is late Mishari al Arada from Kuwait.

“His story touched Feras's heart as he learnt at an early age that it is very important for someone to leave a legacy before he dies. Now that he is 12 years old, he believes that this is his main drive to continue chanting as it leaves an impact on the lives of others because many of these chants remind people, especially the youth, of good conduct, morals, and how to excel in life,” said Moosa al Sulaimi.

The journey, however, began when he was seven years old; he participated in a local competition in Al Amerat called ‘Al Amerat Top Chanter’, and he won first place. He also participated in another virtual competition organised by a non-

profit organisation called Qatari Woman Organisation during Covid-19 in 2020 and won the first place again. He also continues to participate in Islamic and national events throughout the year in different schools and whenever he receives invitations from other organisations. Feras has released more than 15 chants, some of which are of famous chanters and his own. His latest was the one that has gone viral and reached 5 million views in two months, which opening translates to: “Leave your deep sleep, wake up! And pray!”

While browsing through YouTube, he came across this poem, and he did further research and was fascinated when he came across the story behind it and presented it to his father proposing to him that he should record this one, which he did.

“This poem is more than 200 years old by a famous Saudi poet who lived in a village in Saudi Arabia called Al Hareeq. Their area reeled under drought for years, and as part of the Islamic faith, a prayer to seek refuge and ask for rain is done during these times. Because the poet was famous for his poems on love and passion, the older people from the village were reluctant to have him with them at prayers. So he took small children and elderly with him in a separate group and started chanting this poem in the valley. It was narrated, and there was rain, and he believed that his prayers through this poem were answered,” describes Moosa al Sulaimi.

Oman scores high at Arab music contest

TUNIS: Radio of the Sultanate of Oman won first prize in the Arab Music and Song Contest's 14th round dedicated to music tracks. Oman bagged first prize for its leading music track codenamed ‘Wahaj’ (glow).

In the song contest, Oman won second prize for its song titled ‘Aynak’ (your eyes), which evolved around the theme of beauty.

This was announced at the 30th meeting of the Arab Broadcasting Union's standing committee, held via videoconferencing and attended by Yousuf bin Humaid al Yousufi, Director-General of Radio Broadcasting.

The contest was held at the headquarters of the Arab Broadcasting Union in Tunis during the period from May 9 to May 11, 2023. — ONA



RO 13 million investment options for food sector

FROM PAGE 1

Its unit will be set up on an area of 8,000 sqm at the free zone in Suhar, with an investment value of RO 3 million and an investment revenue of 14.1 per cent.

Meanwhile, the date

processing and packaging is a new production facility for processing and packing dates for the commercial and retail food sectors. The unit will have an investment volume of RO 2.1 million and an investment revenue of 17.4 per cent. — ONA

925 released under Fak Kurbah initiative

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef



The Fak Kurbah initiative, organised by the Oman Lawyers Association (OLA), concluded its 10th edition, successfully securing the release of 925 prisoners who were incarcerated for minor financial offenses.

The released inmates, hailing from various governorates across the Sultanate of Oman, met the eligibility criteria for release under the initiative. This achievement was announced during a press conference held at Al Wahat Club in Athaiba, where Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, the Head of the initiative and Chairman of OLA, addressed the media.

Dr Al Zadjali expressed gratitude to the Omani society for showcasing solidarity and generosity towards those in need. He emphasised that Fak Kurbah exemplifies the unity and support among the people of Oman during challenging times.

Since its inception, the

initiative has successfully secured the release of 5,894 prisoners who faced imprisonment or were on the verge of being imprisoned due to financial claims. Dr Al Zadjali extended his appreciation to individuals and institutions whose efforts contributed to the initiative's success.

The released cases were distributed across all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The Governorate of Muscat witnessed the highest number of 194 released cases followed by the Al Batinah North (191) Al Batinah South (122) and Al Dhahirah (97).

There were 87 cases from Al Buraimi Governorate, Al Dakhiliyah (79), Al Sharqiyah North (59), and

the Al Sharqiyah South (40). The remaining cases were distributed among Dhofar (33), Al Wusta (20) and Musandam (3).

Dr Al Zadjali highlighted that community participation has been a fundamental goal of the initiative. He expressed appreciation for the constructive collaboration and support received from government and private institutions, journalists and social media influencers in spreading the initiative's humanitarian message. The Fak Kurbah team diligently worked to streamline fundraising and donation procedures, ensuring accessibility to all segments of society through platforms like the Athar platform powered by the Thawani application.

WORLD TURTLE DAY

Conservation of turtles a priority

MUSCAT: Represented by the Environment Authority (EA), the Sultanate of Oman on Tuesday marked the World Turtle Day, which falls on 23 May every year. The event seeks to encourage global humanitarian action for the protection of turtles and their growth. It underlines the vulnerability of some species of turtles to the danger of extinction.

On this occasion, the Environment Authority organised various activities for children and adults. The programme included educational and recreational activities aimed at highlighting the importance of sea turtles and the need to protect them.

Oman is considered a major nesting site for sea turtles worldwide, especially the Rimani turtles that nest on Masirah Island, with an estimated number of 30,000 turtles visiting the site every year.

Green turtles are among the most common species found in Omani beaches, including the Turtle Reserve in Ras Al Hadd area in the Al Sharqiyah South



Governorate.

In its drive to preserve turtles, the Environment Authority carries out a number of projects, including a programme for registering and numbering sea turtles, a project for monitoring marine green turtles remotely

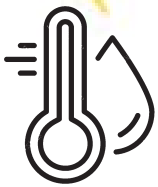
via satellite, a project to study the success rate of nests of Rimani turtles on the beaches of the Wilayat of Masirah and a project to prepare an action plan for the conservation of sea turtles in Oman and other countries.

— ONA



VEHICLE CHECK— SUMMER IS ON

TO ENSURE A TROUBLE-FREE SUMMER AND KEEP THE VEHICLES COOL



CONDUCT REGULAR
MAINTENANCE CHECKS,
INCLUDING MONITORING
THE RADIATOR WATER LEVEL,
INSPECTING THE ENTIRE
COOLING CYCLE

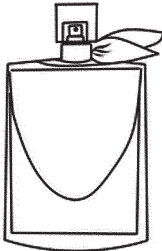


CHECK THE ENGINE OIL,
ENSURING PROPER TYRE
AIR PRESSURE, VERIFYING
BRAKE SYSTEM
AND SUSPENSION
EFFICIENCY

IF EXPOSED
TO TOXIC GASES,
QUICKLY MOVE AWAY
FROM THE FIRE



AVOID STORING COMPRESSED
PACKAGES, PERFUMES, AIR
FRESHENERS, GAS CANISTERS,
LIGHTERS, DRY BATTERIES, OR ANY
OTHER FLAMMABLE MATERIALS
INSIDE THE VEHICLES



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

As the scorching heat of summer arrives, it is crucial to prepare vehicles to cope with the active heat waves. The intense heat can pose more dangers to both you and your car than you may realise.

With rising temperatures, there is an increased risk of technical malfunctions in vehicles or even the explosion of flammable materials, leading to a fire. To prevent such incidents, it is important not to leave dangerous and flammable items such as fuel, perfumes, lighters, or any other materials containing gases inside the vehicles. These precautions can help minimise the risk of fire, which could

result in significant losses.

To ensure a trouble-free summer and keep the vehicles cool, there are tips one should remember to prepare a car for the season. Proper periodic maintenance is crucial, especially in high temperatures. Failure to do so may lead to inefficiencies in the brake system due to increased friction and engine overheating. It is essential for the drivers to conduct regular maintenance checks, including monitoring the radiator water level, inspecting the entire cooling cycle, checking the engine oil, ensuring proper tyre air pressure, verifying brake system and suspension efficiency, monitoring the vehicle's temperature, confirming the functionality of the engine and cooling fans, checking the front and rear lights,

warning signal lights, and ensuring the presence of safety equipment such as a spare tire, a fire extinguisher, and a warning triangle.

The Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority has provided some guidelines and educational advice to promote safety and prevent fires and accidents. They advise all citizens and residents to maintain their vehicles properly and avoid storing compressed packages, perfumes, air fresheners, gas canisters, lighters, dry batteries, or any other flammable materials inside their vehicles. If the vehicle's temperature rises significantly, drivers should pull over to the side of the road and avoid driving further. It's also important to avoid direct exposure to sunlight and, when parking

the vehicle, simply open the windows for ventilation while ensuring that the vehicle does not experience excessive pressure.

In the event of a car fire, it is advisable to follow certain steps: If the car is in motion, signal other cars on the road, and safely drive the car to the side of the road while avoiding proximity to other vehicles or flammable objects. Then, turn off the engine and headlights, and immediately evacuate all passengers, moving to a safe area away from the burning vehicle. Report the fire to emergency services and warn other vehicles to stay clear of the burning car.

It is crucial to avoid inhaling toxic gases produced by the fire, as they are often more deadly than the flames themselves. If exposed to toxic gases,

quickly move away from the fire. It's important to refrain from attempting to extinguish the fire yourself unless you are familiar with how to use a fire extinguisher and handle such situations. If the fire is small, you can use a fire extinguisher with caution.

After the fire has been completely extinguished, never try to restart or drive the vehicle, as it may reignite the fire. Instead, have the car thoroughly inspected by an electrician or auto mechanic to ensure its safety.

As the summer season arrives, vehicles require extra attention and care. Remember to avoid storing flammable and explosive materials in your vehicle and prioritize regular maintenance for your and your vehicle's safety.



Expat workforce reaches 1.7m

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 23

The Sultanate of Oman's expatriate workforce continues to thrive, with the total number of migrant workers reaching 1.776 million by the end of April 2023. The latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) sheds light on the demographic distribution and highlights the leading nationalities contributing to the country's labour market.

According to the NCSI, among the nationalities, Bangladeshis constitute the maximum number of expatriates living in the Sultanate of Oman. Out of the 1.776 million expatriate workers, approximately 1.397 million individuals are employed in the



country's private sector. This underscores the importance of the private sector in providing job opportunities for migrant workers and sustaining economic growth in the country. The number of Bangladeshis living in the Sultanate of Oman is 698,000 individuals.

This figure represents an increase of 10,000 compared to the previous month, further solidifying the significant contribution of Bangladeshi workers to Oman's labour force. Close behind Bangladeshis are Indians, the second most represented nationality. There are 403,000 Indian expatriate workers

in Oman, while Pakistanis come third with 307,000 individuals. These numbers emphasise the substantial presence of South Asian workers and their vital role in Oman's growing migrant labour market. Oman's labour market continues to attract a diverse range of expatriate workers, with the total number reaching 1.776 million by April 2023. The prominence of Bangladesh, along with other South Asian countries, showcases the valuable contributions made by migrant workers to Oman's economy. As the country moves forward, sustaining a healthy and well-regulated labour market will be crucial to capitalise on the benefits brought by the expatriate workforce.

Symposium to focus on historical importance

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 23

Under the auspices of Shaikh Sabbaa bin Hamdan al Saadi, Secretary-General of the Secretariat-General of National Celebrations, the National Records and Archives Authority of the Sultanate of Oman is organising a symposium on 'South Al Sharqiyah Governorate in Memory of Omani History'. The symposium aims to introduce the historical role played by the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah in history by reviewing and studying the various historic sources, documents, manuscripts and oral narratives. The Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah has importance in Omani history, as it was home to the Omani civilisation and heritage and a bridge for the maritime trade caravan routes abroad. Al Sharqiyah South Governorate is distinguished by its different geographical and climatic components, in addition to the human factors that give the place its economic, political and social importance. The three-day symposium will review several research papers. The documentary exhibition will continue till May 27. Dr Talib bin Saif al Khaduri, Assistant Director-General of the Directorate-General of Research and Documents Circulation at the National Records and Archives Authority, said, "The organisation of the symposium and the accompanying documentary exhibition comes within the framework of the continuity of the efforts made by the Authority."

Business Network International holds formative meeting



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Business Network International (BNI), world's largest business referral organisation, held its formative meeting just prior to its full-fledged operations in the Sultanate of Oman. At the ceremony held at the Grand Millennium Hotel, nearly 30 members representing business houses in the country as well as more than 25 local businesses attended the meeting and introduced themselves aiming to benefit from business referrals and networking. "The meeting on Monday is in congruence with our official recognition of Oman as the 77th country of the

BNI," Saleem Althaf, National Director, BNI Oman, told the Observer. BNI is with the commencement of operations in the country, Oman has become the 77th country where the BNI has its direct representation. 300,000 members worldwide spread over close to 11,000 chapters internationally and 13.1 million member referrals resulting in member generated business to the tune of \$21.8 B, the launch of BNI in the country will be highly beneficial to the businesses, both SMEs as well as other entities, who have the opportunity to engage with its services to increase their businesses and grow customer base using

the modernised business networking and globally proven system, according to the representatives of BNI. "BNI worldwide has been supporting businesses for 38 years and acquiring BNI services will only help the businesses to grow and increase customer base," he added. He further added that as more than 1,000 businesses in the neighbouring UAE and Qatar have turned into successful ventures with BNI's support, next month Bahrain is also starting BNI journey. Now Oman-based businesses have ample opportunities to connect with qualitative businesses in the GCC and beyond efficiently through BNI.

SAF chief receives ATLANTA commander

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received on Tuesday Rear Admiral Juan Maria Martin, Commander of the Operation ATLANTA Naval Force. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters related to maritime security in



the region. The meeting was attended by a number of senior SAF officers. — ONA

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (18/2023)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following bidding :

Serial	Bidding No.	Bidding Description	Document Fee	Deadline for Obtaining Bidding Docs.	Deadline for Inquires Submission	Deadline for Submission
1	AB/04/2023	Investment of Plot Number (146/1) at Al-Mabelah South at Wilayat Al-Seeb	220	23/07/2023	02/08/2023	21/08/2023
2	AB/05/2023	Management and Operation of Containers in Longitudinal Garden in Al-Mabelah at Wilayat Al-Seeb	25	03/07/2023	13/07/2023	22/07/2023
3	AB/06/2023	Construction and Operating a Restaurant or Café on Plot No. (297) in Al Bustan in the Wilayat of Muscat	25	03/07/2023	13/07/2023	22/07/2023

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bid are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

- Company registration with Muscat Municipality have to be valid as per note number one below, to be able to get the bid document.
- Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:

Bank Muscat 0423010702710024
- A copy of the transaction's receipt MUST be send to the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name, office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commercial registration number of the company).
- The tender document will be provided to the company via email.
- 2:00 PM** on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered, even if the fee of the document is paid.

Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and drop in the box located in ground floor at Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

- Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website (www.mm.gov.om). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (crm@mm.gov.om).
- If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om).
- 10:00 AM** on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.
- Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/085	11KV NETWORK EXTENSION WORKS TO FEED POWER SUPPLY TO AL MAZYONA HOSPITAL	06/06/2023	22/06/2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/090	REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BELT CONVEYORS AT SOLID PROCESS BUILDING WITH SCREW CONVEYORS IN WRP	06/06/2023	22/06/2023	RO. 52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232554
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om

Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number 2180229, P.O Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om

SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/Before 10:00 am Tuesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
1873/2023/ MOH/ NIZH-4	Supply, Installation and Commissioning of Kitchen Equipment at Nizwa Hospital	08/JUN/2023	04/JUL/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number 2180229, P.O Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om





SUDAN CEASEFIRE IN DANGER AS RESIDENTS REPORT FIGHTING, WARPLANES

KHARTOUM: Artillery fire could be heard in parts of Khartoum and warplanes flew overhead on Tuesday, residents said, raising fears that intense fighting would erupt and shatter Sudanese hopes raised by an internationally-monitored ceasefire.

Some other residents reported relative calm, the first full day of a truce that is being tracked by Saudi Arabia and the United States and is meant to allow for the delivery of humanitarian relief.

Activists wrote to the United Nations envoy to Sudan complaining of severe human rights abuses against civilians that they said took place as the fighting raged.

After five weeks of fierce battles between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the warring factions agreed to a seven-day truce that began at 9:45 pm on Monday, aimed to allow for the delivery of aid.

The ceasefire deal, reached in talks in Jeddah, has raised hopes of a pause in a war that has driven nearly 1.1 million people from their homes, including more than 250,000 who have fled to neighbouring countries, threatening to destabilise a volatile region.

“Our only hope is that the truce succeeds, so that we can



Produce pedlars wait by minibuses and tuk-tuks for customers and passengers at a bus station in Port Sudan. — AFP

return to our normal life, feel safe, and go back to work again,” said Khartoum resident Atef Salah El Din.

Although fighting has continued through previous

ceasefires, this was the first to be formally agreed following negotiations.

The ceasefire deal includes for the first time a monitoring mechanism involving the

army and the RSF as well as representatives from Saudi Arabia and the United States, which brokered the agreement after talks in Jeddah.

US Secretary of State Antony

Blinken said the monitoring mechanism would be “remote”, without giving details.

Shortly before the ceasefire was due to take effect, the RSF released an audio message from its

The ceasefire deal includes for the first time a monitoring mechanism involving the army and the RSF as well as representatives from Saudi Arabia and the United States

commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as Hemedti, in which he thanked Saudi Arabia and the US but urged his men on to victory.

“We will not retreat until we end this coup,” he said.

Both sides accused each other of an attempted power grab at the start of the conflict on April 15.

The United Nations envoy to Sudan warned on Monday of the growing “ethnicisation” of the military conflict and the potential impact on neighbouring states.

“The growing ethnicisation of the conflict risks to expand and prolong it, with implications for the region,” Volker Perthes told a briefing at the UN Security Council. — Reuters

Turkiye’s third-place candidate endorses Erdogan in runoff

ANKARA: Türkiye’s third-place election candidate endorsed President Tayyip Erdogan on Monday, boosting the incumbent and intensifying the challenges for opposition candidate Kemal Kilicdaroglu in a Sunday runoff vote.

Sinan Ogan, a hardline nationalist who was little known among the broader public before the campaign, won 5.2 per cent support in the initial presidential election on May 14, prompting some analysts to call him a potential “kingmaker” for the runoff.

“I declare that we will support the People’s Alliance candidate Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the second round,” Ogan told a press conference in Ankara, adding his campaign had made Turkish nationalists “key players” in politics.

Erdogan received 49.5 per cent support compared to Kilicdaroglu at 44.9 per cent, while the ruling party’s coalition won a majority in parliament. That gives Erdogan an advantage as he seeks to extend his two-decade rule in what is one of Türkiye’s most consequential elections ever.

Ogan, 55, a former academic, was the first-round presidential candidate of an alliance of right-



Sinan Ogan speaks during a press conference in Ankara, Türkiye. — Reuters

wing parties led by the Victory Party, which is known for its anti-immigrant stance in Türkiye, the world’s biggest host of refugees.

Ogan said his goal was to remove two mainly Kurdish parties from Türkiye’s “political equation” and bolster Turkish nationalists and secularists.

The pro-Kurdish party HDP has endorsed Kilicdaroglu, while the Kurdish-Islamist Huda-Par backs Erdogan.

Kilicdaroglu has pledged to roll back much of Erdogan’s sweeping changes to Turkish domestic, foreign and economic policies, including reversing an unorthodox economic programme to address a cost-of-living crisis. — Reuters

Israeli troops demolish Palestinian home in the West Bank

TEL AVIV/RAMALLAH: The Israeli army has destroyed the home of the man who carried out an attack in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv nearly three months ago.

Israeli troops detonated explosives on the second floor of a four-storey building near Ramallah in the West Bank on Tuesday, the Palestinian news agency Wafa reported.

The apartment belonged to the family of the attacker, and neighbours also had to leave the building. Two people were injured in confrontations between residents and Israeli forces.

The attacker had opened fire on passers-by on the busy Dizengoff Street in the centre of Tel Aviv on March 9. Two men were seriously injured, and one of them died less than two weeks after the attack. The attacker was shot dead by

police officers. Israel uses house demolitions as a punishment and deterrence measure. Human rights organisations consider this form of collective punishment a violation of international humanitarian law. However, Israel’s highest court has repeatedly allowed house demolitions and rejected complaints against them.

The security situation in Israel and the Palestinian Territories has long been extremely tense. There are repeated clashes between Palestinians and the Israeli military in the West Bank. The army has been carrying out more raids there since a series of attacks on Israelis that began more than a year ago.

On Monday, three Palestinians were killed in such a military operation. They were fighters of the armed Palestinian Al Aqsa Brigades, the organisation said



This picture shows the house of Palestinian militant Mutaz Khawaja after it was razed by Israeli security forces in the West Bank village of Nilin. — AFP

afterwards. The Al Aqsa Brigades are the military arm of the Fatah movement of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Since the beginning of the year, 116 Palestinians have been killed

in Israeli military operations, confrontations or attacks of their own.

In the same period, 17 Israelis, one Ukrainian and one Italian were killed in attacks. — dpa

SHORT TAKES

CONAKRY

‘Day without news’ as media snubs junta

Private media and online outlets in the West African state of Guinea on Tuesday launched a one-day boycott of news in protest at press and Internet restrictions by the ruling junta.

The protest was announced on Monday after the ruling military shut down two radio stations owned by the Afric Vision group, limited access to popular websites and social media, and threatened to close any media that “undermines national unity.”

Telecommunications Minister



Ousmane Gaoual Diallo has denied any crackdown.

The junta has promised to restore civilian rule by the end of 2024, purportedly to give it enough time. — AFP

TEHRAN

Iran appoints ambassador for Saudi Arabia

Iran has appointed an ambassador to Saudi Arabia as part of a rapprochement between the two countries. The diplomat Alireza Enajati is to start work in the Saudi capital Riyadh in future.

Enajati most recently worked as director-general for the Gulf region in the Iranian Foreign Ministry.

Embassies in each other’s countries are now expected to start operating soon.

The move is the first step



towards resuming bilateral relations between the two countries after seven years of diplomatic iciness.

A warming of ties could lead to major regional shifts. — dpa

PESHAWAR

Six killed in attack on energy firm

Six Pakistan security personnel were killed in an overnight siege by dozens of militants on a Hungarian-owned oil and gas exploration site, police and the energy firm said on Tuesday.

About 50 fighters attacked a site owned by the Budapest-headquartered MOL Group around midnight district police chief Asif Bahadur said.

“They were armed with light and heavy weapons and fired mortar shells, killing six security personnel at the main entrance”



to the remote site near the Afghan border, said Bahadur.

Two wells near the attack site have “been temporarily shut down by remote access and the wells are now secured”. — AFP



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WEDNESDAY | MAY 24 | 2023

7

In brief

■ SILVES



POLICE SEARCH ESERVOIR IN MADELEINE MCCANN CASE

Police carried out new searches at a reservoir in Portugal on Tuesday connected to the disappearance of British toddler Madeleine McCann, who vanished from a resort in the Algarve region 16 years ago. Reporters on the scene of the remote Arade reservoir, around 50 kilometres from the Praia da Luz resort, saw police officers searching the bank along the dam with the help of a sniffer dog. Two officers searched the water on board a fire department boat. German prosecutors confirmed the search was taking place but said they could not give further details “for tactical investigative reasons”. — AFP

■ GENEVA



PRIVATE JETS PROTEST DISRUPTS FLIGHTS AT GENEVA AIRPORT

Activists demonstrating against Europe’s biggest private jets sales fair disrupted flights at Geneva Airport on Tuesday after chaining themselves to the planes on display. Environmentalist groups said around 100 demonstrators from 17 countries were involved in the protest at the three-day European Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition (EBACE) being staged at a conference hall adjoining Switzerland’s second-biggest airport. Geneva police spokeswoman Tiffany Cudre-Mauroux said that around 80 people had been detained.

■ OSLO



TOURISTS RESCUED IN ARCTIC AS SHIP RUNS AGROUND

Eleven French tourists and four crew members were rescued by helicopter after their ship ran aground in the Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard in the Arctic, local authorities said on Tuesday. No one was hurt in the incident, which occurred late on Monday, the governor’s office said in a press release. It is not yet known why the tourist vessel MS Isbjorn 2 ran aground in a bay of the Isfjord fjord, in the territory twice the size of Belgium and located a thousand kilometres from the North Pole. “None of the people onboard were physically injured”, the authorities said. — AFP

Russia sees border attack as grounds for extended war as battles rage



This photograph shows servicemen on guard at the forward positions of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Donetsk region. — AFP

MOSCOW/KIEV: The Kremlin on Tuesday said the attack on the western Russian border region of Belgorod proves the need to continue the war against Ukraine even though Kiev has denied involvement. Russian authorities have launched a terrorism probe after fighting broke out just inside Russia on Monday. Two volunteer corps made up of Russians but fighting on Kiev’s side in the Ukraine war claimed responsibility for the attacks. “This confirms once again that Ukrainian fighters continue their activity against our country,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by the Inter fax news agency. This requires efforts from Russia, he added. “These efforts will continue as well as the special military operation to prevent such intrusion in the future.” Moscow describes its war of aggression against Ukraine as a special military operation.

Ukraine has distanced itself from the Belgorod incidents but the Russian Defence Ministry said attacking troops had been “blocked and destroyed,” adding that “more than 70 Ukrainian fighters, four armoured vehicles and five other vehicles were captured.” According to Belgorod authorities, at least eight civilians were injured and nine villages were evacuated due to the fighting. The attack had caused “deep concern”, Peskov said, but Russian President Vladimir Putin would not call a special session of the National Security Council. The Belgorod governor said earlier that fighting continues in several localities in the Russian border region. “The clearing of the territory by the Ministry of Defence and other security structures continues,” Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram. While there have been no civilian deaths so far, it is too early

for residents to return, he said. Gladkov added that a “spy and sabotage squad” had entered the area. The Russian citizens fighting for Ukraine said they wanted to create a “demilitarised zone along the border,” which is meant to prevent the Russian military from shelling its neighbour. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation said in a press release said the attackers were “representatives of Ukrainian military units.” The statement added: “Residential and administrative buildings were shelled by mine launchers and with artillery. Because of these criminal acts, several civilians were injured.” Investigations are under way into terrorism, attempted murder and attempted killing of security officers, wanton destruction of property and illegal possession of weapons and explosives, the committee added. The incident in Belgorod is the most serious attack on Russian territory to date. — dpa



British Home Secretary Suella Braverman speaks at the House of Commons in London, Britain. — Reuters file photo

UK plans curbs on overseas students amid immigration furore

LONDON: The UK government on Tuesday announced new visa limits affecting international students, with the ruling Conservatives locked in a war of words over soaring immigration. Under the new measures only students on postgraduate courses designated as research programmes — typically lasting longer than two years — will be able to bring dependants to the UK while they study. Much of that has been driven by bespoke visa schemes for people fleeing Ukraine, Hong Kong and Afghanistan. But student numbers have also surged. That has stoked political controversy, and cabinet infighting over the issue spilled into the open last week as right-wing Home Secretary Suella Braverman urged her own government to get tougher. Ranged against her are the finance and education ministers, who value the skills brought in by foreign workers and the high overseas fees paid by students to UK universities. In a statement to parliament, Braverman said the proposals struck the “right balance” and would

likely see net migration “fall to pre-pandemic levels in the medium term”. Some 136,000 visas were issued to the dependants of international students last year — up eight-fold from 16,000 in 2019, she said. In future, overseas students will be prevented from switching “out of the student route into work routes” before they have finished their courses. But the government said it was not planning any change to foreign students being able to stay in Britain for two years on the same visa, after their course, provided they have found employment. There will also be “improved and more enforcement activity” and a clampdown on “unscrupulous agents” using education as a cover for immigration, according to Braverman’s statement. The minister said overseas students played an important part in supporting the UK economy. But she said that should not come at the cost of the government’s intention “to lower overall migration and ensure that migration to the UK is highly skilled and therefore provides the most benefit.” — AFP

White House to resume debt ceiling talks

WASHINGTON: White House and congressional Republican negotiators will meet again on Tuesday to resolve a months-long impasse over raising the government’s \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling, with the nation facing the risk of default in as soon as nine days. Aides for President Joe Biden and Republican House of Representatives Speaker Kevin McCarthy, will convene again on Tuesday, McCarthy’s lead negotiator said. The two parties remain deeply divided about how to rein in the federal deficit, with Democrats arguing wealthy Americans and businesses should pay more taxes while Republicans wanting spending cuts. The Treasury Department has warned that the federal government could no longer have enough money to pay all its bills as soon as June 1, which would cause a default that would hammer the US economy and push borrowing costs higher.



US President Joe Biden hosts debt limit talks with US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington. — Reuters

Republican negotiator Representative Garret Graves said he had seen little progress. “They are refusing to truly change the trajectory, to truly reduce spending, and that is a red line,” Graves told reporters at the

Capitol. Biden and McCarthy emerged from a Monday evening meeting on the debt ceiling talking about the need to find bipartisan compromise, even as they cling to policies that expose the divides

between the two parties. The lack of clear progress continued to weigh on Wall Street with US stock indexes set to open lower on Tuesday morning and global markets on edge. Biden and Democrats want to

freeze spending in the 2024 fiscal year at the levels adopted in 2023, arguing that would represent a spending cut because agency budgets won’t match inflation. The idea was rejected by Republicans, who want spending cuts. Biden wants to cut the deficit by raising taxes on the wealthy and closing tax loopholes for the oil and pharmaceutical industries. McCarthy declared that boosting revenue is a non-starter. “I don’t think it’s a revenue problem. It’s a spending problem,” McCarthy said. McCarthy told reporters that he expected to talk with Biden daily at least by telephone. If and when Biden and McCarthy reach a deal, they will still need to sell it to their caucuses in Congress. It could easily take a week to pass a deal through the House and Senate, which would both need to approve the bill before Biden could sign it into law. — Reuters

I am none the wiser...



Saif al Shaibany
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The writer is a banker by day and a storyteller by night

The actions of the insensitive is defined by not being aware of or not showing sympathy towards the feelings of other people. In other words a person who will say or act without being aware of the conscience.

To put it in example, your wife asks you to go out for dinner as she had a bad day at work... all she wants to go somewhere quite so she can take her maid off work and talk to someone in the hope that it might make her feel better. But you are being caught up in your own world and none the wiser of the situation without even giving it a thought and neither of her moods.

You just said, I have a better idea... let's stay home and order food and watch a movie. It's been

a long day at work. What do you think?

The answer of the frustrated wife who's currently in an emotional state has hit the roof, she is ready to either cry or scream but will likely just say ok!! And take warm shower to calm herself down, have dinner and accept that her dear husband is just oblivious of how her day went nor of her feelings.

This situation can happen and even to the best of people, where we are so caught up in our own world.

To the point we forget to pause... and allow ourselves to feel our surroundings.

The issue is that life is moving so fast that we are trying to keep up with it and do our best to make up for lost time. Focused on what

THE ISSUE IS THAT LIFE IS MOVING SO FAST THAT WE ARE TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH IT AND DO OUR BEST TO MAKE UP FOR LOST TIME

makes us happy, content and build a life that suits us.

Forgetting that there are people in our lives who live with us and we chose to surround ourselves with them, but yet we isolate ourselves instead of making them part of our lives.

Well I am not saying we do that

all the time, but it does seem we do it when someone needs us to be more aware of their existence.

We get so lost in our own world that when engaging with the person next to us we forget to refine our words or being too honest and blunt on the choices of our words. Not realising we might hurt the person until it's too late.

Let me be the first to say that I fell in that trap, when your child is looking for your attention and starts talking. But you are not in the mood, so you cut them off and tell them "very good now go play, we will talk later".

I guess at the moment yes, you were tired or hungry but forget that little girl or boy just wanted few seconds of your time to ask you

about your day.

Or a husband who been checking the clock to reach home... to see his wife and spend time with her, only for her being too busy to notice you and continuing her conversion on phone for the next one hour.

We never meant to be rude nor insensitive, many of these moments catch us off guard and we are really just oblivious for that few minutes. We tend to snap back to our senses realising our actions only for it being too late.

I guess what I am trying to say is that, when you find yourself in that position so fixated in yourself, pause and take notice of your surroundings before taking any action. Trust me it will save you from the endless apologies.

EU’s protection of Ukrainians offers future asylum lessons

JOANNA GILL, SADIYA ANSARI AND JADE WILSON

Russia’s war on Ukraine last year sparked the biggest refugee crisis in Europe since World War Two, but also a wave of solidarity as thousands opened their homes to Ukrainians and EU states gave them rights and benefits akin to their own citizens.

The European Union swiftly granted temporary protection to millions of fleeing Ukrainians, giving them immediate rights to work and access to education, healthcare, welfare and housing, almost the same as local nationals.

Their treatment is in stark contrast to that received by refugees from other warzones, but could provide lessons in how to deal with the contentious issue.

“Temporary protection has been the sleeping beauty of the European asylum legislation,” Sara Consolato, an immigration expert with non-governmental organisation Refugees Welcome Italy, said. “The decision to activate, for the first time since its adoption, has been ground-breaking,” she said.

The EU’s never-before-used 2001 Temporary Protection Directive aims to fast-track residency rights by waiving the need to examine applications individually and so avoid major bottlenecks and the possible collapse of asylum systems under the pressure of a mass movement of refugees.

But the measure, while largely hailed as a success, has created a two-tier system, refugee advocates say, in which non-Ukrainian refugees undergo a lengthy asylum application process and endure conditions that often appear designed to deter them from coming to the EU.

Asylum is provided to those not just fleeing war, but also to those experiencing persecution, but that is harder to prove and often leads to lengthy scrutiny. While asylum regimes differ greatly across the EU, what they have in common is curtailing the rights of applicants for months and sometimes years while their claims are assessed.

The EU had considered triggering the directive before. Italy and Malta called for it in 2011 when almost 2 million people were displaced as a result of the Arab Spring uprisings.

In 2021, EU Foreign Policy Chief Josep Borrell suggested temporary protection be applied to Afghans fleeing the Taliban takeover of their country. But some EU countries argued activating temporary protection in these cases might attract more migrants to Europe. It was also hard for EU leaders to agree to trigger the directive when the influx affected some countries and not the bloc as a whole. — Thomson Reuters Foundation



Aleksandar Vasovic

The writer works for Reuters

After two mass shootings, can Serbia rid itself of guns?

After Serbia was rocked by two mass shootings in two days earlier in May, Branko, 54, surrendered his unlicensed arms under a government amnesty: four assault rifles, nine handguns, eight grenades and many boxes of ammunition.

The huge cache of weapons handed over by just one veteran of the wars that tore apart Yugoslavia in the 1990s highlights the scale of the task facing the nation, where arms from a 19th century uprising against Ottoman rule and old British Bren machine guns parachuted to partisans in World War Two are also still hoarded.

“I surrendered my weapons as I was horrified at what happened,” said Branko - who asked to be identified by his old military callsign — referring to the May 3 shooting where a teenage pupil at a Belgrade school killed 10 people, and another the next day when a man killed eight in a village south of the capital.

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic pledged to “practically disarm” his country, with the government quickly launching a month-long amnesty for illegal weapons.

More than 26,094 firearms, over 1.3 million rounds of ammunition and 6,333 pieces of ordnance had been handed in since May 8, interior ministry official Bojana Otovic Pjanovic told state TV RTS.

“There were weapons from 1847 and 1907, (old) English revolvers, a guidance system for anti-tank missiles, a fuse to which 4.6 kilograms of explosives were attached,” Pjanovic Otovic said.

Political opponents — who have long demanded tighter arms controls — call the move a populist step that cannot solve Serbia’s illegal weapons problem, while organising mass protests against the violence they say permeates society. “This cannot be done quickly due to the estimated quantity of weapons ...People here have no awareness about the dangers of holding illegal weapons,” said Jelena Jerinic, a law professor and a parliamentary deputy of the Ne Davimo Beograd opposition movement.

Many of the military grade weapons which flooded into Serbia and the



A police officer stands guard in front of the weapons handed over to police in the first 10 days of gun amnesty, near Smederevo, Serbia. – Reuters

MORE THAN 26,094 FIREARMS, OVER 1.3 MILLION ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION AND 6,333 PIECES OF ORDNANCE HAD BEEN HANDED IN SINCE MAY 8

rest of Western Balkans as Yugoslavia disintegrated ended up in private hands, turbocharging a culture of weapons ownership that Belgrade University history professor Aleksandar Zivotic describes as “ingrained in the (nation’s) foundations”.

Organised crime and various state-sponsored nationalist paramilitaries flourished during and after the wars, with dozens of people killed in gangland-style shootings until the early 2000s.

Authorities have struggled to assess the current scale of the problem. According to SEESAC, a UN and EU-backed regional gun-control initiative, the number of registered civilian firearms in Serbia increased almost 10 per cent between 2012 and

2016 to 618,061. Officials’ estimates of unlicensed pieces range anywhere from 90,000 to 700,000.

Even in a country whose gun laws are tight by some European standards, Filip Svarm, editor in-chief of the Vreme weekly and a prominent analyst in the field, said it would take years for the state to disarm its citizens and he did not believe the amnesty and harsh sentences would solve the problem.

“The aggressiveness that is constantly fuelled in society affects some people in such a way that they now want to keep or get illegal guns,” he said.

Since May’s shootings, Vucic has halted issuance of new gun permits, tightened rules for existing owners and pledged changes to the law so it does not pay to keep illegal weapons.

It is not the first time the government has offered an amnesty — according to police data, 101,283 weapons and 2,517,520 rounds of ammunition were handed in between 2003 and 2017 — and it has already been steadily tightening requirements to legally hold a weapon. Opposition politicians, however, say enforcement can be lax.

Licensed gun owner Narcis Selimic, a marketing executive from Belgrade who has a 11-year-old son, was among those giving up his pistol, bought for personal protection in the 1990s, under the current amnesty.

Making education mandatory for all

Even as education is a universally acknowledged fundamental human right, only a committed and visionary leadership can ensure that all young people join the learning system in a country. This is because getting all children in schools requires alignment across families, educators and policymakers.

The basic purpose of education is to improve the human condition. Proper education can lead to a longer and better life, a higher income and a better society. After all, access to education is the cornerstone of economic and social growth.

When education suffers, many other dimensions of society suffer.

The Sultanate of Oman's government places utmost emphasis on education, in view of its role in developing human resources and providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills which represent key inputs to the economic, social and environmental development process desired by the country.

So is Oman's new education law that establishes a legislative and regulatory structure to guarantee that education reaches all young children in the country. Although the law has many features, the main highlight is that basic education has been made compulsory for all children who reach the age of six.

The law stipulates that the parent or guardian should enrol the child in the first grade of the basic education stage during the specified date for admission. The guardian should also follow up on his regularity in the study until the completion of this stage.

The new law stems from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's conviction on the importance of developing the educational system and improving its standards to keep pace with global educational developments.

The Royal gesture reflects the development that the educational system and the learning process have witnessed during the past decades.

The government considers education as the key to all dimensions of development. It believes that providing quality education for all is fundamental



Samuel Kutty
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The writer is a senior journalist and author with nearly four decades of experience in broadsheet newspapers and magazines in India and the Gulf region

OMAN'S GOVERNMENT PLACES UTMOST EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION, IN VIEW OF ITS ROLE IN DEVELOPING HUMAN RESOURCES AND PROVIDING THEM WITH THE NECESSARY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

to creating a peaceful and prosperous nation in particular and the world in general.

Education in Oman is a right for all guaranteed by the Basic Statute of the State, and gender equality and quality education are among the fundamental guiding principles in educational work.

Therefore, the Omani leadership has devoted considerable attention to educational standards and quality in order to enhance the efficiency of human resources and enable them to contribute to national development.

Since the beginning of the Sultanate's Renaissance, educational plans were directed towards the spread and universalisation of education, as well as its improvement in line with Oman's five-year development plans.

Oman attached great importance to early childhood development across sectors including developmental, social, health, education, cultural, and other aspects, as it strongly believes in the importance of investing in this segment of society.

National plans, policies and strategies were formulated to improve the quality of services provided in this field. And in view of the importance of providing children with quality early childhood development and care, laws and legislations were enacted to encourage the establishment of child-upbringing institutions.

With the aim of providing equal opportunities for all, Oman applies the adult education system which runs parallel to the formal education system from Grade 7 to Grade 12 and targets learners liberated from illiteracy or persons who completed Grade 6 in formal education and then dropped out of school for various reasons, provided that their age exceeds the legal age for formal schooling.

Statistics issued in September 2022 by the state-run National Centre for Statistics and Information showed that the literacy rate in the age group over 10 years stood at 97.26 per cent while the literacy rate in the age group 15 years and over was 97 per cent and the literacy rate in the age group from 15 to 45 years is 99.59 per cent.

KEEPING COOL!



A boy splashes water on flowers sold at a roadside shop on a hot summer afternoon in Prayagraj, India, on Tuesday. – AFP

Keeping small islands financially afloat

RALPH GONSALVES,
FIAMÉ NAOMI MATA'AFA &
WAVEL RAMKALAWAN

It is too early to tell whether all the talk about reforming development finance at this year's International Monetary Fund and World Bank Spring Meetings will translate into meaningful policy action for the Global South. But multilateral financial institutions increasingly recognise the need to evolve to remain relevant in light of new global challenges, and world leaders are paying attention to innovative approaches, such as Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley's Bridgetown Initiative to address the immediate financial needs of debt-distressed countries or Secretary-General António Guterres's stimulus to deliver the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Better late than never. The current international financial architecture is outdated and ill-equipped to handle the massive disruptions caused by climate change, a global economic downturn, the Covid-19 pandemic, and changes in income distribution fueled by technological developments and globalised competition. The unique geographic and demographic characteristics of small island developing states (SIDS) like ours make it even harder to cope with these disruptions. The remoteness of SIDS, coupled with limited usable land and small populations, all but guarantee

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS RECOGNISED THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES FACING SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES, BUT HAS DONE LITTLE MORE TO HELP



The pandemic has had a profound effect on Samoa and other Pacific island states.

significant barriers to integration in a fast-paced global economy. Our countries are overdependent on imports, especially of food and energy, and often rely heavily on a single economic sector (usually tourism), making us prone to supply-chain disruptions and other external shocks.

The United Nations has long recognised our special circumstances, but the international community has done little to help us manage them. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the global financial system, where we are

often left to fend for ourselves — small fish at the mercy of predators that profit handsomely from the repackaging of our debt.

The problem is that concessional financing is primarily tied to traditional measures of development, namely a country's gross national income (GNI). But the relatively high income of SIDS — more than half qualify as upper middle-income countries — prevents many from accessing the cheap finance offered to the lowest-income countries. Using income as the sole determinant for financial

assistance means more debt for SIDS, which disproportionately suffer the effects of global warming and other external shocks. There is no way to escape this Catch-22 without a credible framework that takes these vulnerabilities into account.

The Multidimensional Vulnerability Index, currently under consideration at the UN General Assembly, could be a lifesaver. The MVI, a universal ranking based on developing countries' susceptibility to external shocks, provides the basis for international institutions

like the IMF and the World Bank to allocate the concessional financing needed to prepare and recover from unforeseen crises. While the Bridgetown Initiative addresses the immediacy of the climate-change threat, SIDS measure highly across all three dimensions of vulnerability: economic and social, as well as environmental.

For example, the gas crisis in Europe and high inflation in the United States, both fueled by the war in Ukraine, have dominated headlines over the past year. Yet the war's economic ramifications have been especially painful for remote island states like the Seychelles, where the energy shortage is compounded by higher transport costs. High inflation and soaring airfares have deterred European visitors, undermining the post-Covid recovery of the country's tourism industry, a crucial source of budget revenue.

As for the social dimension, the pandemic has had a profound effect on Samoa and other Pacific island states. Some may argue that they were spared the worst health outcomes of Covid-19, owing to their isolation. But one must also consider their capacity constraints, including their limited ability to provide health services.

sport

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Oman to start with Irish challenge on June 19

Duleep Mendis' men pooled in Group B along with Sri Lanka, Ireland, Scotland and UAE in the ten-team ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe from June 18 – July 9. MUSCAT: Oman have been clubbed with former World Cup winners Sri Lanka, Ireland, Scotland and neighbours UAE in Group B as the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2023 fixtures were released on Tuesday afternoon. Hosts Zimbabwe, West Indies, Netherlands, Nepal and United States make up Group A with the ten teams competing for the final two spots at ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 in India. The ten-nation World Cup Qualifier will be held in Zimbabwe from June 18 - July 9 across four venues in Harare and Bulawayo. Oman, who are aiming to qualify for the Cricket World Cup for the first time, will begin their campaign on June 19 in Bulawayo against Ireland followed by a game against UAE on June 21.

On June 23, Oman will take on 1996 World Cup winners Sri Lanka before concluding the league stage with a match against Scotland on June 25. Each side will play the other teams in their group once with the top three from the groups progressing to the Super Six stage. The teams each play three Super Six matches against the sides they did not meet in the group stage. All points won in the groups will be carried over to the Super Six stage apart from those gained against the bottom two from each group. The finalists will both progress to the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. The Super Six stage will commence on June 29, while the bottom two teams from each group will compete in the play-off. For the first time at this event, DRS will be used for all matches from the Super Six stage. The Qualifier will begin with hosts Zimbabwe taking on Nepal and two-time World Cup winners West Indies meeting USA on June 18. Each match will be high stakes, with the top two teams qualifying for the global one-day showpiece

OMAN'S CRICKET WORLD CUP QUALIFIER FIXTURES:	
(All matches begin at 11am, Oman time)	
June 19 (Monday):	Ireland vs Oman, Bulawayo Athletic Club
June 21 (Wednesday):	Oman vs UAE, Bulawayo Athletic Club
June 23 (Friday):	Sri Lanka vs Oman, Queen's Sports Club
June 25 (Sunday):	Scotland vs Oman, Bulawayo Athletic Club
June 29 (Thursday):	Super 6: A2 vs B2, Queen's Sports Club
June 30 (Friday):	Super 6: A3 vs B1, Queen's Sports Club
Play-off: A5 vs B4, Takashinga Cricket Club	
July 1 (Saturday):	Super 6: A1 vs B3, Harare Sports Club
July 2 (Sunday):	Super 6: A2 vs B1, Queen's Sports Club
Play-off: A4 vs B5, Takashinga Cricket Club	
July 3 (Monday):	Super 6: A3 vs B2, Harare Sports Club
July 4 (Tuesday):	Super 6: A2 vs B3, Queen's Sports Club
Play-off: 7th vs 8th Takashinga Cricket Club	
July 5 (Wednesday):	Super Six: A1 vs B2, Harare Sports Club
July 6 (Thursday):	Super Six: A3 vs B3, Queen's Sports Club
Play-off: 9th vs 10th Takashinga Cricket Club	
July 7 (Friday):	Super Six: A1 vs B1, Harare Sports Club
July 9 (Sunday):	Final, Harare Sports Club
Warm-up fixtures:	
June 13 (Tuesday):	Zimbabwe v Oman, Takashinga Cricket Club
June 15 (Thursday):	Oman vs Nepal, Harare Sports Club

and assured of nine guaranteed matches in India. Queen's Sports Club and Bulawayo Athletic Club in Bulawayo, Harare Sports Club and Takashinga Cricket Club in Harare will share 34 matches between them, with Harare Sports Club staging the final on July 9. The Qualifier is the

culmination of four years of hard-fought competition and brings together the bottom five teams from the ICC Men's CWC Super League, three automatic qualifiers from ICC Men's CWC League 2 and two teams who gained entry from the ICC Men's CWC Qualifier play-off. WARM-UP MATCHES CRUCIAL: MENDIS Ahead of the Qualifier, all the teams will also feature in two warm-up matches to be played on June 13 and 15. Oman will play against hosts Zimbabwe in the first of the two warm-up matches at Takashinga Cricket Club on June 13 and then meet Nepal in the second warm-up game at Harare Sports Club two days later. Oman's coach Mendis said: "Now with the groupings and venue released, we know where to play and whom to play. We have to perform and there wouldn't be any room for any excuses wherever we play. I along with my boys are confident of making it to Super Six stage." "We have a pre-World Cup Qualifier tour to Durban in South Africa that will last for 12 days.

Our preparations have been good despite the scorching summer giving the boys a hard time. We hope the five practice games in Durban will help us and by the time we conclude the trip, our boys will be ready. The two official warm-up games against Nepal and Zimbabwe will be crucial in Harare. We hope to have a successful outing in Zimbabwe." ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said: "The countdown to the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 is entering the final stages and this event presents an incredible opportunity for teams to earn a place in the pinnacle event of one day cricket. The stakes don't get any bigger in what will be a very competitive event enjoyed by fans looking to see who will join the eight teams that have already booked their tickets to India. "With two former Cricket World Cup champions among the contenders as well as emerging cricket nations who are aiming to qualify for the first time, this unique event, featuring teams from Africa, the Americas, Asia and Europe will be a showcase of the global game."

Jokic outduels LeBron as Nuggets reach NBA Finals for first time

LOS ANGELES: Nikola Jokic outduelled LeBron James as the Denver Nuggets completed a 4-0 Western Conference championship sweep over the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday to reach the NBA Finals for the first time in franchise history.

Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic bagged a 30-point triple-double as the Nuggets overturned a 15-point half-time deficit for a 113-111 victory that sent the Lakers crashing out and left James reportedly contemplating a shock retirement from basketball.

James had looked to be single-handedly keeping the Lakers' season alive after scoring 31 points in a magnificent first-half display that left the 17-time NBA champions leading 73-58 at half-time.

But Jokic led a resurgent Nuggets offense in the third quarter, scoring 13 points as the Western Conference top seeds outscored the Lakers 36-16 to turn the contest on its head.

A dramatic fourth-quarter finale saw Jokic put Denver 113-111 ahead with a typically barnstorming driving layup through heavy traffic with 51.7sec remaining. With four seconds left, James had one last chance to tie it up and force overtime, but his attempted driving floater was blocked by Denver's Aaron Gordon to leave the Nuggets celebrating a famous win.

A dejected James left the court immediately following the loss as his latest bid for a fifth NBA title ended in disappointment.

James later spoke cryptically about his future in a post-game

press conference, while an ESPN report said he was contemplating retirement.

"Just for me personally, going forward with the game of basketball, I've got a lot to think about," James said.

Denver — one of 11 teams in the league who have never won the NBA championship — will face either the Miami Heat or Boston Celtics in the finals.

Miami lead Boston 3-0 and can clinch their place in the finals with a victory at home on Tuesday.

"We don't give up," Jokic told ESPN. "I've been saying this for five years — when we were bad or when we were good — we don't give up. And that's what happened today.

"They jumped on us the first half, they were better, more aggressive, scoring easily and didn't miss, basically.

"But in the second half we turned the page and everybody stepped up. It was a collective effort, it's not just one guy."

Jokic finished with 30 points, 14 rebounds and 13 assists, while Jamal Murray added 25 points. All of Denver's starters finished with double-digit points tallies, reflecting the team's depth and balance. The Nuggets will head into the finals brimming with confidence that they can end their near-half-century wait for a maiden NBA crown.

James, meanwhile, described Denver as the best team he has faced since joining Los Angeles five years ago. "They have scoring. They have shooting. They have play-making. They have smarts. They have length. They have



Denver Nuggets' Nikola Jokic (15) shoots the ball against Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James (6) during the fourth quarter in game four of the Western Conference Finals for the 2023 NBA playoffs at Crypto.com Arena. — USA Today Sports

depth," James said. "And one thing about their team, when you have a guy like Jokic, who is as big as he is but also as cerebral as he is, you can't really make many mistakes versus a guy like that."

SELF-INFLICTED WOUNDS

James finished with 40 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists for the Lakers in a heroic attempt to keep

the series alive.

"He had an amazing game," Jokic said. "We couldn't stop him in the first half... he's still one of the best to ever play this game."

But the Lakers' supporting cast once again failed to step up when it mattered, with a series of missed baskets in the fourth quarter allowing the Nuggets to hold on to their slender advantage to clinch

victory. Lakers head coach Darvin Ham said his team had paid the price for not making enough shots, praising Denver's ruthlessness down the stretch.

"I just think, again, the phrase for me is 'self-inflicted wounds'. You can't have those," Ham said of the Lakers' performance.

"The sign of a great team is if you make any mistake, they're

going to make you pay for it. And they did just that."

Ham, who was appointed last year with a brief to rebuild the Lakers after a dismal failure to reach the playoffs, insisted that the NBA giants were on the right path.

"This is year one," Ham said. "Losing sucks, but I think we can do something special here," he added. — AFP

Spin to be deciding factor in Mumbai-Lucknow clash



The stress and intensity of this year's IPL has been crazy and both these teams would have taken a much-needed breather to have been able to climb to that prized position in the play-offs. Both these teams would need to win three games to lift the trophy and that's exactly what they would want.

Mumbai's win had eliminated Rajasthan, but a win for RCB could have ended their stint in this year's IPL. Mumbai had a terrible start to the IPL, before they caught momentum in the second half of the tournament, from where they just didn't stop and now with all the momentum, they are certainly considered as the favourites to win this tournament. Lucknow had qualified with a win in their last match, but surely, they wouldn't have wanted RCB to have qualified and to have had that extra motivation to do well. Lucknow who started the tournament on its prime, had lost their grace mid-way and they just managed to scrape through somehow.

ELIMINATOR - LSG vs MI AT CHENNAI

TEAM INFO - Both these are impact teams

and each of these teams have super destructive players, that can change the course of the match within a few overs. Although, both these teams will be clashing a neutral venue, that will ideally suit spin and that's something that makes the Lucknow Super Giants a slight favourite. But for the benefit of Mumbai, the form of Ishan Kishan and Rohit Sharma would be a big bliss for Mumbai. Talking about momentum, both the teams have found their peak form off-lately and should bring them in a great mindset into this must win game.

PREVIOUS ENCOUNTER - Both these teams clashed in the 64th match, where Lucknow came out on top by a small margin of just 5 runs. Batting first, Lucknow were in trouble at 35/3 from where Krunal Pandya had a brilliant partnership with Marcus Stoinis, from where Stoinis finished incredibly well to get Lucknow to 177/3. Chasing 178 to win, MI got off to a flyer, where they lost the first wicket at 90. But some excellent fielding later in the innings allowed LSG to win by 5 runs, despite a 19-ball 32 runs by Tim David.

Head-to-Head - Played - 3; Won by LSG - 3; Won by MI - 0

LSG possible 12 - K Sharma, Q de Kock, P Mankad, M Stoinis, N Pooran, K Pandya, A Badoni, K Gowtham, R Bishnoi, N Ul Haq, M Khan, Y Thakur

MI possible 12 - R Sharma, I Kishan, C Green, S Yadav, T David, N Wadhwa, C Jordan, P Chawla, J Behrendorff, K Kartikeya, A Madhwal, V Vinod



Pitch & Weather Report - The MA Chidambaram Stadium is the home ground of Chennai Super Kings and it is also called as the unbreachable fortress of CSK. The pitch is ideally trusted to support the spinners and stroke making becomes tougher as the innings progresses. Although, the small boundaries will provide results to even half of a well-connected short as well. The temperature is expected to hover between 30 to 38 degrees and as the evening progresses, batting could get easier with dew coming into play. Teams winning the toss could very well chose to bowl first.

Match Prediction - Mumbai are filled with match winners and even if one of the players has a great day, they are capable of making the match one-sided. One player who tops this list is Suryakumar Yadav, who is considered to be one of the best T20 players in the world. If Mumbai can get off to a good start and then SKY can play deep, that would be an ideal circumstance. LSG are a brilliant team and they thrive in low scoring games. LSG are mainly filled with small contributing players that can provide exceptional match-changing contributions. Batting had actually weakened, after the injury of KL Rahul, is what many said. Although the experts say that, KL Rahul's injury has been a blessing in disguise and his presence was only dampening the team, and the results have also shown the same. It wouldn't be wrong to say that, this is a game for Lucknow to lose and the surface is something that should end the road for Mumbai. So, its going to be 'Luknawi Kali Gajar ka halwa' in the dinner.



PAKISTAN VS CHINESE TAIPEI

Pakistan, Japan and Malaysia start with big wins

JUNIOR ASIA CUP HOCKEY BEGINS IN SALALAH

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 23

Top contenders Pakistan started their campaign in the Men's Junior Asia Cup Salalah 2023 hockey championship with a thumping 15-1 win against Chinese Taipei in Salalah on Tuesday.

Earlier, in the opening match of the tournament, Japan thrashed Thailand 7-1 and the third match saw Malaysia drub Uzbekistan 8-1.

The matches are staged at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex in Salalah.

In the Pool A match, Mohammad Khan and Abdul Shahid scored three goals each, while Arbaz Ahmad netted two for a dominant Pakistan in a Pool A match against minnows Chinese Taipei. Bilal Akram, Abdul Qayyum, Abdul Rehman, Basharat Ali, Zikriya Hayat, Arshad Liaqat and Muhammad Murtaza also made it to the scoresheet to complete a 15-1 margin.

Te-ju Lin netted the consolation goal for Chinese Taipei in the 49th minute.

In the first match, Japan gathered full three points against Thailand.

Tsubasa Tanaka scored a hat-trick (10th, 19th and 20th minutes) for Japan while Kumpei Yasuda netted a brace. Ikumi Saeki and Kodai Saeki also found the target for the winners. To their credit, all the Japanese goals were field goals while Kritsana Phumee scored the lone penalty corner goal of the match for Thailand in the 44th minute.

In a Pool B match, Malaysia also started off with a resounding win against Uzbekistan.

Perabu Tangaraja converted three penalty corners for Malaysia (7th, 9th, 18th minutes). Alfario Liao, Shahmie Irfan Suhaimi, Nur Aqilrullah Che (pc), Mughni Kamal and Adam Ashraf were the other scorers.

Uzbekistan pulled one back through Shavkatjon Kakhramonov in the 55th minute.



Japan's Tsubasa Tanaka receives the player of the match award.

TROPHY UNVEILED

On Monday, the Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) unveiled the Junior Asia Cup trophy in a grand ceremony organised by hosts Oman Hockey Association (OHA) in Salalah.

The trophy was showcased amidst the presence of all ten team captains from Bangladesh, Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Oman, Pakistan, Thailand, and Uzbekistan.

Dato Fumio Ogura, President of the Asian Hockey Federation, expressed his gratitude to the

Oman Hockey Association (OHA), stating, "On behalf of the Asian Hockey Federation, I extend my sincerest gratitude to the Oman Hockey Association for hosting this significant event. Our past experiences have shown us the exceptional capabilities of OHA as an excellent host for AHF events. We take great pride in our strong working relationship with the OHA, who have consistently proven themselves as one of the finest hosts in Asia. We would also like to express our appreciation to Dhofar Municipality, the local government

of Salalah and all the sponsors and facilitators of the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2023."

OHA Chairman Dr Marwan al Juma, said: "We are deeply honoured to host this significant event. The Oman Hockey Association is committed to serving hockey in the best possible manner, and we strive to continue our endeavours in promoting the sport across Asia and beyond. We thank the Asian Hockey Federation for entrusting us with hosting this event and wish all the participating teams the very best." At the ceremony to reveal the trophy for the Dhofar Municipality Men's Junior Asia Cup in Salalah, Dr Khamis Salim al Rabhi, OHA Secretary- General, expressed his deep appreciation to the AHF. He conveyed that hosting the Men's Junior Asia Cup 2023 is a tremendous privilege for Oman.

"We are delighted to host Men's Junior Asia Cup 2023. It is a great privilege to be host the top Asian teams and the future hockey stars. We realise the significance of this responsibility which we have been

entrusted with by the Asian Hockey Federation. We pay our utmost gratitude to AHF for this honour. We hope that all the guests enjoy themselves with the best experience of our hospitality in Salalah."

3 SPOTS FOR WORLD CUP

The top 10 Asian men's junior teams are battling it out in the Men's Junior Asia Cup Salalah 2023 from May 23 to June 1 with three spots up for grabs in the upcoming FIH Junior Hockey Men's World Cup 2023, to be played in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The ten participating teams have been split into two pools, with Pool A comprising Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, Pakistan and Thailand. In Pool B hosts Oman are joined by Bangladesh, Korea, South Malaysia and Uzbekistan.

Each team in the pool stage will play the other four teams in their pool once. The top two teams in both pools will qualify for the semifinals, while the teams in third and fourth positions will compete for the 5-8 place classification.

Newcastle back in Champions League

NEWCASTLE: Qualifying Newcastle United for the Champions League was not even in Eddie Howe's thoughts at the start of the season but on Monday the club's remarkable transformation saw them secure their place back amongst Europe's elite.

A 0-0 draw at home to Leicester City meant Newcastle will finish in the Premier League's top four and will be mixing it with the continent's big guns for the first time in two decades.

After celebrating on the St James' Park pitch with his players, Howe was asked what the targets had been back in August.

"Certainly wasn't (top four)," the former Bournemouth manager told Sky Sports. "You always hope and always believe and you have to dream. But we didn't feel we were ready for that.

"After last season's battle against

relegation, it really was whether we could consolidate and become a better team and not flirt with relegation like last season.

"I can't praise (the players) enough for that mentality, their attitude what they've given me and the club."

When Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund bought an 80 per cent stake in Newcastle in October 2021, ending Mike Ashley's barren 14-year ownership of the North East club, the initial task was to keep them in the top flight.

Newcastle were 19th in the table and without a win and Steve Bruce was shortly sacked and replaced by Howe. Even then it took Newcastle until the 15th game of the season to get a league win, but after that, with the help of some astute signings such as England right back Kieran Trippier, Brazil midfielder Bruno Guimaraes and



defender Dan Burn, the fog that had shrouded the Tyneside club finally began to lift.

Newcastle eventually finished 11th and the momentum carried into this season with the club splashing some of the Saudi cash on club record purchase Swedish striker Alexander Isak.

While, on paper, Newcastle have riches to rival any club in the world, they have not yet signed the sort of galactico players the fans might have been dreaming about.

But the likes of Isak, former Burnley keeper Nick Pope and defender Sven Botman have enhanced Howe's squad.

They began to turn a succession of draws at the start of the season into wins and apart from a mid-season dip when the goals dried up, Newcastle have been a model of consistency.

The fact they have finished

above the likes of Liverpool, Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur, speaks volumes for Howe's impact and he can now start planning for the next step.

"We have to recruit wisely which we have done in every window so far," Howe said. "But the next window will be the hardest. We know next season the challenge will be bigger."

While Newcastle's first top-four finish in the Premier League since 2003 sparked celebrations on Monday, Howe said the next step is to deliver a first major trophy since 1955 after falling in the League Cup final this year.

"I want success massively for this football club," Howe said. "So we'll try that. I feel like we've achieved something great but there's no trophy. We'll enjoy tonight be we want to bring silverware here in the future." — Reuters

business

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FDI inflows rise 10.5% to RO 19.620 billion in 2022

MUSCAT: The sectors of oil and gas extraction activities and real estate activities led foreign direct investments (FDI) in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of the fourth quarter of 2022, achieving a growth of 10.5 per cent, as FDI amounted to RO 19.620 billion, up from RO 17.660 billion a year earlier.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, foreign investment in oil and gas extraction activities totalled RO 14.166 billion, up from



RO 12.177 billion a year earlier.

This was followed by the manufacturing activity with FDI of RO 1.549 billion, down from RO 1.705 billion as of end-2021, the financial intermediation activity with FDI of RO 1.481 billion, down from RO 1.648 billion.

FDI in real estate activities increased from RO 990 million in Q4 2021 to RO 1.037 billion a year later. In other segments, FDI rose from RO 1.240 billion to RO 1.388 billion.

The United Kingdom topped foreign direct investment with a value of RO 10.156 billion, followed by the US with RO 2.735 billion, UAE with RO 1.083 billion, Kuwait RO 927.500 million, China RO 896.800 million, Bahrain RO 370.399 million, Qatar RO 327.700 million, India RO 255.200 million, The Netherlands RO 241.100 million and Switzerland RO 171.100 million.

Other countries contributed an FDI of RO 2.458 million. — **ONA**

Oman Sustainability Centre to launch by year-end, says Al Aufi

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 23

Oman Sustainability Centre, a pivotal national institution tasked with overseeing the delivery of the country's Net-Zero strategy, will be operational before the end of this year with energy efficiency management as one of its primary responsibilities, according to Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Speaking at the IEEE Power Talks forum, which began in Muscat on Monday, Al Aufi underlined the important role that energy efficiency would play in Oman's decarbonisation strategy under the new centre's direction and auspices.

"The Sustainability Centre that was announced last year by the Sultanate of Oman will be up and running hopefully by the end of this year. It will take responsibility

for energy efficiency management as a core pillar of its deliverables," the Minister stated.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals, along with Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, Environment Authority and the Civil Aviation Authority are coordinating in the conceptualisation and establishment of the centre.

Its primary task is to ensure the implementation of the Net-Zero national plan in line with the follow-up methodology to achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Significantly, in driving energy efficiency programmes and initiatives, the Centre's role will go beyond commonsense public messaging, like switching off lights and classifying appliances according to their energy efficiency, said Al Aufi "It's actually being smart about the use of



the energy we generate on a daily basis. And of course, there will be some standards set and there will be some monitoring systems in place as well."

As a result of these initiatives, energy audit engineers will be embedded in many companies to oversee the delivery of energy efficiency programmes in their respective organisations, he stated.

Innovation & Scientific Research, and (4) Net-Zero Socioeconomic Centre. As a Net-Zero think-tank, the centre will formulate strategies, policies and regulations in support of Oman's carbon emission reduction goals.

Besides providing technical and advisory services, it will monitor progress in the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Further, in its role as a Business Environment Centre, the new entity will support the development of sustainable finance and circular economy programmes.

Innovation and scientific research will be a key objective of Oman Sustainability Centre. Finally, as a Net-Zero Socioeconomic Centre, it will conduct awareness and educational programmes in support of rationalised energy consumption and sustainability. It will also support local content development and capacity building within this emerging sector.

Daleel Petroleum: A Journey of Excellence

Daleel's journey began in 2002 with a mission to study and explore the hydrocarbon potential of Block 5, underpinned by a goal to harness these resources for the advancement of the Omani economy. It paved the way for 20 years of excellence – a milestone that was recently celebrated. In addition to securing a 15-year extension for Block 5, Daleel has also recently added to its portfolio by signing of an agreement with PDO to develop the Lekhwar Small Field.

From the outset, Daleel has been committed to safety, operational excellence, empowerment and business growth throughout our challenging journey. Guided by a sustainable advancement strategy, our goal is to optimize value creation from our assets by unlocking new opportunities and maintaining our successful track record while maximizing stakeholder value as well.

Leveraging the latest technologies, Daleel has succeeded in tapping the hydrocarbon resources of the Daleel, Bushra,



Shadi, Mazoon, Furat and more recently the Thahab fields. These efforts were complemented by the deployment of EOR technology, which helped boost oil production to around 50,000 bpd presently, up from 5,000 bpd in 2002.

In recognition of these accomplishments, Daleel was conferred with the Gas and LNG Middle East Summit Award for the 'Most Efficient Oil and Gas Industry Developer in Oman'. Adding to the haul of awards received by the company were the MB Chairman Award for Excellence in 2018, 2019 and 2022, and the OPAL Best Practice Awards for Operational Excellence in 2018, 2020, 2021 and 2022.

Also noteworthy are Daleel Petroleum's robust HSE safeguards. In 2022, for

example, Daleel achieved its goal of eliminating Routine Zero Flaring – eight years ahead of target. This was made possible by investments to extract associated natural gas and condensates with a capacity of 40 million cubic feet per annum.

Omanisation has been one of our proudest achievements that presently stands at 97%, up from 69% in 2011. This success was applauded at the 17th GCC Ceremony to Recognize Companies & Establishments in the area of Nationalization Practices and Implementations.

As we begin a new chapter in our growth, we are committed as ever before to contribute to a brighter, more ambitious, future for the Sultanate of Oman in partnership with our shareholders.

Duqm Refinery now 98% complete

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 23

Duqm Refinery project, OQ8, has been making steady progress, with a total completion rate of 98.10% as of May 2023. The project has been a major undertaking for Oman and has been designed to enhance the country's oil refining capabilities.

In a video update released by OQ8, as of May 2023, the project has seen 482, 857 cubic metres of concrete poured, indicating significant progress in the construction phase.

Moreover, the project has seen the installation of 6,960,453 metres of electric cable and 4,169,385 metres of instrumental cable, indicating a high level of attention to detail in ensuring the facility's electrical systems are fully operational.

The overall commissioning progress of the Duqm Refinery project stands at 65.94% as of April 2023, highlighting that the facility is moving closer to completion.



Commissioning is a crucial phase in the project, where the various systems and processes are tested to ensure they are working correctly before the facility is fully operational. The high level of commissioning progress achieved thus far is an encouraging sign that the facility will be ready to start operations soon.

The project has also been a significant employer, with a total of 4,821 manpower on-site as of May 2023. The project

THE OVERALL COMMISSIONING PROGRESS OF THE DUQM REFINERY PROJECT STANDS AT 65.94% AS OF APRIL 2023, HIGHLIGHTING THAT THE FACILITY IS MOVING CLOSER TO COMPLETION.

has provided employment opportunities for people from different parts of Oman and has been a significant contributor to the country's economy.

The man-hours worked on

the project to date stand at 482.86m, indicating that the project has required a significant amount of effort and dedication from the workers involved. The high number of man-hours worked is a testament to the project's importance to Oman's oil refining industry.

Upon completion, the OQ8 is expected to process around 230,000 barrels of crude oil per day, making it a significant contributor to Oman's economy.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Bank Muscat showcases its digital solutions for individuals and corporates at COMEX

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman is participating in the COMEX 2023 exhibition and showcasing some of its cutting-edge, digital services and products at this premier Technology, Communications, Innovation and Digital exhibition, which offers exhibitors and visitors a comprehensive and highly specialised platform for industry-leading discussions, knowledge-sharing and B2B meetings.

The bank continues to participate in the exhibition over the years because of its great importance in introducing modern digital services and its keen support for the digital transformation efforts in the country.



Speaking on the occasion, Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager, Digital

Banking, Bank Muscat, said: “By participating in COMEX annually, the bank is able to introduce

modern financial products and services to the exhibition visitors and the general public in line with the rapid digital transformation happening in Oman.

Bank Muscat services and products enjoy great popularity, and today more than 1.6 million customers are using Bank Muscat Internet and Mobile Banking services. Digital banking is also helping enhance financial inclusion for various segments of society and increasing the advantages and number of benefits available to our customers.”

He also thanked the organisers and invited all exhibition visitors to visit the bank’s stall and get familiar with various new digital services and products provided by the bank. He added that bank

employees at the stall would be delighted to answer any queries they may have regarding the huge number of digital services available to them.

On her part, Wafa bint Ibrahim al Ajmiyah, Assistant General Manager, Transaction & Government Banking, Bank Muscat, affirmed that the bank would continue to develop and innovate to keep pace with the latest developments in digital banking. She pointed out that the bank has been steadily adding to the number of digital services and solutions, which are available to corporates and institutions.

With state-of-the-art solutions and services like the Trade Portal, Liquidity Management solution, Business-to-Business (B2B)

Connect platform, Corporate Online Banking platform, Direct Debit solutions and Remote Deposit Capture, Bank Muscat’s Corporate Banking offer secure ‘best-in-class’ digital solutions and services, which are based on customer feedback and needs as well as global trends.

Corporate and institutional customers are benefiting immensely from the latest devices, solutions and technological advances made available to them through the implementation of cutting-edge technology. This is reflected in the transactions processed through the Corporate Online Banking platform, which soared to an unprecedented RO 8 billion in 2022, and continue to show a rising trend at present.

Get the best value and latest technology with JAC S3 and JS4



MUSCAT: The automotive industry in Oman has seen tremendous growth recently, thanks to the introduction of new models by various acclaimed car makers. Two of the most popular models in this market are the JAC S3 and the JAC JS4, both of which have been designed with the latest technology to offer a well-rounded driving experience.

The JAC S3 is a sporty hatchback that comes with an impressive range of features and specs. It has a 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine that offers 118 horsepower and 150 Nm of torque. It also has an impressive fuel capacity of 45-litres and can move with a top speed of 180 km/hr.

On the exterior, the S3 features: stylish 5 spoke alloy wheels, daytime running lamps, and chrome accents on the grille and door handles for a visually appealing look.

The JAC JS4 is a popular SUV that is known for its bold and aggressive styling. It is equipped with a powerful 1.5-litre four-cylinder Turbo engine that delivers up to 147 horsepower and 210 Nm of torque, this vehicle is a force to be reckoned with on the road.

It comes with amazing features which includes 360 camera, rear radars, electronic stability control (ESC) and much more. On the outside, the JS4 has a striking design with 5 spoke Alloy wheels, a muscular front grille, and chrome accents on the door handles and roof rails.

Both vehicles come equipped with a range of modern safety and convenience features. The S3 has multiple airbags, ABS brakes with EBD, cruise control, parking sensors, and an 8-inch touchscreen infotainment

system with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay. Similarly, the JS4 comes with multiple airbags, Electronic Stability Control, hill-start assist, and a 10.25-inch touchscreen infotainment system with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

But that’s not all! When you purchase a new JAC vehicle from Towell Auto Centre, you’ll also receive a JAC IINJAZ service package for 3 years/50,000 km (whichever comes first) for an unbeatable price. The service package cost varies depending on the JAC model, starting from RO 100 on JAC S3, and RO 120 on JAC JS4 (VAT extra).

AAA roadside assistance, which is a valuable service that is included for free with the purchase of a new vehicle for the first three years. This service is a great resource for customers who may find themselves in need of assistance on the road. So take advantage of it and enjoy the peace of mind that comes with knowing you have help just a phone call away.

With JAC Motors Oman, you can rest assured that you’re getting a reliable, high-quality vehicle that is backed by a manufacturer’s warranty of 6 years / 200,000 km (whichever is earlier) for passenger cars and 5 years / 250,000 km (whichever is earlier) for light trucks.

With all the options and outstanding customer service from JAC Motors Oman and Towell Auto Centre, you’re sure to find the perfect vehicle to suit your needs. So why not head down to Towell Auto Centre today and take a look at the JAC S3 and JS4? With their unbeatable price, luxurious interior, and performance, you can’t go wrong.

Vodafone immerses visitors into a world of innovations at COMEX 2023

MUSCAT: Vodafone is showcasing how 5G is going to revolutionise the world at COMEX 2023. Imagining a world where traffic signals respond in real-time to the situation on the road, where drone delivery services is an option, and where immersive gaming can make racing through the streets of Monaco a feel-like-real experience, the digital operator’s showcase has been purposely-built to bring 5G to life, inviting visitors to dive into a world of innovation that engages with them and responds to their movements and thoughts.

Taking centre-stage this year is a first of its kind simulator IVR that offers an interactive multi-sensory virtual reality experience entirely designed and manufactured in Oman by Innovation Factory. Without the need for headsets, the simulator seamlessly brings the virtual world into reality using unparalleled advanced technology.

Visitors are also invited to unleash the power of their minds and enjoy a digital experience that uses real-time neural feedback data to create unique and ever-changing works of art.



Partnering with Ericsson, Vodafone is also demonstrating how people communicate with each other and with machines will completely change in the future. Bringing demos from MWC Barcelona, visitors of COMEX in Oman, will be able to interact with holograms and make 3D calls.

“Our participation at COMEX this year is centred on showcasing the limitless potential of 5G, grounded in real impact. Each experience we have at our booth is a glimpse of what we aim to enable and how we envision a digital life in Oman to be in

the near future,” said Sayyid Fahad bin Abdulaziz bin Saud al Busaidy, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Vodafone Oman.

Powered by Vodafone in its 32nd edition, COMEX 2023 has brought together local and international brands to offer a new perspective on the world of technology. This year’s agenda includes a host of events and activities including Exhibitions, Conferences, Awards, Workshops, Seminars, Certified Training Programmes, Gaming, B2B Meetings and Attractions, under the theme “Future Tech Redefined”.

NBO showcases next generation of banking and finance technology

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) participates in this year’s COMEX 2023, the Sultanate of Oman’s official technology, communications, innovation and digital transformation exhibition, where it demonstrates the advances in financial technology and the bank’s capabilities to drive Oman towards a digitally-enabled future.

Held at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre (OCEC) on May 22-25, COMEX 2023 – the 32nd annual staging of the event – includes a public exhibition, workshops and seminars, as well as deep dive specialist events throughout the year.

Tariq Atiq, General Manger and Chief Retail & Digital Banking Officer at NBO, said, “COMEX 2023 is the ideal platform for the bank to showcase the next step in the digital transformation of Oman’s financial sector.

Banking & Finance Technology Week is the ideal opportunity to gain insight into global trends, understand customer needs and continue to build on our reputation to adopt the latest technology to develop innovative products and services to



empower customers and make their financial lives more convenient.”

NBO was the first local bank in Oman and since its inception has introduced many market firsts to the country. The bank has fully embraced the digital transformation of banking and was first in the country to introduce self-service kiosks, a Merchant App specifically designed to serve micro and home businesses, and adopted QR codes as a form of payment.

GMW launches regional parts centre in Dubai



MUSCAT: OTE Group has enthusiastically welcomed the recent launch by Chinese automaker Great Wall Motor (GWM) of a major parts distribution centre in the UAE – a move that will dramatically improve parts availability and after-sales service delivery for GWM’s growing customer base in the Sultanate of Oman.

Set up in Dubai, the facility is GWM’s first Regional Parts Distribution Centre in the Middle East, encompassing 22 markets across the region. State-of-the-art in its design and operation, the new facility will significantly reduce the logistics cycle, while also enriching parts variety and range.

For OTE Group, the launch of the Regional Parts Distribution Center just across the border in the UAE will help OTE to facilitate immediate availability of parts for their customers. Additionally, it will further strengthen GWM’s positioning in the Oman market following the Chinese automaker’s launch in the Sultanate of Oman last year under OTE Group’s auspices.

With the easy availability of critical auto parts, GWM sees its prospects for growth in the Middle East on a strong upward trajectory. The privately-owned Chinese automaker has been making impressive inroads into the Omani roads, mirroring its breathtaking growth across the globe.

In Oman, OTE Group has made available some of GWM’s choicest automotive offerings. Leading the line-up is Haval JOLION, a five-seater compact SUV that has charmed key markets around the world. Other flagship offerings from the GWM stable include the Haval H6 (five-seater compact crossover SUV), Haval DARGO (seven seater SUV), Haval H9 (large family SUV) and GWM POER (petrol pickup truck).



Amazon Payment Services launched in Oman via OmanNet

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 23

Amazon Payment Services, a regional leader in digital payments operating across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, has expanded its services to Oman through a collaboration with the OmanNet payment solution.

Amazon Payment Services' merchants can now accept online payments from all locally-issued debit cards in Oman to expand their reach and attract customers in the Sultanate of Oman, while continuing to be able to accept payments from other major globally-issued cards.

Powered by the Central Bank of Oman, OmanNet is a safe, convenient, and reliable payment solution enabling shoppers in the country to conveniently pay with their debit card.

OmanNet debit cards comprise 95% of all cards in the Sultanate of Oman, and with this launch, OmanNet cardholders are now able to shop on thousands of



merchant websites enabled for digital payments by Amazon Payment Services.

Through this launch, Merchants will also enable the OmanNet payment option on the Payment Link invoicing product offered by Amazon Payment Services which allows merchants to collect payments from anywhere online by generating a link which can be easily sent to customers via email or SMS.

Commenting on the launch, Peter George, Managing Director for Amazon Payment Services in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), said: "At Amazon Payment Services, we strive to facilitate seamless and secure payments across the region.

The addition of OmanNet to our portfolio is an important step toward achieving this vision,

enabling our merchants to accept payments through a prominent card-based payment gateway in Oman. With this launch, we are supporting our existing merchants to drive better conversion in the Sultanate of Oman, while enabling more Omani merchants to utilise our range of innovative payment products to accept online payments and grow their businesses."

The launch also reinforces Amazon Payment Services' commitment to strategic forward-thinking to help merchants prepare for the future.

Oman is experiencing rapid growth in digital payment adoption, presenting a burgeoning opportunity for online retailers in the region.

Specifically, more Omani customers are opting to use

debit cards, with online payment and point-of-sale transactions found to represent 81% of card transactions in Oman in 2021, whereas ATM cash withdrawals accounted for only 19%, according to this data from the Central Bank of Oman.

Enabling payments from locally issued debit cards as well as from globally issued cards will help local and regional merchants to process online payments in Oman and grow their businesses, supporting them to expand their reach and provide their customers with multiple choices.

Amazon Payment Services enables payments on Amazon stores in the MENA region including Amazon.ae, Amazon.sa and Amazon.eg, in addition to supporting thousands of other merchants and businesses across the region.

The company's services are available for businesses in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

Sohar Power weighs bankruptcy



QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, MAY 23

Sohar Power Company SAOG, a leading player in Oman's electricity generation sector, has scheduled an extraordinary general assembly (EGM) to assess and analyse potential insolvency measures.

This crucial decision has been taken by the company's Board of Directors in response to the prevailing financial challenges and constrained market opportunities to remain in operation.

As per the latest financial data, the company's current capital stands at RO 22.1 million, while its outstanding debts amount to RO 39 million.

Notably, shareholder equity reflects a negative value of RO 30.8 million. CEO Sreenath Hebbar said in a regulatory filing to Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) that the plant has been unsuccessful in securing a contract with Nama Power & Water ever since the term of its Power & Water Purchase Agreement with Nama came to an end on May 15, 2022.

"The company actively

engaged with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), Nama PWP and other parties to explore options aimed at extending the company's operating life, however these engagements were ultimately unsuccessful and will not meet the company's ambitions," Hebbar stated.

Following the annulment of the Power 2022 procurement process, Sohar Power explored options to offer its capacity under the Spot Market and Bilateral Contract Framework, both of which were ultimately found to be unviable for various reasons. It also decided not to participate in the more recent Power 2024 procurement process due to a number of constraints.

Finally, saddled with an outstanding debt of RO 39 million and with no expectation that the lenders would consider an extension of the maturity date or restructuring of the debt, the Board of Directors resolved to convene an EGM to consider and approve the proposal for commencement of bankruptcy proceedings, the CEO added.

PDO hosts annual forum of Gas Producers Association GCC Chapter

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 23

Hosted by Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the 29th Annual Conference and Exhibition of the GCC Chapter began on May 23, 2023 under the patronage of Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, with the participation of executives, engineers, and experts in the gas sector at regional and global levels.

This year's conference, which is being held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC) for the period from May 21-25, is themed "Expanding Possibilities towards Excellence in the Gas Value Chain" and brings together more than 700 participants to exchange experiences, knowledge, and best practices related to developing the gas industry's value.

The welcome speech was delivered by the Chairman of the Gas Processors Association –



GCC Chapter Hamad al Zuwayer, while the conference's keynote speech was delivered by PDO Gas Director Moutaz al Riyami.

The opening ceremony also included a panel discussion titled "The Future of Gas in Energy Transition" followed by the awards ceremony for the winning technical papers in the 28th edition of the event hosted last year in Kuwait.

The accompanying exhibition, in which more than 21 local and global institutions participated,

was also opened today.

PDO Gas Director Moutaz al Riyami said: "This year's conference themes and technical papers have been carefully curated to address emerging challenges and opportunities within the gas value chain. Our aim is to enable the highest possible value while supporting our journey towards becoming more carbon and cost-competitive in a sustainable manner."

The Gas Producers Association – GCC chapter was founded in

1993 and is based in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It operates under the umbrella of the Gas Producers Association in the United States, an organisation with a century-long history.

With approximately 30 member companies, including PDO, the GCC branch is focused on advancing performance, optimising operational procedures, and strengthening various health, safety, environment, and technology aspects.

Duqm Refinery now 98% complete

FROM PAGE 13

It has the capacity to process all types of oil and upon operation, the refinery will produce liquefied natural gas, naphtha, jet fuel, diesel, sulphur and coke. The facility will help reduce Oman's dependence on imported refined petroleum products and will provide a reliable source of domestic fuel supply.

The Duqm Refinery project, located in the heart of the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, is a joint venture between the OQ Group and Kuwait Petroleum International, and is part of Oman's broader plans to diversify its economy and reduce its reliance on oil exports.

The project is expected to create a range of job opportunities in the region, both directly and indirectly, and contribute to the country's overall economic development.

OPAZ launches Centralised Compliance System 'Eltizam'

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, MAY 23

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) inaugurated, on the sidelines of the Oman's Official Technology show (COMEX 2023), the Centralised Compliance System 'Eltizam', under the ausices of Dr Ali bin Amer al Shidhani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Communications and Information Technology.

'Eltizam' system automates the follow-up procedures and

practices in the field of control and compliance, most notably environmental and labour control and inspection of buildings and projects, monitoring, compliance, and issuance of violations and reports, in addition to providing the system with another feature of e-payment through the system.

The Centralised Compliance System will initially automate the various follow-up procedures, which include procedures for following up on environmental compliance, pollution control, waste and hazardous materials management, projects control, labour control, and building control.



This system also targets other categories of end users as it is not only used by inspectors, but representatives of companies,

consultants and contractors can also use the system via tablets or mobile phones.

Through the system, users can

schedule field visits, distribute compliance follow-up tasks electronically, specify exact inspection sites, prepare field visit reports and add attachments and images directly on site without having to go back to the office.

It is also possible via Eltizam to communicate directly between the inspection team and follow-up team and companies to follow up on inspections, in addition to the ability for companies to send inspection requests according to the projects' stages.

In this regard, Mohammed bin Abdulmajeed al Hooti, In-charge of Managing the Digital Transformation Programme at

OPAZ, stated, "The Centralised Compliance System comes within OPAZ plan towards digital transformation and its continuous efforts to re-engineer the procedures in force in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in which the system was implemented as a first phase.

However, at a later phase, the follow-up procedures in the zones affiliated with OPAZ will be unified according to this system as the scenarios is in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and in a manner commensurate with the nature of business and requirements in other zones."

Probe into silencing victims of workplace misconduct



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

The Legal Services Board (LSB) in the UK is investigating the role lawyers play in the way companies use non-disclosure agreements (NDA) to conceal wrongdoing

in the workplace. The board said concerns are mounting about the misuse of NDAs to conceal wrongdoing and silence victims of workplace misconduct.

In a call for evidence — in the wake of allegations of rape at the largest business lobby group, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) — the board said it is also looking at how regulation might help lawyers avoid compromising their professional ethical obligations.

The board noted around 799 cases of workplace harassment captured by Speak Out Revolution, a non-profit that collects data to highlight the issue. Among these cases, 80 per cent were experienced by women, 25 per cent of the individuals reporting the issue said NDAs had been

used to prevent them from talking about their experiences, and 34 per cent said they expected they would be asked to sign an NDA. The LSB also flagged a survey by campaign group Pregnant Then Screwed of 260 women who said they experienced pregnancy or maternity discrimination and subsequently signed NDAs. Among the group, 91 per cent said they felt signing NDAs was their only option, while 70 per cent experienced poor mental health as a result of signing the NDA.

In its consultation, the LSB noted NDAs were suitable for protecting confidentiality and sensitivity around business information and ideas. But it added that “there is evidence of misuse of NDAs to conceal unlawful activity, such as discrimination, harassment or

abuse.” In these instances, lawyers can be asked to draft, enforce or advise on what amounts to an unethical or illegitimate use of NDAs, the board added.

“Vulnerable individuals who are the targets of discrimination, harassment or abuse may be asked or coerced through an imbalance of power to sign them. There is an active question to be addressed about the professional ethical conduct of legal professionals who assist, enable or facilitate such misuse of NDAs,” the board said.

LSB chair Matthew Hill said in a statement that the watchdog wants to ensure regulation helps lawyers to ensure NDAs are not to cover up wrongdoing or deprive individuals unwittingly of their rights.

“We’re interested in hearing

from anyone — whether the real experience of people who have been subject to misuse of NDAs, practitioners in this or related fields, regulators, representative bodies and others — to help identify solutions that uphold public confidence,” Hill said.

It’s to be noted that the incoming global chair of accountancy giant Deloitte is set to stand down from the board of the scandal-hit CBI. Senior Deloitte audit partner, Anna Marks is chair of the CBI’s audit committee and a non-executive director of the board. She is set to stand down from both CBI roles, a spokesperson for Deloitte said.

Marks is one of the Big Four firm’s most senior partners. She will be taking over as chair of Deloitte’s global board of directors from June 1. She currently sits on

Deloitte’s global board, as well as its north and south Europe board, and is a vice-chair of Deloitte UK.

Marks’ exit from her role at CBI comes as major businesses, including Deloitte, rush to distance themselves from the CBI (as mentioned in these columns two weeks ago) following allegations that senior staff at the lobby group had committed acts of gross misconduct.

The organisation said on April 21 that it was suspending its operations until an extraordinary general meeting in June to decide its future.

“The CBI shares the shock and revulsion at the events that have taken place in our organisation, and at past failures that allowed these events to happen,” the CBI said in a statement.

EU will go easy on Indian resale of Russian fuel

BY SHRITAMA BOSE

Western pledges to prevent the circumvention of anti-Russian sanctions risk falling flat in India. Fuelled by cheap imports from Moscow, the Asian country’s yearly oil products sales to Europe have surged over 70 per cent to \$15 billion in the past year, according to data from the Indian Ministry of Commerce.

The trend shows trade restrictions are not watertight. And the Group of Seven vowed on Friday to plug sanctions loopholes. Yet, the risk of an energy inflation resurgence makes a European Union ban on Russian oil reselling a tough call.

The war in Ukraine has offered India an opportunity to boost purchases of discounted Russian oil. Crude imports from the sanctions-hit country jumped to \$31 billion during the twelve months to March from just \$2.5 billion in the previous year, Indian government data show.

Procured at a few dollars below a G7 price cap of \$60 a barrel imposed in December, part of Russia’s Urals crude consignments has been used for Indian domestic consumption and helped cool inflation.

The rest is being refined and shipped on as diesel and jet fuel to the West, providing a loophole for efforts to choke off Russia’s oil proceeds.

European imports of oil derivatives jumped to 200,000 bpd after the EU banned Russian crude products imports on February 5 from 154,000 barrels previously.

Sensing a growing problem, the EU’s top diplomat Josep Borrell has called for a crackdown on such exports. That would be taxing for private refiners including billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Industries and Rosneft-backed Nayara, which accounted for 60 per cent of Indian oil imports from Russia in January, Vortexa energy flow data show.

However, enforcing a full-blown embargo, which requires unanimous support from all 27 EU states, would be hard. Refineries typically blend a basket of crudes from different sources before processing, making it difficult to identify the origins of each barrel.

And New Delhi argues oil products substantially transformed in a third country cannot be subject to EU sanctions.

To avoid an open clash with India, the EU could try to target European companies buying Russian-origin refined oil. But Brussels will be also mindful that inflation in its core euro area remains sticky at 7 per cent: diverting crude shipments away from the bloc could reignite a painful energy crisis. In striving to weaken Russia, Europe is likely to avoid a crude approach. — Reuters



A worker walks atop a tanker wagon to check the freight level at an oil terminal on the outskirts of Kolkata, India. — Reuters

Building a better SDR



JAYATI GHOSH

The writer, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is former a member of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism.

With much of the developing world teetering on the edge of a debt crisis, the calls for a new issuance of special drawing rights (SDRs, the International Monetary Fund’s reserve asset), have grown louder and more urgent.

But to have the desired effect, the IMF must modify its allocation criteria and clarify how SDRs can be used to support low- and middle-income countries through the current economic turmoil.

One proposal currently being considered is to expand SDR allocation beyond individual countries to include multilateral development banks and dedicated funds.

The idea of channelling SDRs to multilateral institutions like the World Bank and regional development banks, which are uniquely equipped to assist emerging and developing countries, has become increasingly popular in recent years.

The Bridgetown Initiative, led by Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley, has called for a new issuance of SDR 500 billion (\$650 billion) “or other low-interest, long-term instruments” to support the creation of a multilateral agency that would accelerate “private investment in the low-carbon transition, wherever it is most effective.”

Similarly, the recent report by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism (of which I was a member) recommends the “immediate, and thereafter regular” annual issuance of additional SDRs to aid countries facing foreign-exchange shortages. The report also



suggests that IMF shareholders amend the organisation’s Articles of Agreement to permit “selective SDR allocation.”

This proposed change aims to facilitate a more targeted and effective distribution that prioritises the most vulnerable countries over the world’s largest economies, which receive the lion’s share of SDR allocations under the current rules. Another proposed amendment stipulates that “specific conditions” would automatically trigger SDR allocations to ensure a “swifter global response.”

Notably, the report emphasises that eligibility for SDR allocation should not be conditional on the recipient country adopting an IMF-supported fiscal consolidation programme.

Unfortunately, these proposals were not even discussed during the Spring Meetings of the IMF and World Bank in April.

But we must continue to pursue these reforms, because increased international liquidity, delivered in a timely and efficient manner, is needed more than ever. By modernising the outdated system of SDR allocation, the international community could also narrow the climate-finance gap.

But, first, the many developing countries currently at risk of a severe debt crisis must receive immediate budgetary support. Unless we create a global financial safety net, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals stand little chance of being met.

The ongoing financial turmoil highlights the current system’s inherent inequities. Over the past few weeks, governments that

control global reserve currencies, such as the United States and Switzerland, have pumped massive amounts of liquidity into the banking sector to rescue private banks.

In contrast, debtor countries that have applied for debt relief under the G20’s Common Framework for Debt Treatments have been waiting for years for a fraction of those sums.

The sovereign-debt crisis currently engulfing the world’s poorest countries, which also happen to be the countries’ most affected by climate change, requires immediate action. At a minimum, low- and middle-income countries grappling with balance-of-payments challenges should be given the opportunity to bolster their foreign-exchange reserves through a new SDR allocation.

But even if a fresh allocation is eventually agreed upon, countries must understand how to make the most of it.

Unfortunately, the IMF’s vagueness on this issue has caused much confusion, with some asserting that SDRs belong to central banks, not governments, and others insisting that they are loans rather than assets distributed by the IMF.

Consequently, many recipient countries’ newly allocated SDRs simply augment foreign-exchange reserves. While this can have a positive impact by increasing a country’s perceived creditworthiness, it can also hinder more effective uses of SDRs, particularly in times of acute shortages and fiscal constraints.

The Ecuadorian economist

Andrés Arauz has highlighted these concerns, arguing that there is no legal basis for central banks to appropriate SDR allocations.

The IMF’s own guidance says that members “enjoy a large degree of freedom in how to manage the SDRs allocated to them,” including the extent to which “central banks are involved in their management and whether the budget can directly use them for budget support.”

According to the Fund, SDRs are “allocated and held by the member and instructions for its use come through the fiscal agency of the member” (emphasis added).

In other words, governments can use SDRs as they see fit. The confusion over the nature and status of SDRs stems, in part, from the IMF’s own misclassification of these assets.

As Arauz points out, prior to the release of the IMF’s latest balance-of-payments manual (BPM6) in 2009, SDR allocations were treated as equity rather than as liabilities that recipient countries must repay. The BPM6, however, reclassified them as liabilities, essentially treating them as debt.

This change, which was made without clear reasoning or transparent discussion, must be contested, because it can deter the use, transfer, and recycling of SDRs, preventing allocations from fulfilling their potential.

Some countries, particularly in Latin America, have demonstrated creativity in their use of SDRs. Ecuador, for example, used them to finance its 2021 investment plan.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

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DISCOVERY

Illustration shows the newly discovered Cretaceous Period meat-eating dinosaur Protathlitiscinctorrensis from Spain. — AFP



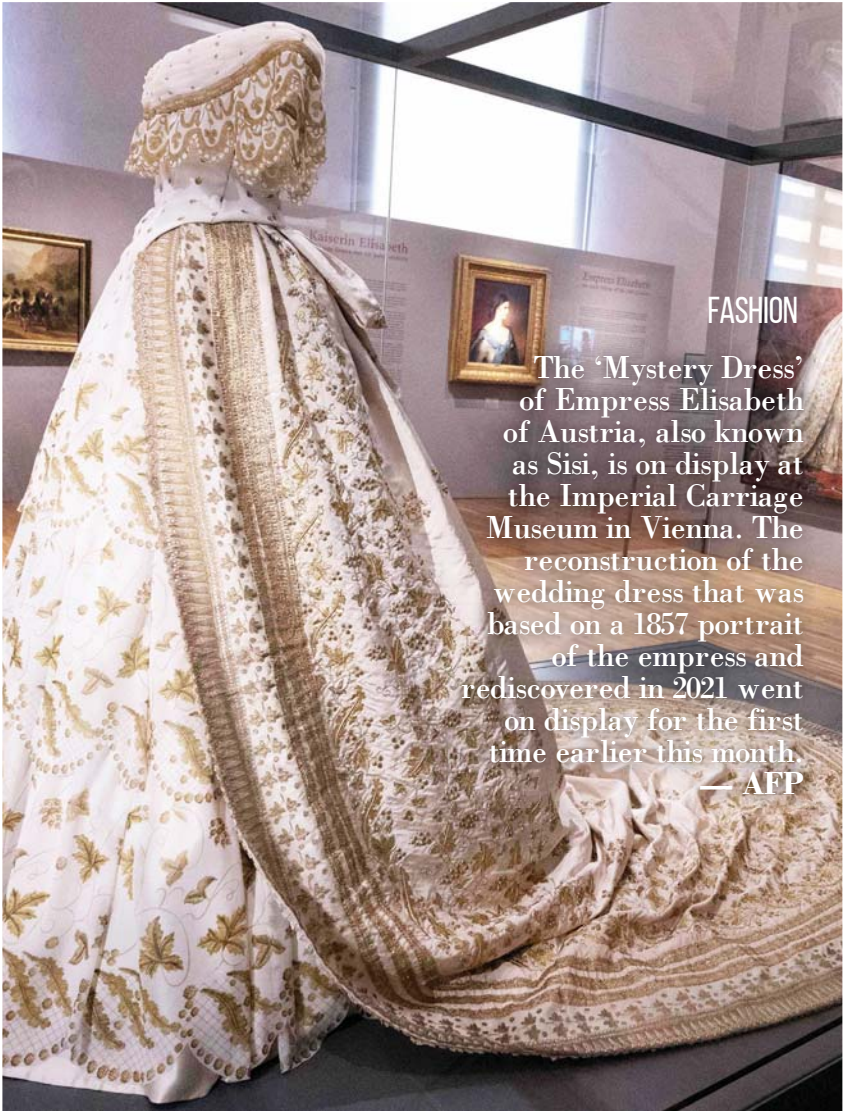
LIFESTYLE

Zandile Kumalo, cofounder and CEO of Neighbour Roots, stands inside an hydroponic greenhouse on the rooftop of Morningside Mall, in Johannesburg. — AFP



FASHION

The ‘Mystery Dress’ of Empress Elisabeth of Austria, also known as Sisi, is on display at the Imperial Carriage Museum in Vienna. The reconstruction of the wedding dress that was based on a 1857 portrait of the empress and rediscovered in 2021 went on display for the first time earlier this month. — AFP

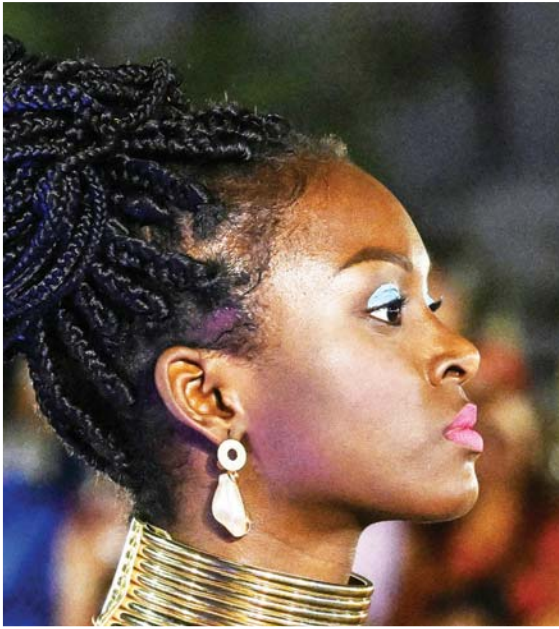


FASHION

Models present creations during Cali’s District Fashion Fair launch event in Cali, Colombia. — AFP

TRAVEL

A visitor stands in front of a display during a media preview of the exhibition “Now Boarding: Experiencing Singapore Through Travel, 1800s-2000s” at the National Museum in Singapore. — AFP



art & life

WEDNESDAY | MAY 24, 2023 | DHUL QA'ADA 4, 1444 AH

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Ancient traditions in Oman empower youth and nurture mental well-being



Reinilda van Heuven Dernison is a dedicated Dutch neuro psycho-therapist and cognitive behavioural therapist who intertwines her passion for community work and photography to advocate for youth development and mental well-being in Oman. Reinilda strongly believes in the transformative power of preserving cultural knowledge and nurturing community bonds, laying the foundation for a promising future for the youth of Oman... **p20**

ENTERTAINMENT

Director of Cannes' first Sudanese film: I walk red carpet as people flee bullets

For Mohamed Kordofani, being at the Cannes Film Festival is bittersweet: He directed the first Sudanese film to be included in the festival's official selection as weeks of fighting in Sudan have driven nearly 1.1 million people from their homes.

"I feel immensely honoured and very happy that the film made it to Cannes, and it's such a great reward to all the crew and the cast, and myself included," he said on Monday.

"But at the same time, I feel really bad ... I walk the red carpet while people are running away from bullets and bombing."

His film, "Goodbye Julia," which premiered on Saturday, looks at the effect South Sudan's split from Sudan in 2011 has had on people's lives through two women, Mona and Julia, played by theatre actor and singer Eiman Yousif and model Siran Riak.

Undermined by racism, war and political instability, relations between the two countries remains tense to this day.

Mona, a retired singer from northern Sudan, tries to erase her feelings of guilt after covering up a murder by taking the victim's





South Sudanese widow, Julia, and her son into her home. Unable to confess, she decides to leave the past behind.

Sudan has been gripped by fighting between two military factions for more than a month, with several ceasefires failing to hold.

Some 705 people have been killed and at least 5,287 have been injured, according to the World Health Organization, though the true death toll is believed to be much higher.

Kordofani said he hoped Sudan could find peace and reconciliation in the future.

"I hope we can build a new national identity that is proud of values that bring people together like freedom; like justice; like coexistence," he said.—**Reuters**



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California's wet winter sparks a new gold rush



ALBERT FAUSEL HAS BEEN scouring the rivers of Placerville, California, for decades in search of gold. But the task has never been easier, nor the haul bigger, thanks to recent torrential rains.

"This year, there's a lot of new spots" to find gold, says Fausel, clad in a wetsuit and snorkel, standing up to his knees in water.

Less than 10 minutes into a recent visit by AFP, Fausel — diving with a small shovel to dig a crevice at the bottom of the riverbed — resurfaces with proof.

Among the mix of clay and sand emptied onto a plastic tray, unmistakable shiny particles glitter brightly under the strong mid-day sun.

"Mother Nature has done a great job with

all this flooding," he said.

While his search near the shoreline has yielded "a small amount of gold," he predicts that closer to the middle of the river, "there's probably going to be a lot larger, bigger, heavier pieces."

Fausel collects his bounty with a tool that resembles a suction pump, before adjusting his snorkel and disappearing back into the water.

- 'FLOOD GOLD' -

California is emerging from an unusually wet winter, with near-record rainfall.

A series of atmospheric rivers — high altitude ribbons of moisture — chugged into the western United States, dousing a land-

scape that had been baked dry by years of below-average rain.

In Northern California, those downpours triggered scenes reminiscent — if on a far smaller scale — of the original Gold Rush that transformed this region in the 19th century, when thousands of miners arrived in search of El Dorado.

"Now, we're talking about flood gold," said Barron Brandon, a geologist and foreman of the Cosumnes River Ranch.

Heavy rainfall creates powerful currents in the river that "wash" the banks, loosening particles of mud and gold, which are then carried downstream to be scooped up by lucky miners.

The river acts "like a big sluice box... just

on a very grand scale," said Brandon, who also pans for gold in summer as a hobby.

"The real gold is just being out here," he added, smiling as he takes in the landscape of blue and green hues, soundtracked only by the gushing flow of the water.

- GOLD FEVER -

Placerville — around 40 miles (70 kilometres) from California's state capital Sacramento — relies heavily on tourism, most of which is themed on its golden history. Through the small city runs a road called the "El Dorado Freeway." Stores with names like Ancient Gold Jewelers, Gold Country Artists Gallery and Gold Insurance Solutions dot the street.

In one toy store, plastic mining helmets and miniature panning trays take up half of the display space.

- 'VERY, VERY RICH' -

Mark Dayton, a local treasure hunter with millions of views on his YouTube channel, says many of his followers have heard about the rains and are on their way.

He traces the public's widespread fascination with striking gold to many children's love of tales about pirate booty.

"There's so many movies like 'Indiana Jones' and all those movies, 'Pirates of the Caribbean' — they all pull at the heartstrings of treasure," he said.

One of Placerville's main attractions is the Gold Bug Park and Mine, while draws visiting school groups.

"Kids are always interested about the gold... California was built on gold," said Pat Layne, an 80-year-old volunteer guide who worked in gold mining for decades.

"What we try and get across to them is



A hotel on the main street maintains the aesthetics of the original Gold Rush, with 19th-century furniture and photographs from that bygone era.

A hardware store run by Fausel sells a wide range of mining and panning tools, such as sluice boxes and metal detectors, as well as brightly painted souvenir "gold seeds."

But Fausel is not worried about a tide of outsiders invading the region in a new wave of gold fever.

"Come out to California. Give yourself a chance to find some gold," he urged. "It's out here for everybody. But follow all the rules."

the true history, not the Hollywood version of the Gold Rush," he added.

Standing next to a tributary of the river that borders the now-defunct mine, Layne describes to visitors how there were once "hundreds of miners right here in this creek, right where we're standing, working, panning gold."

"It was very, very rich here... gold was delivered to the creeks by Mother Nature over millions of years."

This winter's huge amount of rain has helped to recreate those conditions, on a much briefer and accelerated scale.

When "the water moves, the gold moves," he said. — AFP

FASHION

EU targets fast fashion in push for durable goods

EUROPEAN UNION MINISTERS on Monday backed plans to crack down on fast fashion with a ban on destroying unsold clothes, as it targets more goods with tougher sustainability rules.

EU competition ministers met in Brussels to approve a plan proposed last year by the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm, to ban the destruction of textiles, shoes and other unsold consumer products.

The bloc wants to reduce the environmental impact of clothes or accessories that are made but never used, especially since the proliferation of online shopping.

According to the EU, textiles have the fourth highest impact on the environment and climate change across its 27 nations after



food, housing and transport.

There will be a four-year exemption from the ban for medium-sized companies, while small firms will have a general exemption.

The rules will include tighter requirements for products to be "more durable, reliable, reusable, upgradable, repairable, recyclable and easier to maintain", the member states said in a statement.

Many other consumer goods will be affected, but there will be exemptions for food, feed, medicine and veterinary products. Cars were also exempted since other laws address their impact on the environment.

Goods must be sold with a "digital product passport", which could be a QR code, it added.

The rules will only come into force after negotiations between the member states and the European Parliament, which is due to formally back the proposals in the coming weeks.

The European Environment Agency (EEA) says the number of used textiles exported from the EU tripled over the last two decades from more than 550,000 tonnes in 2000 to almost 1.7 million tonnes in 2019.

But the EEA said the fate of used textiles exported from the EU is "highly uncertain". — AFP

CHANGING WORLD

Hundreds of millions of life years lost to pandemic: WHO

NEARLY 337 MILLION life years were lost in the two first years of the Covid-19 pandemic, as millions of people died prematurely, the World Health Organization said on Friday.

The UN health agency's annual world statistics report also showed a swelling threat from non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

The most dramatic finding, based on data up to 2022, was the estimate of how many years of life COVID had taken, WHO said.

The pandemic has wreaked global devastation and officially killed nearly seven million people, with the true figure believed to be closer to 20 million.

The WHO report lays bare how the virus itself and the broader impact of the crisis abruptly cut short the lives of millions of people.

While the WHO officially registered



5.4 million COVID deaths in 2020 and 2021, its excess mortality data shows around 14.9 million people actually likely died due to the crisis over that period.

Even more striking, perhaps, it said

the statistics show that during those two years alone, COVID resulted in the loss globally of 336.8 million years that otherwise would have been lived.

"It's like losing 22 years of life for every excess death," Samira Asma, WHO's assistant chief for data and analytics, told reporters ahead of the launch.

- OFF-TRACK -

"Significant inequities underpin the distribution of Covid-19 cases and deaths, as well as access to vaccinations," the report said.

The WHO warned that the pandemic had helped throw off-track many health-related indicators that had been improving for years.

During the first two decades of the century, the world saw significant improvements in maternal and child health, with deaths falling by one-third and one-half respectively.

The incidence of infectious diseases like HIV, tuberculosis and malaria also declined significantly, as did the risk of premature death from NCDs.

Global life expectancy rose from 67 years in 2000 to 73 in 2019.

But after the pandemic hit, existing inequalities in access to high-quality healthcare, routine immunisations and financial protection deepened, among other things sending the long improving trends on malaria and TB in the opposite direction. — AFP

Ancient traditions in Oman empower youth and nurture mental well-being

By Liju Cherian
@lijucherianoman

As the sun sets over the dusty village roads of Oman, a palpable sense of anticipation fills the air. Villagers gather, immersed in animated conversations, while children perch on cars, eagerly awaiting a majestic spectacle. Reinilda van Heuven Dernison, a Dutch neuro psychotherapist and cognitive behavioural therapist, is also a devoted photographer and advocate for mental well-being, who has made it her mission to capture these precious moments and embrace the rich cultural tapestry of Oman.



ing of ancient customs as she interviews passionate supporters gathered around the tracks, participating in the communal Ardha activity. Reinilda firmly asserts that community-based activities, like horse Ardha, foster social connections and a profound sense of belonging. Mohammed Al Rahbi, a young engineer, returns from abroad to support his brother in the race. For Mohammed and his family, horse riding is interwoven into the fabric of Omani society. The young riders chant local poems, adding an enchanting melody to their mesmerising performances. On the second day of the festivities, the team attends a special Ardha event organised by the Bausher volunteer team, showcasing the skills of young male and female riders. Enthusiastic audiences are captivated as the Knights Equestrian's young riders demonstrate acrobatic feats, including standing on horses and even letting them sleep.



Residing in Oman for seven years, Reinilda finds inspiration in community work and her voluntary engagement with children with special needs, particularly through the joy and belonging fostered by horse riding. During the Eid Al Fitr holidays, Reinilda ventured into

Children delight in short rides and the opportunity to pet these majestic animals. Yahya al Maskri, an oil and gas sector professional, attends the race in his hometown with his beautifully attired children on the third day of celebrations. Yahya emphasises the importance of passing down these traditions to future genera-



rural villages, immersing herself with the local community. Assisting the 'Knights of Oman' Equestrian School, led by Rashid bin Salim al Abruwi and his dedicated team, Reinilda organises events that bring the knowledge of horses and the Ardha tradition into schools. Believing that ancient activities like camel racing and horse Ardha provide an exceptional platform for youth development, Reinilda envisions more than cultural preservation. "They strengthen community bonds and instil vital personality skills such as risk-taking behaviour, friendship building, emotional regulation, grit, and perseverance," she says. During the vibrant Eid al Fitr celebrations, Reinilda accompanies Rashid and his team as

tions, as they foster a love for learning, reading, and character-building, shaping the path to a bright future. Among the participants is Mohammed al Maskri, a manager at Oxy, who races alongside his 14-year-old son. Encouraged by his younger son, Mohammed revived the family's horse-riding tradition, which had been temporarily halted due to busyness and expenses. Horse races originating from the stables of Barka to the interior keep these traditions alive. Reinilda highlights the profound impact of participating in these ancient activities, as they develop essential mental health qualities such as establishing friendships, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness, and promoting resilience. During the pandemic, she collaborated with senior therapists from the Ministry of Health, and The Royal Hospital to provide online mental health sessions for healthcare workers, underscoring the significance of community support for mental well-being. Recognising the fading of risk-taking behaviour and playfulness in the modern age of technology, Reinilda firmly believes in cultivating ancient races and traditions as a buffer for improving mental health and enhancing important life skills. With a steadfast commitment to preserving this invaluable cultural heritage, Reinilda envisions a brighter future for individuals and communities in Oman.



they visit various wilayats, immersing themselves in cherished traditions alongside families and friends. These experiences grant Reinilda a deeper understand-